

Non-custodial Fathers' Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief

This document (Part One and Part Two) is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research

David Barton

Qualifications:

Bachelor of Arts – Christian Counselling (BACC)
Diploma of Christian Ministry and Church Management (Dip. CMCM)
Diploma of Youth Work (Dip. YW)
Certificate II in Public Safety (SES Rescue) (Cert. II PS (SES))
Certificate of Youth Suicide Risk Assessment (Cert. YSRA)
Certificate of Trench and Excavation Safety (Cert. TES)
Bushwalking and Mountaincraft Leadership Certificate (BMLC)

School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning
College of Design and Social Context

RMIT University

September 2010

Thesis Submission

Declaration by the Candidate

I, David Brandon Barton, declare that:

- a) except where due acknowledgement has been made, this work is that of myself alone;
- b) this work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award;
- c) the content of the thesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program;
- d) any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.
- e) all ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signed:

Date: 24/9/2010

David Barton

Acknowledgements:

The journey to undertake this huge piece of work began over a decade ago back in 1999 when I met with Dr David Maunders at RMIT's Bundoora Campus. My original goal had simply been to upgrade my Diploma of Youth Work to a Bachelor of Youth Affairs. David said that would take a year of work, but why not do a Master's Degree instead. I asked him what was involved. He said 'about 2-3 years of part time work'. Little did I realise what chain of events that conversation would set in motion, and here I am ten years later with a not quite finished project.

During the course of the journey I have had many supervisors, a number of whose names I cannot recall, and one who has passed away. To them all I give my thanks for their contribution. More recently, some 4 years ago, I was fortunate to have Dr Margaret Liddell appointed as my supervisor. To those who know Marg she is renowned for her tenacious fastidiousness; an enduring if not at times somewhat annoying quality! We worked well together and almost had a fine finished product ready for submission in early 2009.

Then tragedy struck. The 'Black Saturday' bushfire of 7/2/09 swept through my home town of Marysville consuming my wife Jennifer's and my home and everything in it. All hard and electronic copies of the thesis, along with a small mountain of almost ten years worth of resource material and interviews was suddenly gone. All seemed lost.

After 12 months of post-fire negotiation with RMIT, and thanks to some old hard copies of early versions of some thesis chapters that Marg was able to find, much of the project was able to be salvaged – but not all of it. What this work represents is a sadly incomplete shadow of something that was almost complete and would have made a fine contribution as a free-standing Masters Degree. Sadly, that is now not possible, but the work is nevertheless able to make a small contribution in its own way.

Finally, I give thanks to the six non-custodial fathers who shared so deeply, personally and at times painfully of their experiences of separation, divorce and loneliness. And most of all I give my thanks to my patient wife Jennifer who has journeyed with me and persisted with this project for as long as I have, along with many other family members and friends too numerous to list individually. To you all I say thankyou for your support, patience and understanding.

Non-custodial Fathers' Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief

PART ONE

This paper is a compilation of early versions of an almost completed Research Thesis due for submission in March 2009 that was for the most part destroyed in the 'Black Saturday' bushfire on the 7th of February 2009.

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Non-custodial Fathers' Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief

Explanation, Thesis Abstract & Thesis Paper

Explanation regarding this Presentation:

This thesis summary has been compiled to provide a brief overview of the original research thesis which was commenced in 2000. Work on the research project had continued steadily since that time, however, there were some interruptions to the project, including having some formal leave as it was not possible to continue work on the project at times due to various work and family commitments. Initial problems also occurred over the first few years with numerous changes to RMIT staff and hence supervisors, and the redefinition and relocation of the school from the RMIT Bundoora Campus to the City Campus. There was one point in time when there was no university supervisor allocated to the project for almost a year. Fortunately, Dr Margaret Liddell was appointed as supervisor some 5 years ago and the project continued since that time.

Despite the various problems and delays, work continued steadily and by January 2009 the thesis was all but finished with only minor revisions, editing and formatting to take place prior to anticipated submission on the 31st of March, 2009. During the previous eight years a huge amount of resource material on the topic had been amassed, including over 200 books, approximately 250+ research papers and journal articles, along with both video and tape recordings.

Then, on the 7th of February, 2009, a massive bushfire now referred to as the 'Black Saturday' fire, swept through Marysville and all copies of the thesis were consumed by fire, along with all the thesis resource materials and the researcher's home and all material possessions. Despite multiple hard and electronic copies being kept in various locations, all of the work and resource materials were lost, including those contained in a 12mm thick steel safe, the contents of which were heated to in excess of 1,000^{0C}. All copies of research interview tapes and transcripts were also lost.

Unfortunately, RMIT University did not have any electronic versions of the thesis and the researcher was not aware of the storage facility that had recently become available via the RMIT computer server, so no copy was stored there either. What was able to be recovered were some old hard copy versions of earlier chapters which were held by Dr Liddell. Unfortunately, no copies have been located of the Findings Chapter (Chapter Four), which contained all of the data and results from the research interviews, or of the 36 page Reference List. In view of the lack of any other resource or research material, it has not been possible to reconstruct either the Findings Chapter or the full Reference List.

Given that the thesis was so close to completion and that it now cannot be completed, RMIT University agreed to allow a variation to the assessment process, of which this thesis summary based upon the original work forms a part. The following document was reconstructed by scanning older hard copy versions of each chapter back onto a computer and then correcting, updating and reformatting the documents as far as was possible to produce this result.

David Barton

September 2010

Thesis Abstract

This research is about non-custodial fathers¹, their experiences of separation and divorce and the challenges they have faced as a result. It considers their experiences of attachment, loss and grief regarding their relationships with their children and others around them.

The work of Bowlby (1974, 1979, & 1980) and Worden (1991) is used in this research to develop a theory regarding the experiences of a small sample of non-custodial fathers. The theory relates to a fathers experience of attachment, loss and grief associated with the sometimes sudden separation from wife and children.

¹ Note that the 'non-custodial fathers' referred to in this study are what could be termed 'involuntary' or 'abandoned' fathers as they either had no say or did not agree to the marriage separation and divorce.

The literature and this research show that the effect of the separation brings about the type of grief responses that would usually follow a severe trauma of loss. The theory posits that a father, having formed a strong attachment to both wife and children, experiences enormous grief when the attachment is suddenly broken through separation and divorce, and that such a grief response can be temporarily debilitating (Fisher, 1992:32-37; Green, 1998:4-6; Brott, 1999:13-17; Gee, 2001:7).

In pursuing the theory, it is important to make a clear qualification. As everyone is a unique individual, everyone experiences separation and divorce differently. Each person brings with them into their lives the sum total of their family of origin, their upbringing, their previous relationships, and a host of other influencing factors. Marriage relationships fail for a multitude of reasons; therefore, the theory does not and cannot apply to them all. However, in certain observable situations there are clear trends that can be discerned which are worthy of further exploration; this research is one such exploration.

This research does not seek to examine those fathers or situations where, for one reason or another, the father has voluntarily left his wife and family. As Martin (2001:11) and Gee (2001:7) note, such a situation produces a much different set of outcomes to those being considered here. The research examines in depth a small number of fathers who had been left by their wives and whose wives had the primary custody of their children.

The research is arranged into six chapters which consider the many facets of this complex topic. The topic is first introduced and the scene set regarding the aims and structure of the research. The paradigm, rationale and hypothesis which undergird the research are described, along with the research benefits, the research questions and the policy context.

The literature examining the contextual setting of marriage and divorce in Australia and internationally is then considered, along with an overview of Family Law and child support legislation, and recent developments at the Federal level. The research defines the terminology used and then explores Bowlby's theories of attachment and loss as related to the occurrence and experience of grief. The

research methodology is then considered, noting various relevant theoretical models of inquiry and describing the interview process, the data correction and interpretation methods.

The research then considers what has been revealed through the interviews with the non-custodial fathers, the findings of those interviews and the resultant themes. The findings and themes are then analysed to reveal the effects upon the respondents, considering the issues of grief response, anxiety, health, nutrition, suicide, relationship issues, strategies for the future, and a brief consideration of new Federal Government initiatives.

Finally, the research concludes with an overview of the research projects strengths and limitations, makes recommendations, and considers areas for future research and policy reform.

The research demonstrates that many non-custodial fathers experience significant grief that can be understood through a broader interpretation of John Bowlby's theories and framework of attachment and loss. This has implications for the way in which society, policy makers and regulators consider and manage issues of separation and divorce for parents, and in particular, for men and their children.

The research shows that whilst there has been much recent activity at the Federal Government level, particularly in relation to recent changes to the Family Law and Child Support Acts, and whilst the future may appear bright in terms of additional regulatory changes, up until the time of writing (July 2008) nothing has transpired that recognises or will alleviate the issues raised by this research or experienced by the many parties who endure the trauma of separation and divorce.

* * * * *

Chapter One: 'I'll never forget ...'

'I'll never forget the morning she left. The boys were only two and four years old. She simply put them in the car and drove off ...'

Male divorcee, 'Noel', in Green, 1998:4

1.1 Introduction

In the contemporary Western world the matter of divorce is a vexing problem for society generally, and for regulators attempting to ameliorate its effects. Discovering and exploring issues surrounding what it means to be a non-custodial father may be an important element in addressing the problem. In a small way, this research attempts to do just that.

This research examines many aspects of the in-depth experiences of a small sample of non-custodial fathers, compares their experiences to a theoretical base, and draws useful conclusions and applications from those experiences and comparisons.

This chapter explores the structure, aims and hypothesis of the research. It considers the research benefits, considers the research questions and examines the policy context. The research seeks to be exploratory which may prove useful in determining the nature and affect of experiences that some non-custodial fathers have after separation and divorce. It also seeks to discover whether or not non-custodial fathers are experiencing particular difficulty within themselves and with their relationships with their children as a result of the marriage breakdown.

The research will examine the readjustment necessary in the lives of non-custodial fathers following separation and divorce, their relationships with their children, and the extent of the father's participation in their children's lives.

This chapter considers the context of the research and explains the paradigm and rationale behind it. The aims of the research, the research hypothesis,

benefits and contribution to knowledge will also be described. Research questions, policy context and the structure of the thesis will also be outlined.

1.2 Background

This researcher's interest in the topic arose when he became a non-custodial father after his wife left, taking their two children interstate. The following years gave him first-hand experience of being a non-custodial father. The researcher also began to have contact with other men who had been through similar experiences and had similar responses. When studying a course on grief management, the researcher read in Worden's *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy* (1991) about John Bowlby's 'attachment and loss theory' (Worden, 1991:7-9) and was able to study grief responses in more detail. The researcher realised that the experiences and responses of many men he had spoken to, and his own experiences and responses, were that of a significant grief response that is not generally recognised in the literature in any more than a superficial manner.

This research seeks to connect the experiences and responses of non-custodial fathers with Bowlby's attachment and loss theory, and with what is known and understood of the grief process. The research combines the theoretical concepts of attachment and loss with the reality of grief, and the experiences of fathers who lose their spousal relationships and ongoing contact with their children. Further, the research aims to examine how the experiences of separation and divorce have affected the fathers' relationships with their children.

1.3 Paradigm and Rationale

Family breakdown continues to be a significant issue within contemporary society; there are almost daily articles and programs in the media about the subject. However, it would appear that apart from recognition of high male suicide rates and the role of family breakdown as major contributor to that (Davies & Waldron, 2003a:11 & 2003b:13), little emphasis has been given to the social and emotional effect of family breakdown upon men and in particular, their relationships with and participation in the lives of their children (Price, 1997:1-3).

The impact of family breakdown on non-custodial fathers is significant. Price, (1997) observes that 'One certain result is increased levels of poverty and despair amongst the disenfranchised fathers of Australia, resulting in high suicide levels that have to date been ignored' (Price, 1997:3). To some extent, it would appear that the popular media is now also starting to turn its attention to this area, particularly in relation to the suicide/murders of non-custodial fathers and their children (Leyland 1998:7; Ashley-Griffiths, Hewitt & McManus, 2000:1 & 4; Bice & Collier, 2007:3; Bice, 2007:1).

Arndt (1999:15) has also written about the financial hardships that many non-custodial fathers experience, noting that 'the Child Support Agency's own research shows that over 50 per cent of potential payers² under the scheme earn less than \$18,000 per year and half of all payers experience bouts of unemployment'. Hines (1997:375-6 & 384) observes that whilst there would appear to be a reasonable number of journal articles about non-custodial fatherhood, they are quite subject specific³ and are not readily available to the general public.

In 1998 the Commonwealth Government held an inquiry into aspects of family services and produced the report *To Have And To Hold - Strategies To Strengthen Marriage And Relationships*. Some findings of the report, which shall be discussed further in Chapter Two, are relevant to this research. The report notes that:

Many organisations representing men spoke to the Committee about the particular problems facing men in coping with the pain and anguish of separation; the problems facing men in continuing their role as parents after separation; and the particular problems that men face in maintaining healthy relationships.

House of Representatives, 1998:238-9

The report also noted that:

Marriage and family breakdown costs the Australian nation at least \$3

² Most 'potential payers' referred to here are fathers.

³ Hines states that they deal only with small and specific aspects or elements of non-custodial fatherhood, for example, effects on children's' schooling.

billion each year. When all the indirect costs are included, the figure is possibly double. When the personal and emotional trauma involved is added to these figures, the cost to the nation is enormous.

House of Representatives, 1998:51

It can be seen that divorce is a major and serious issue facing the social, economic and emotional health of the Australian community. Farrant (2001:6) quotes Family Court Judge, Justice Buckley, remarking that men's family law lobby groups rely 'too much on anecdotes, instead of credible research to argue about problems in family law and child support' and that they run a 'very great risk of distorting reality, whilst reducing complex issues to, at best, a mere litany of half truths'. Divorce researchers Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000:xxx-xxxi) seem to agree with Justice Buckley. They note that:

Only face-to-face interviews over many hours within the context of a trusting relationship, where the interviewer is free to follow unanticipated topics that arise in natural conversation, lead us to the human experience behind the statistics.

Wallerstein, et al., 2000:xxx-xxxi

Wallerstein, et al. (2000:xxx-xxxi) conclude that whilst intensive interviewing is best, it is limited to a small number of people because it is very time consuming (see also Yin, 2003:11). However, they maintain that it is nevertheless the only way to gain a real understanding of how people view themselves and of how they came to be where they are (see also Stake (1994) in Mark, 1996:219).

Whilst views such as Justice Buckley's and Wallerstein, et al. may at first appear mutually exclusive, they are indeed not at all. If valid research is to be conducted into the area of marriage and family breakdown, and if the community is to ascertain appropriate family law changes, changes to social policy and shifts in community perceptions, then such research as described by Wallerstein, et al, is essential. This research seeks to address this issue in a small way.

1.4 Policy Context

The policy context of the research revolves around two Federal Government Acts: the Family Law Act (1975) with numerous subsequent amendments, the most recent being in March, 2007 (Act No.23), and the Child Support Act (1988) also having a number of subsequent amendments, the most recent being in June, 2007 (Act No. 82). These two Acts and their subsequent amendments have been controversial in their formulation, implementation, application and outcomes, as Milburn writes:

Over the past several decades, individual men have exacted violent revenge against the Family Court, their ex-partners and their children. They have committed murder-suicides, stabbed or shot ex-partners outside the Family Court, hired hit-men to kill their ex-wives, murdered a Family Court judge and the wife of another judge, bombed the home of another judge, and bombed a Family Court.

Milburn, 1998:7

This is a tragic litany. The subject of separation, divorce, family breakdown, property settlements, custody, child support and access are highly emotive matters that draw media attention on an almost daily basis. As a result, many community organisations, lobby groups and individuals have applied a great deal of pressure on the Federal Parliament to bring about substantial policy and practical changes to the family law and child support systems (for example, see the internet websites of 'Dads in Distress', 'Fatherhood Foundation', 'Dads on the Air', 'Men's Rights Agency', and even the political 'Non-custodial Parents Party').

Liberal Member for Casey (Vic.) Tony Smith (2005) reports that the Howard Liberal Government (1996-2007) had over a number of years attempted to enact legislative reforms regarding both the Family Law and Child Support Acts.

He noted that the Government's attempts were thwarted and blocked by the Senate where the Labor, Democrat and Green parties held the majority. By way of example, the manner in which some previous Amendment Bills (eg: the Child Support Legislation Amendment Bill 2004) appear to have been stalled in the Senate would seem to give credence to his view. However, after July 2005 the Liberal Government held the majority in both the House of Representatives and

the Senate and the Government was, according to Smith (2005), able to proceed with the reforms it had previously proposed (borne out by empirical evidence).

Furthermore, the implementation of the previous Howard Government's Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act 2006 in May 2006 and the passage of the Child Support Legislation Amendment (Reform of the Child Support Scheme-New Formula and Other Measures) Act 2006, demonstrates the previous Governments commitment to at least attempt to address the many policy and practice issues confronting the family law and child support systems. The Family Law Amendment Act (2006) and Child Support Legislation Amendment Act (2006) are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Nevertheless, as Maley (2001:176 & 2003:99) and Baskerville (2005:2) argue, despite recent amendments to the Acts and the millions of dollars being spent on new programs, the situation will not be made better until the very concept of no-fault divorce is removed and issues of breach of contract addressed and resolved. Indeed, these two concepts seem to lie at the very heart of much divorce acrimony and are yet to be resolved.

Maley (2001:166) also notes that under the new regime of the radically different Family Law Act (1975), the traditionally understood (and legally enforceable) mutual marital obligations such as not to commit adultery, not to be cruel (or violent), not to be habitually intoxicated, not to desert a spouse, and so on, no longer carried penalties and became irrelevant under no-fault divorce laws. Maley argues that this has created a lasting sense of injustice with many of those who had such experiences.

Further, both Maley (2003:35) and Baskerville (2005:1) note that marriage is the only kind of contract where the breach of the contract is ignored by law. Indeed, the contractual and mutual obligation tenets of marriage would appear to be readily disposable under the current Family Law system. Maley (2003:35) further argues that with the divorce rate now four times higher than 40 years ago, with nearly one child in three living apart from one natural parent and with about 30% of children living with an unmarried parent, the instability of marriage is 'at the heart of the disorder of our family system'.

From a policy perspective, issues within the family law and child support systems remain some distance from resolution. Nevertheless, there is hope that incremental change will bring with it incremental improvement.

1.5 Hypothesis

The research has as its hypothesis that during and soon after separation and divorce, non-custodial fathers in the Australian community may suffer from acute grief reactions, not only regarding their children, but in relation to their (ex) wives as well. This grief reaction may have flow-on effects to every aspect of their relationship with their children over what may become a prolonged period.

Ochiltree (1990:137) notes that when not awarded custody of their children, non-custodial fathers suffer even more, no longer regularly see their children, and consequently over time participate less, and are less involved in their children's lives. Whitehead (1998:15a) has also observed that 'By every measure durability, quality and solidarity - the father-child bond is weakened by the widespread shift from the nuclear to the post-nuclear family'. Whitehead (1998:154-5) further notes that there is a 'steady emotional and financial disengagement of fathers from their children' and there are 'persistent feelings of estrangement and resentment reported by their children'. This research seeks to examine these matters in more detail.

McMurray and Blackmore (1993:156) confirm that research demonstrates considerable inner anxiety in post-separation fathers; a condition that is little recognised or acknowledged (see Edgar, 1997:306-7). Such anxiety may have detrimental effects upon non-custodial fathers individually, and may produce flow-on effects for the community generally.

1.6 Aims of the Research

The research aims to examine existing research and add to the body of knowledge in relation to this specific subject. Further, the research will consider the theoretical background of Bowlby's (1974, 1979, & 1980) work in the area of attachment, loss and grief. The research will examine Bowlby's conclusions, and

relate his work to the practical findings of the interview component of the research.

McMurray and Blackmore (1993:153) observe that after marital and family separation many fathers no longer have custody of, and hence regular access to, their children (see also Hines, 1997:376). Family Court of Australia (2001:1) statistics show that whilst the number of custody or residence orders being made in favour of fathers has increased over time (from 2,042 in 1994-95 to 2,585 in 2000-01) mothers nevertheless continue to receive a significantly higher number of residence orders than do fathers. This aspect shall be further examined in Chapter Two.

The research will show that for many fathers the result of not being awarded custody of or regular access to their children will often result in depression, debility, withdrawal and detachment. This occurs not only in relation to their children, but for a period of time, to life in general.

1.7 Research Questions

The research questions specifically relate to the experiences of non-custodial fathers following separation and divorce and of how their relationships with their children and significant others have been affected as a result. Further, the research questions will consider if there is any connection between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief.

The research questions are:

- 1) What are the experiences of non-custodial fathers?
- 2) What challenges do such experiences present to them?
- 3) In what way have their experiences and challenges affected their lives?
- 4) How do such experiences and challenges affect non-custodial father's relationships with their children, and significant others?

- 5) Can a connection be made between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief, and if so, what are the implications, if any, for individuals and the community?

1.8 Research Benefits - Contribution to Knowledge

This research is important because of the individual and collective impact of family breakdown and its related affect upon the creation and maintenance of a healthy society. It is therefore hoped that the research will make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in relation to the experiences of non-custodial fathers. There is a need for research that addresses issues amongst non-custodial fathers and develops new approaches to assist them to better cope with their changed circumstances, in particular, in their role as fathers.

As far as can be ascertained, this type of research has not been undertaken before, is exploratory in nature and will break new ground in researching the topic. The connection with Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief as directly related to non-custodial fathers' experiences of separation and divorce has not previously been made. However, some conceptual work has been carried out in this area in the United States by Fraley and Shaver (1999), (2000), and Fraley (2004) and shall be reviewed in Chapter Two. The connection between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories is seen to be very important in understanding the dynamics of the behaviour of many non-custodial fathers' after separation.

It is anticipated that one benefit of the research will be a contribution towards the welfare and counselling body of knowledge by providing insights and understanding useful to individual welfare professionals in working with and counselling non-custodial fathers. It is further hoped that the research may make a contribution towards government policy by providing an understanding of the experiences of non-custodial fathers.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter Two provides the literature review which analyses the relevant literature in relation to the nature of marriage, separation and divorce and its societal impact. The changing nature of Australian families and single parent families will be reviewed along with family law and child support legislation and a brief analysis of relevant Government inquiries. The terminology used in the research will be described and John Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss, bonding and grief also reviewed, concluding with an exploration of the grieving process.

Chapter Three will examine the methodological rationale and structure of the research and the data collection and analysis process. It will describe the ethics and approval processes, the nature of the interview process, the development of the questions used, and the case studies to be further examined.

A description of the findings and themes that have arisen from the interview process will be included in Chapter Four, along with details of the case studies, presented to provide an in-depth 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973:3-30) of the experiences of non-custodial fathers. Some outcomes are described which include issues of self-identity, justice, self-esteem and practical living.

Chapter Five provides the analysis for the research. The inner dimensions to the non-custodial fathers' experiences are explained, including grief, anxiety, depression, anger, illness, suicidal ideation, physical health, nutrition and fitness. The chapter concludes with new some new thoughts about fatherhood, strategy for growth and a brief analysis of Commonwealth Government initiatives.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, sums up the research conclusions and will briefly review the strengths and limitations of the research. The chapter gives recommendations developed as a result of the research and suggests future directions for additional research and some future directions for policy reform.

* * * * *

Chapter Two: *'The basis of marriage is ...'*

'The basis of marriage is commitment, not compatibility.'

Marston, 1980: 34

2. 1 Introduction

There is significant literature both of an academic and popular nature about marriage, marital relationships, separation and divorce, loss and grief, post-divorce recovery and parent-child relationships. However, up until the early 1980's little had been written about non-custodial fathers, as the occurrence of the non-custodial father was a relatively new phenomenon. It has only been in the closing decade of the 20th Century that the phenomenon of non-custodial fatherhood has been publicly recognised as an issue (Sarantakos, 1996:414; Edgar, 1997:249; Tacey, 1997:42; Maley, 2001:134; Crawford, 2002:1-3). Indeed, it could be suggested that there was a time lag effect from the introduction of the Australian Family Law Act in 1976, to the recognition of the problem of non-custodial fatherhood in the early 1980's.

In recent times the challenges of non-custodial fatherhood have become the focus of more literature and research. However, with few notable exceptions (see Myers, 1985, Kruk, 1992, Hannum and Dvorak, 2004 and Small, 2005) the researcher has found that there is limited literature available that makes the connection between the separation and grief experienced by non-custodial fathers and the concepts of attachment and loss. The literature about grief seems to primarily focus only upon the concepts and reality of death, dying and bereavement (Gee, 2001:7). Only occasionally in some texts are the effects of grief as related to divorce actually stated (Fisher, 1992:106), and only recently has attachment theory been related to issues of grief arising through divorce (Egan, 2004:3-5; Gee, 2001:7).

This chapter will examine the literature pertinent to the phenomenon of non-custodial fatherhood in this research. Matters considered will include the themes of the changing nature of marriage, divorce and families in Australia and

attachment theory. The chapter will provide a brief overview of the American and Australian experience of Family Law legislation, including the latest Federal Government initiatives under Family Law and Child Support Legislation. The chapter will also define and describe some of the related terminology of non-custodial fatherhood used in the research and will further consider the theory and practice of attachment and bonding and its relationship to grief and loss.

The chapter sets the theoretical foundation for considering the information obtained through the interview process and its later analysis.

2.2 Contextual information: Marriage and Divorce

In Australia, the nature of marriage has changed substantially since the first European settlement some 220 years ago (Burns and Goodnow, 1979:27-28; Sarantakos, 1996:46-53; Maley, 2001:3). Kenealy (2006:34) states that in the late 19th Century it was a criminal offence for a man to leave his wife (or vice-versa) and this could bring about a prison term. If the local policeman became aware of such a situation he was duty bound to pursue the offender and bring him (or her) back to his dependant spouse and children. Desertion of a family would not be tolerated and the local constabulary was regularly dispatched to retrieve the offending party.

An English Royal Commission into divorce in 1850 resulted in marriage and divorce becoming a matter for state legislature rather than marriage and divorce being moderated by religious authority and directly by the Parliament as had previously been the case (Bromley, 1971:204). In addition, successive amendments to Australia's divorce laws through the late 19th and early 20th Centuries removed provisions that would force an unwilling partner to return to a marriage (Hambly & Turner, 1971:115).

Joske (1976:4) remarks that 'marriage formerly was a sacrament and indissoluble, but this no longer is so as a matter of law', with Finlay (1983:7) noting that the religious view of marriage as indissoluble was fast disappearing in the 20th Century. Duncan (1983:6) observed that in Western society the Christian religion's view of marriage has been supplanted by the liberated Secular

Humanist view of the non-permanence of marriage. This shift in values has also been reflected in Australian society's now secular (non-religious) understanding of marriage and divorce (Finlay, 1983:6; Sarantakos, 1996:416; Maley, 2003:7).

Further reflecting the above shift, marriage ceremonies performed by religious celebrants have also decreased markedly since 1986, and in 1999 the majority of all marriages (51.3%) were being performed by civil celebrants (ABS, 2006b:5). By 2006 civil celebrants were performing 61.3% of all marriages as compared to 40.5% in 1986 (ABS, 2006b:5). Maley (2001:28) views this as showing a trend towards a more secular view of marriage and a move away from a religious view which has as a part of its traditional core a life-long covenant and commitment.

In 2006, 68.5% of cohabiting de-facto couples united in a civil ceremony; such couples account for 84.9% of civil ceremonies (ABS, 2006b:5). Co-habiting couples are more inclined to be married by a celebrant rather than a Minister of Religion. This also appears to be a reflection of the change of values occurring in Australian society, being a move away from the religious towards the secular (Maley, 2001:28; Sarantakos, 1996:58-59). As Trewin (2004:137) states 'the commitment to a formal marriage (in a religious ceremony or by a civil celebrant) has become less popular'. However, cohabitation prior to marriage is likely to lead to a less stable, satisfactory or permanent marriage. What can be concluded is that more people are cohabiting, either prior to marriage or instead of marriage, and that such relationships are less likely to be as long-term as a formal marriage (Sarantakos, 1996:58-59; Maley, 2001:28; Doré, 2000:26-27).

The traditional nuclear family usually had a wife and a husband who were married and then produced offspring. According to Mace (1953:86) until the mid-1930's the concept of a family was inseparable from having marriage as its foundation and nucleus (see also Finlay, 1983:3). Mace (1953:86) concludes that the quality of the marriage relationship will affect 'more decisively than any other factor, the quality of the life of the home'. Sarantakos (1996:49) adds that such mid-20th Century families were also very 'child-centred' and that children were both a 'goal' and an 'asset' in family life.

However, Burns and Goodnow (1979:62) observe that due to social and economic influences many Australian families were by the early 1970's experiencing 'unprecedented strain'. As Sarantakos (1996:330) notes, couples were not happy but stayed together for a myriad of reasons, not the least of which being that it was simply too hard to get a divorce. Further, families may have stayed together fulfilling the outward requirements of societal expectation, but often there was never any of the nurturing, communication or emotional contact that a healthy family requires for the normal development of children (Hambly and Turner, 1971:27; Anderson, 2000:12).

2.3 Trends in Marriage and Divorce

Whilst marriage rates have fluctuated for over a century, the crude marriage rate has now been steadily declining since 1970 (Trewin, 2006a:135) Trewin stated that:

This decline in marriage rate can be mainly attributed to changes in attitudes to marriage and living arrangements that have occurred since then.

Trewin, 2006a:135

The trend away from marriage is also associated with a trend towards cohabitation instead of marriage as an alternative living arrangement, a trend towards marriage at a later age and with young people remaining in education and at home for a longer period (Trewin, 2007:137-139). Between 1996 and 2001 the number of cohabiting de-facto relationships rose by 28% of registered relationships from 74,100 to 95,500 (Trewin, 2007:138).

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures cited in McLennan (1996:60) show that prior to the introduction of the Family Law Act (1975) the number of persons divorced in 1975 was 24,307. The following year, 1976, the figure increased sharply to 63,230 divorces (McLennan, 1996:60; see also: Family Law Council, 2005:32), highlighting that there was a backlog of people who wanted to exit from their marriage but had found the previous divorce laws too difficult (Trewin, 2007:139; Sarantakos, 1996:330).

The most recent ABS divorce statistics show a 2% decrease over the 2005 figure of 52,399 to a lower 2006 figure of 51,375. This is the fifth annual decrease since the highest rate of 55,330 in 2001. The 2006 figure represents a 2.1% decrease from 52,466 in 1996, but an overall increase of 30.3% from the number of divorces granted in 1986 of 39,417 (ABS, 2006b:2). The Australian divorce rate has never returned to the lower pre-1976 levels.

Jain (2007, in Linacre, 2007:43) notes that marriage rates have decreased and divorce rates increased in Australia over the past twenty years which has resulted in changed family structures. They also note that the likelihood of an Australian marriage ending in divorce increased from 28% to 33% during the period 1985 to 2002 (Jain in Linacre, 2007:43).

Whilst ABS figures show a declining trend in the divorce rate from the high of 55,330 in 2001, the data does not take into account the increasing rate of cohabitation, of *living together* or of *de-facto* relationships. (Trewin, 2007:2). There is a lack of information regarding the dissolution of long-term cohabitation arrangements and indeed, whilst the ABS collects data on the number of de-facto relationship cohabitations, it does not monitor the dissolution of those relationships (Trewin, 2007:2; Gee, 2001:6).

2.3.1 The Changing Nature of Marriage

Over the period 1996 to 2005, ABS figures (2007:2) show that the length of time couples are staying married has increased from 7.6 years to 8.8 years. During the same period the number of divorces involving children has declined from 53.6% in 1996 to 49.8% in 2005. The data shows that over the decade 1996 to 2005 divorced males and females are re-marrying at a later age, up 3.3 years for men (to 44.9 years old) and up 3.6 years for women (to 41.9 years old) and the age of first time marriage partners has increased by 2.4 years for men (to 30 years old) and up 2.3% for women (to 28 years old) (ABS, 2007:2). It would appear that marriage duration, high rates of divorce, rapid re-marriage after divorce and early first marriage are all showing signs of stabilisation.

Whilst the divorce rate is currently declining, so to is the marriage rate. What is not known is the rate of separation of cohabiting persons and this factor remains problematic in ascertaining the real rate of de-facto relationship breakdown. Trewin (2004:137) reports that the ABS would ideally

...like to measure all family formation and dissolution, whether formed through registered or de-facto marriages, and dissolved through divorces or separations.

Trewin, 2004:137

However, at this stage, such data collection is not possible and is not undertaken because de-facto families are not registered. The ABS can use only registered marriage and divorce statistics (Trewin, 2004:137).

As Jain (in Linacre, 2007:43) also notes 'the ABS does not collect annual data on the number of people forming de-facto relationships or becoming separated'. It is unfortunate that any data regarding the actual number of cohabiting de-facto partner separations is therefore likely to be unreliable as it is not currently possible to capture the numbers of persons living in de-facto relationships who establish a family and then separate.

A further trend is the tendency for more people to be living alone. Although many people now choose to live together in de-facto marriages, people are increasingly likely to live without a partner (Linacre, 2007:45). Time spent divorced for both men and women has increased; for men, from 11 years in 1985 to 17 years for those divorcing in 2002 and for women from 18 years to 24 years (Linacre, 2007:45). Trewin (2004) notes that between 1992 and 2002, the proportion of people aged 15-64 years who lived alone increased from 6% to 9% (Trewin 2004:140). Linacre (2007:45) concludes that a number of factors are expected to have influenced this increase. These include an increase of life expectancy, not entering into a formal remarriage and/or the tendency to live alone following divorce.

In summary, marriage and divorce rates continue to fluctuate with trends towards a reduction in the number of marriages, and more recently a reduction in the

number of divorces. The duration of a marriage is increasing, along with a slight reduction in the number of children involved with divorce and an increase in the age of both male and female partners in both remarriages and first time marriages. There is an increase in both the number of cohabiting de-facto relationships and people living alone. Couples are also increasingly likely to choose a civil marriage ceremony over a religious one, possibly because of their pre-marriage cohabitation experience and a reduced interest in traditional religious morality. This societal change doubtless has an effect upon each individual's commitment to the 'institution of marriage' (Maley, 2001:24 and 28).

2.3.2 Separation and Divorce

The issue of which partner initiates a separation and divorce is pertinent to this research and therefore requires brief examination. Ahrons (1999:387) estimates that in Western countries in two thirds to three quarters of cases the partner who initiates the separation is the female (see also Gee, 2001:7). Gee and Houghton report that

...in more than 60 per cent of relationships, women initiate the separation, often to the shock and disbelief of their male partner.

Gee and Houghton, 2002:105

This is the female as *dumper*, male as *dumpee* combination, (see Terminology in Section 2.5.3 below). Fisher (1992:308) noted that once a couple has separated for the first time it is most unlikely that they will reconcile permanently. Gee and Houghton, (2002:105) also report that 'many women do give their partners another chance' but that 'final separation usually follows one or two earlier temporary separations and reconciliations'.

Jordan's (1996:3) ten year follow-up research of fathers after divorce showed that 63% of fathers still reported feeling dumped by their wives, being only a 2% reduction from the 65% result ten years earlier. Green (1998:2) cites Gibson's 1992 research which found that that wives initiated 61% of separations, husbands initiated 24% of separations and 15% were by mutual agreement (see also Francis, 2005:8).

2.3.3 The impact of separation and divorce

According to Sarantakos (1996:344-347) and Maley (2003:42) separation and divorce have a huge social impact and place a massive financial burden on both individuals and the community. There is little doubt that the divorce rate will remain at a high level for the foreseeable future, with Trewin (2006b:11) stating that in considering indicators of family life, the high number of divorces might reflect 'a greater prevalence of unhappy marriages, or greater acceptance of dissolving unhappy marriages'.

It is children who suffer greatly from the impact of divorce, and for most it will alter the rest of their lives (House of Representatives, 1998:34-35; Maley, 2001:142-49; Egan, 2004:3). As the divorce rate has climbed, so has the number of children affected by it. Trewin (2004:138) notes that in the 10-years from 1991 to 2001 there was a steady increase in the number of children under the age of 18 years experiencing the divorce of their parents. In 1991 it was 46,700 and by 2001 it was 53,400.

Trewin (2004:138) further reports that one of the impacts of separation and divorce is to 'create fewer families where children live with both natural parents' (see also Sarantakos, 1996:371; Maley, 2001:139). Trewin (2004:138) notes that intact families with children under 18-years of age fell statistically from 76% in 1992 to 72% by 1997 whilst step and blended families remained fairly constant with step families at 4% and blended families at 3%, hence, the proportion of single-parent families increased. The implications of these statistics are that it is known that single-parent families are more likely to be financially and socially disadvantaged (Wroe, 2003:6; AMP.NATSEM⁴, 2005:92; Sarantakos, 1996:346).

Trewin (2006c:44) notes that in 2003, 22% of Australian children under the age of 18 had a parent living elsewhere. According to Maley (2001:174) the impact of divorce has affected many children in the developmental and formative period of their physical and emotional growth. Sarantakos (1996:362), Hines (1997:379),

⁴ The reference AMP.NATSEM 2005 is a report that the AMP Society contracted the consulting company NATSEM to conduct on their behalf regarding the financial impact of divorce in Australia.

Dixon, Charles and Craddock (1998:30), Maley (2001:174) and Egan (2004:3) believe that such impact is primarily negative. In contrast, Ruschen, Prior, Sanson & Smart (2005:361) believe that the experience of divorce may be of little enduring consequence, whereas Dreman and Ronen-Eliav (1997:324) are undecided. Until further longitudinal research is conducted, the community has little way of knowing what sort of impact the experience of divorce will have on children into adulthood both as individuals and on the wider community.

What is known is that divorce in Australia generally results in a number of negative consequences, especially for children. For example, there are lowered living standards for those involved and financial poverty for both mothers and fathers (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; Crawford, 2002:2; National Marriage Coalition, 2004:8; AMP.NATSEM, 2005:14). Emotional hardship has been observed in mothers, fathers and children (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; National Marriage Coalition, 2004:12). An overall lack of trust in relationships and high alcoholism and suicide rates are observed in men (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; Crawford, 2002:4-5). Behavioural and educational difficulties have been noted in children (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; House of Representatives, 1998:35; National Marriage Coalition, 2004:e).

The Federal Government's 1998 "To have and to hold" Report describes the cost of divorce to the nation as follows:

Marriage and family breakdown costs the Australian nation at least \$3 billion each year. When all the indirect costs are included, the figure is possibly double. When the personal and emotional trauma involved is added to these figures, the cost to the nation is enormous.

House of Representatives, 1998:51

There is little evidence to suggest that the financial and emotional cost to the community of separation and divorce has diminished in recent years. Indeed, de Vaus, Gray, Qu, and Stanton (2007:15-17) show that always married couples manage the best financially, followed by divorced and remarried couples, with divorced and not remarried persons being financially the worst off. In relation to housing, de Vaus, et al, (2007:15) conclude that

...the divorced single men in particular, followed by divorced single women, were in the worst situation as far as housing equity was concerned.

de Vaus, et al, 2007:15

Regarding the overall cost to the community, de Vaus, et al, (2007:21) conclude that

Older divorced single Australians are much more likely to experience material hardships and report having a lower level of prosperity than the married and never-divorced. The divorced and single are more reliant on the public pension than those who do not divorce, and this will have important implications for the financing of retirement incomes in Australia in coming decades and the extent to which the taxpayer will have to bear the costs of providing for retirement incomes.

de Vaus, et al, 2007:21

It would appear that the financial cost of divorce to both the individuals concerned and to the wider community are large and can last for a lifetime.

2.3.3.1 Housing

Whilst addressing the issue of spiralling house prices that are driving many out of the housing market and putting the affordability of home-ownership out of the reach of many, Stephanie Dowrick has identified and highlighted the importance of a "home" in her article 'A home of one's own' in *The Age - Good Weekend* magazine.

Dowrick discusses the psychological effects of not having our own secure physical space, and of how such insecurity is undermining both personally and socially. She notes that 'few people can survive sustained insecurity regarding their home without severe effects upon their mental health' (Dowrick, 2004). This is even more relevant when applied to children. Homeless children are extraordinarily insecure, but, Dowrick suggests, is also true for the children of separated parents where children consistently move between two homes.

Dowrick refers to a 2003 Californian study that showed that two-thirds of 145 children aged 12-18 months had 'disorganised attachments with both parents' and that they ended up 'living in a state of fear' as a result of repeated movements. Conversely, a control group of children living with both parents in the one home did not show the same signs, and had healthier relationships with both parents (Dowrick, 2004).

The loss of ones home has a particularly difficult impact upon non-custodial fathers as well, because they are likely to find that they have had to leave the family home (either forcefully or by their own consent) and now 'face the transition from living in the comfortable three-bedroom family home to a small flat some distance away' (Gee and Houghton, 2002: 105).

2.3.3.2 Children's Education

Baker and McMurray's findings in their 1998 paper 'Contact father's loss of school involvement' are relevant and important to this research. They found that a negative social stigma was especially thought to be attached to the non-custodial father in the school setting where five of the six respondents described feeling rather like a pariah and some sort of child molester type person as a result of the separation. Some respondents thought that this was most likely as a direct result of false, misleading or exaggerated information told to school staff by their ex-spouse, and they were very annoyed about that as it dramatically reduced their ability to have a working relationship with the school.

2.3.3.3 Suicide

In 2001 the *Herald Sun* newspaper reported that 2,500 people committed suicide in 1999, 'averaging about six suicides a day' and being 'eight times more serious than homicide rates'⁵. In noting that 'the second most common form of suicide for both men and women' is carbon monoxide poisoning via delivery from a motor vehicle exhaust, the Government is curiously going to spend \$2 million dollars researching an 'in-car emissions monitor' (*Herald Sun*, 2001:18).

⁵ The actual number was 2,492; this was still down on the high 1997 figure of 2,720 (ABS, 2005:16).

One must wonder at the rationale of the emphasis upon symptomatology⁶ in dealing with the much wider social issue of suicide. Dealing with the means to commit suicide does nothing to address the issues as to why people commit suicide. Suicide remains the worst possible response for a non-custodial father, and yet it is all too common. Male suicide rates continue to be unacceptably high, especially in the 25-44 age range. There were 2,101 deaths from suicide registered in 2005, males comprising 79% of those deaths. The number is a decrease from a high of 2,720 deaths registered in 1997 and there has been a downwards trend since that time (ABS, 2005:7).

Whilst the number of suicides has decreased in recent years following the peak in 1997, suicide remains the major single external cause of all unnatural deaths (ABS, 2005:16). For example, in each of the years from 1994 to 2005, the total number of deaths from suicide was greater than the number of deaths from transport accidents. It would appear though that no research has been carried out or any correlation made in relation to the number of non-custodial fathers (or mothers) who are reflected in the suicide statistics.

Suicide methods recorded in 2005 include hanging at 51%, poisoning (including by motor vehicle exhaust) at 16%, poisoning by drugs at 12%, firearms at 7% and the remaining 14% including drowning and jumping from heights. Whilst suicide by firearm has more than halved over the last decade, the overall suicide rate has not decreased markedly at all. Indeed, statistics from the 1997-98 period showing suicide by method (following the implementation of the new Federal and State firearm laws) reveal method substitution had occurred (from firearms to hanging); a trend which has continued to the present time (ABS, 2005:5 & 11).

According to Douglas (1967: 116-17) many psychiatrists have long associated an individual's suicide to the 'loss (especially the early loss) of a love object'. The "loss of love object" theory has also been connected to the age old "loss of economic ranking" theory whereby it has been assumed for some time that a person may become suicidal when they lose social and economic standing in the community. Douglas provides an example whereby both theories are combined and describes the attempted suicide of one man who detailed the loss of his wife

⁶ Symptomatology in this instance meaning to address only the symptoms of a malaise, rather than the underlying causes of the malaise.

through a divorce, the loss of his job, and the subsequent loss of his life savings, as driving him to attempt to take his life.

Douglas (1967:118) says 'the loss of a loved person was the direct antecedent of the loss of social status' which may then lead on to suicidal ideation and an eventual attempt at suicide. Douglas even surmises that the loss of the loved person 'might be the cause of the loss of social status' (Douglas, 1967:119). There is little doubt that the combined loss of a loved (attached) person and loss of social status theories behind suicidal ideation would resonate well with many non-custodial fathers who have lost firstly their wife, then their children, then often their home and often (as compounded by child support payment issues) their employment and income as well. Such plummeting social and economic standing is endemic to the lot of a non-custodial father and is likely to contribute to suicide under such circumstances.

2.3.4 Single Parent Families

ABS data shows that the percentage of lone father families has increased from 1.5% in 1992 to 2.7 in 2006, having reached a peak of 2.8% in 2004 (Trewin, 2006c:33; Linacre, 2007 34). The percentage of lone mother families has also grown steadily over the same period from 14.9% in 1992 to 18.0% in 2006, having reached a peak of 20.3% in 2002 and 2004 (Trewin, 2006c:33; Linacre, 2007:34). However, from 1992 to 2006 this shows a growth of only 1.2% for men as opposed to a growth of 3.1% for women, being almost three times the rate for men, a factor most likely accounted for in the rise of single women bearing children out of a marriage (that is, in a de-facto relationship) or out of a stable relationship at all. The birth rate for mothers outside of marriage increased from 27.4% of all births in 1996, to 32.2% of all births in 2005, an increase of 48% (Linacre, 2007:35). As Linacre (2007:49) notes

In 2006, 87% of one-parent families with children under 15 years were headed by mothers. The proportion headed by fathers was 12% in 1997 and 13% in 2006.

Linacre, 2007:49

Recent ABS (2007:1) data shows that of all families with children aged under 15 in 2006, 20.7% of children lived in a single parent household. The majority of the remaining 79.3% are within intact families (both biological parents present), in step-parent and blended families, and a small percentage resident with grandparents, friends, other relatives or in the care of the State. Further, ABS (2007:1) data shows that in 2006 the disparity in terms of contact fathers and resident mothers (see Terminology in section 2.5.2 below) is quite stark, now at 2.7% for fathers as opposed to 18.0% for mothers, almost 7 times the amount in favour of mothers⁷. In other words, a mother is almost 7 times more likely to be the carer of the child than is a father.

The most recent ABS figures in relation to childrens' face-to-face contact with a non-resident parent only extend to 2003 as derived from the ABS "Family Characteristics Surveys" carried out in that year (See ABS figures Appendix 3). According to Trewin (2006c:47) of the 705,400 children living in a lone mother family, 53.5% see their non-resident parent (or, as the ABS terms it, a parent living elsewhere) at least fortnightly and 25.9% (that is, 182,700 children) see their non-resident parent less than once per year or never.

By contrast, of the 97,700 children living in a lone father family, 64.9% see their non-resident parent at least fortnightly and 14.0% (that is, 13,680 children) see their non-resident parent less than once per year or never (Trewin, 2006c:47). Of the 239,300 children living in a new couple (step or blended) family, 37.2% see their non-resident parent at least fortnightly and 31.7% (that is, 75,860 children) see their non-resident parent less than once per year or never (Trewin, 2006c:47). In 2003 a total of 272,240 children saw their non-resident parent less than once per year or never.

In summary, ABS data shows that children in the care of a single father see their non-resident mother much more regularly (65% fortnightly) than those children in the care of a single mother (53.5% fortnightly) (Trewin, 2006c:47). The younger the child, the more regular the contact, and children in new couple (re-partnered)

⁷ Notwithstanding that the data includes mothers who may never have been married or in a cohabiting relationship with the child's father.

families have less regular contact with their parent living elsewhere (37.2% fortnightly) than those children of single parent families (Trewin, 2006c:47).

2.3.5 The changing nature of Australian families

Trewin (2006b:149) confirms that over the last 30 years there have been major changes in the way families are structured and function. Couples are marrying later, waiting longer to have children and having fewer of them. Trewin (2006b:149) also notes that during the period 1976 to 2001 an increase is shown of couples without children, and conversely a decrease of couples with children, and a gradual increase in the number of single parent families.

Families are also subject to a range of pressures and stresses which can become problematic. These include separation and divorce, poor quality parent-child relationships, housing pressure, employment pressure, financial pressure, parental conflict, mental health, substance abuse and abuse or neglect of children (Bustanoby, 1982:92-95; Newman, 1992:197-201; Sarantakos, 1996:346-347 and 405; Maley, 2001:152-155; and Trewin, 2006b: 149).

Trewin (2006b:152) further reports that subsequent to the many changes to family structures there has been a rise in the number of people living alone, and as a result, also spending more of their time alone. It is revealing that this finding relates particularly to men who spend more time alone than women. Trewin also found that

...lone person households will also become more common. The number of lone person households is projected to increase from 1.6 million households in 1996 to between 2.4 million and 3.4 million households in 2021, increasing from 9% of the population to between 11% and 15% of the population.

Trewin, 2006b:149

Trewin (2004:137) reports that over the ten year period from 1993 to 2003 the number of families with children declined from 65% of all families to 60% with the decline having been mainly driven by couple families with children, which

declined from 52% of all families to 45% during the period. However, since 2003 ABS (2007:2) data shows that the Australian birth rate has increased by an additional 3,000 births in 2004 and an additional 8,600 births in 2005.

There is little doubt that the type and structure of Australian families has over the past three decades undergone significant change (Trewin, 2006b:149; Jain in Linacre, 2007:43). Such change will present many challenges to the community, and one of those key challenges may be in the area of mental health and, in particular, depression for both men and women (National Marriage Coalition, 2004:11-13). In this respect, the long-term effects of divorce upon parents and children remain unknown.

King (2002:57) suggests that divorce is not only a very painful experience, but may be often unnecessary and harmful to those involved. King notes that many people are 'disappointed when their post-marriage life doesn't live up to its rosy promises' and that new problems of 'financial difficulties, loneliness and separation from children' result (King, 2002:57). His research also shows that whilst some may find post-divorce life 'satisfying', the 'price they had to pay was much higher than they expected'. The research also showed that 37% of people regret their divorce five years later and 40% believe that their divorce could have been avoided (King, 2002:57). Many researchers (Wallerstein, 1980 & 2000; Harley, 1994; Whitehead, 1998; Maley, 2001) and research organisations such as Relationships Australia and the Institute of Family Studies also suggest that many divorces are unnecessary (Cebon, 2002:2). Biddulph and Biddulph (1997:256) go so far as to say that '75% of a marital break-ups are unnecessary'. Harley concludes that

...in the vast majority of cases I've counseled, divorce devastates children.
To rationalize otherwise is not only stupid, it is cruel'

Harley, 1994:180

2.4 Family Law Legislation

2.4.1 Background

Australian Family Law legislation is important to this research as it provides the legal foundation and sets the relational parameters around which husbands, wives and de-facto partners who have separated must comply; however, Family Law legislation is complicated, and regularly amended. There is considerable background about the history and nature of marriage and divorce, which should be briefly considered prior to examining the major changes that occurred in Australia in the mid-1970's.

Concepts such as marriage and divorce have their origins in English ecclesiastical law⁸ not in common law (Bromley, 1971:26; Hambly & Turner, 1971:29 & 112; Joske, 1976:4-5; Dickey, 2002:3). Marriage and divorce were originally administered via ecclesiastical courts using religiously trained lawyers (Dickey, 2002:3). Australia did not have such courts (Hambly & Turner, 1971:30), nevertheless, from the mid-19th century until 1976, the Supreme Courts of the State and Territories applied ecclesiastical law to certain matrimonial matters (Dickey, 2002:3). Pre-1976 matrimonial relief in Australia was found via the *Matrimonial Causes*⁹ Act 1959, which was modeled upon the English *Matrimonial Causes Act* 1857. This in turn still had embodied in it many of the tenets of ecclesiastical law (Dickey, 2002:3; Hambly & Turner, 1971:115; Bromley: 1971:404).

Under old English law there were two types of divorce; the first to nullify and dissolve a marriage as if it had never existed, known as a 'divorce *a vinculo matrimonii*,' (Dickey, 2002:17) which would allow for remarriage. The second allowed for permanent separation, but did not dissolve the marriage bond, meaning that the spouses could not remarry and this was known as a 'divorce *a mensa et thoro*' (Dickey, 2002:11; see also Bromley, 1971:58-59 & 404). From 1670 until the to the establishment of the 1857 *Matrimonial Causes Act* a nullification or dissolution of a marriage in England was obtainable from the state by an Act of Parliament, and after 1857 thence by judicial decree. Such law also came to apply in Australia (Dickey, 2002:17-18; Hambly & Turner, 1971:115).

⁸ Ecclesiastical law essentially means 'the law of the church' (Dickey, 2002:3).

⁹ *Matrimonial Causes* essentially means 'all suits and actions which arise between spouses by virtue of their marital relationship' (Dickey, 2002:18).

Both types of divorce eventually became the one *dissolution of marriage* as stated in both the *Matrimonial Causes Act (1959)* and later in the *Family Law Act (1975)* so there would no longer be any confusion about what was meant. From the time of the introduction of the new *Family Law Act (1975)* in Australia, a divorce simply meant that the marriage no longer existed, and the only qualifying factor was to cite 'irreconcilable differences leading to an irretrievable breakdown' (Sarantakos, 1996:46, 331 & 339; Joske, 1976:30) and for the couple to have had 12-months of separation from each other (Maley, 2001:169; Joske, 1976:31-32).

A central tenet of the new *Family Law Act (1975)* was to remove the concept of fault, as the new law regarded enquiry as to the cause of the breakdown as neither necessary nor proper (Finlay, 1983:16; Joske, 1976:4).

2.4.2 American Legislation

The introduction of the Australian *Family Law Act (1975)* was not the first Act of its kind in the Western world, or the first to introduce the concept of irretrievable breakdown as being the only basis for divorce (Finlay, 1983:11 & 13-14; Glenn, 1997:1023). Indeed, Australia's *Family Law Act (1975)* was modeled on principles and legislation originating in, amongst other Western nations, the United States of America. Therefore, a brief consideration of the American experience is instructive to understanding what occurred in Australia.

The United States of America initiated divorce law reform in 1970 in what Weitzman (1985) refers to as *The California experiment* (Weitzman, 1985:xi). Prior to 1970 the gaining of a divorce in the United States was problematic. As in Australia, one party had to be found guilty of some marital transgression such as adultery, cruelty or desertion before a divorce could be granted (Weitzman, 1985:x; Whitehead, 1998:68).

Amongst the first new divorce laws in Western society introducing the no-fault model as the only basis for the dissolution of marriage were California and Idaho

in 1970¹⁰ (Fischer, 2007:2; Maley, 2003:29; Weitzman, 1985:15; Whitehead, 1998:68). The new law only required that one party assert that 'irreconcilable differences have caused the irremediable breakdown of the marriage' (Weitzman, 1985:15). The goal of the new law was to eliminate the adversarial nature of divorce and to reduce the hostility, acrimony and trauma as found in fault-oriented divorce (Weitzman, 1985:15; Whitehead, 1998:68-69).

Whitehead (1998:4-5) observes that in the late 1950's changes occurred in America regarding an individual's obligation towards family and society. She notes that Americans increasingly saw divorce as an 'individual choice', an 'entitlement' and an 'individual freedom' (Whitehead, 1998:6). Inevitably, the level of divorce in America rose to 'once unthinkable levels' (Whitehead, 1998:6-7) yet at the same time, public concern about the high divorce rate seemed quite low.

Weitzman (1985) notes six major innovations that were behind the new US laws. Firstly, no grounds were needed to gain a divorce. Secondly, neither spouse had to prove guilt or fault, representing a rejection of the moral framework of the old law. Thirdly, one spouse could unilaterally divorce their spouse without their consent or agreement. Fourthly, financial awards were not linked to fault but now based upon current individual needs and resources rather than past behaviour. Fifthly, new financial standards sought to treat each spouse equally and so reduce sex-based traditional models. Sixthly, the law aimed to reduce adversarial processes and create a climate of amicable divorce (Weitzman, 1985:15-16). All six of these innovations were transposed into Australian *Family Law Act (1975)*.

The new system shifted the focus from moral questions of fault and responsibility to economic issues of ability to pay and financial need. Weitzman (1985:15) notes that now couples were less likely to argue in Court about who did what to whom, but will argue about property, income and support.

Weitzman (1985:x) notes that in America the result of no-fault divorce is that divorced women with young children experience a sharp decline in their standard of living, and men are often better off with a raised standard of living¹¹ (see also

¹⁰ Note that Maley states that no-fault divorce was introduced in California in 1969.

¹¹ This has also been found to be the case in Australia (Maley, 2003:42; AMP.NATSEM, 2005:9).

Whitehead, 1998:93-95). Weitzman (1985:xi) found that far from restoring dignity, introducing equitable settlements, promoting equality between men and women and removing traditional assumptions about the subordinate role of women, that women are now much worse off. This especially applies to women with younger children and older women with adult children, who are now expected to support themselves in spite of the fact that they have suffered years of economic disadvantage as mothers and homemakers (see also Linacre, 2007:1). Weitzman (1985:xi-xii) and Whitehead (1996:183 & 195) argue that as a result, American women are now much worse off than they were under the old traditional system¹² concluding that

...the major economic result of the divorce law revolution is the systematic impoverishment of divorced women and their children. They have become the new poor.

Weitzman, 1985:xiv

In summary, in the United States of America new easily accessible and permissive no-fault divorce laws were introduced that had no basis in morality, required no consent, had no permissible compensation and were meant to be gender neutral (Whitehead, 1996:183), Whilst it may seem that the new type of law came with good intentions, it is clear that by eliminating many of the past understandings and elements of the law, new problems were created. What Maley (2001:176 and 2003:99) argues is missing from the present system in both America and Australia is justice, indeed, moral justice; precisely the key element that was removed from family law in the 1970's.

2.4.3 Australian Legislation

2.4.3.1 The *Family Law Act (1975)*

For many years Australia had followed the English model of divorce legislation, encapsulating elements of marriage and divorce in a variety of legislative instruments. With the introduction of the Commonwealth *Matrimonial Causes Act*

¹² Recent ABS data demonstrate that such is the case in Australia as well (Trewin, 2006c:46).

(1959)¹³ and the *Marriage Act (1961)* all marriage legislation became unified under two Acts and so covering 'the principal areas of family law in Australia for the first time' (Dickey, 2002:16; Alexander, 1999:1).

The *Family Law Act (1975)* replaced the *Matrimonial Causes Act (1959)*¹⁴ and also created the Family Court of Australia to administer the new Act. Dickey notes of the new *Family Law Act (1975)* that it

...not only substantially changed the law relating to divorce and matrimonial causes but also created a new code of law relating to the custody and guardianship of children, the maintenance of children and spouses, the declaration and alteration of the interests of spouses in property, and matrimonial injunctions.

Dickey, 2002:16

The *Family Law Act (1975)* received Royal Assent in June 1975, but did not commence operation until January 1976. The new Act not only introduced the no-fault concept of divorce, but also 'reformed the law as to annulments and reformed ancillary matters pertaining to children, maintenance, injunctions and property' (Alexander, 1999:1). It also established a specialist Federal Family Court¹⁵ of Australia with newly appointed judges, and its own counselling, conciliation and research facilities (Alexander, 1999:1).

The ABS (2002:5) provides the following succinct summary of the introduction of the new *Family Law Act (1975)*

Divorce rates in Australia were affected significantly by the introduction of the *Family Law Act (1975)*, which made it easier to obtain a divorce. The Act allows only one ground for divorce, an irretrievable breakdown in a marriage, measured as the separation of spouses for at least one year. The change saw the crude divorce rate jump from less than 1.3 divorces per 1,000 people in the early 1970's to 4.5 divorces in 1976. After several

¹³ The *Matrimonial Causes Act (1959)* primarily dealt with matters pertaining to divorce, whereas the *Marriage Act (1961)* primarily dealt with matters pertaining to marriage.

¹⁴ Whilst the *Family Law Act (1975)* replaced the *Matrimonial Causes Act (1959)*, the *Marriage Act (1961)* was left in place.

¹⁵ Note that Western Australia did not join the federal system but chose to adopt its own state-based system.

years, while the backlog of applications was processed, the divorce rate settled at a level more than twice that before the introduction of the Act.

ABS, 2002:5

Amongst the more radical changes that were ushered in with the new Act, Alexander (1999:1) notes that Part VII relating to children included the requirement that 'the Court shall regard the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration' in custody and access matters and provided a good deal of scope for judicial discretion. Alexander (1999:1) adds that the 'welfare of the child' principle was further bolstered by legislative amendments made in 1983, 1987 and 1991 and continued to be of paramount importance amongst a 'non-exhaustive non-prioritised list of factors to be considered by the Court in proceedings relating to children'.

Alexander (1999:1) reports that in June 1996, the *Family Law Reform Act (1995)* came into effect introducing an entirely new Part VII regarding 'Children'. Alexander details that

...earlier concepts of guardianship, custody and access were replaced by new concepts of parental responsibility and parenting orders about residence, specific issues and contact. The automatic nexus between custody and daily care and control of a child was broken and each part of a child's existence is now separated, compartmentalised and discretely determined.

Alexander, 1999:1

Further, the concept of the 'welfare of the child' was replaced by the 'best interests of the child', with a new Section 68F prescribing how the court was to determine what is in a child's 'best interests', and providing a list of pertinent factors, all of which remain subject to the discretion of the judge regarding the facts and merits of each individual case (Alexander, 1999:1).

2.4.3.2 Changes to the *Family Law Act (1975)*

It is both necessary and useful to look briefly at current trends in Australia at the

Federal Government level in relation to developments in the area of Family Law to give some contemporary context to the research project.

There have been two major Federal Government reports that are significant for this research, as they have focussed directly upon the effects of separation and divorce on parents and children. Firstly, there was the 1998 report "To have and to hold - Strategies to strengthen marriage and relationships" and more recently, the Commonwealth Governments "Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation". This inquiry received a good deal of media attention, received over 2,500 submissions, and in December 2003, resulted in the production of a report entitled "Every picture tells a story - Report on the inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation" (2003). A discussion paper was also produced, entitled "A New Approach to the Family Law System - implementation of Reforms", with submissions closing in January 2005.

In May 2005, as a result of the inquiry, the Government announced a package of family law reforms with the stated objectives of helping to 'strengthen family relationships and, where separation does occur, help parents agree on what is best for their children rather than resorting to litigation through the courts' (Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2006:1).

Karvela (2005) reports that in 2005 Liberal backbencher David Fawcett¹⁶ sought for the Government to take a bigger and more pro-active role in stopping divorce. Fawcett said:

In 2001, the additional direct cost of family separation to the taxpayer was in the order of \$350 million. This figure does not take into account the indirect costs of coping with increased demand on health services, the legal system, remedial education, contact orders programs, etc. (We must) recognise that our current hands-off approach to marriage is contributing to a very real human and financial cost.

Karvela, 2005

¹⁶ Fawcett was at the time the Chair of the Howard Government's Family Relationship Centres Taskforce.

Fawcett proposed that the Government should adopt a “Don’t quit marriage” crusade based upon the successful “Quit” smoking campaign. He argued that the Government chose to ‘respond to the damage that smoking causes’ so it should do so in response to the damage that divorce causes. Fawcett argued that the “Quit” model could be used for a pro-marriage campaign against divorce that would urge couples not to separate. The proposal was endorsed by the then Attorney-General Philip Ruddock (Karvela, 2005). Unfortunately, the concept disappeared and was never heard of again.

In March 2006, the Senate’s Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee produced a report entitled “provisions of the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005” which critiqued the Governments proposed reforms.

The Bill was passed by the Senate in March, 2006, returned to the House of Representatives in May, 2006 and the *Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act (2006)* came into force in May 2006. The Federal Government called this ‘the most significant reform of the family law system in 30 years’ (Australian Government, 2006c: Fact Sheet Six). As a result of the new Act and reforms, the Federal Government allocated \$397 million in the 2005-06 budget over the subsequent four years, to support the new approach, which will include the establishment of 75 Family Counselling Centres across Australia.

The changes would appear on the surface to be very positive reforms and were implemented in July 2006. It remains to be seen what the long-term effect will be of the reforms and new programs in alleviating the problems of separation, divorce and custody as have been experienced in the past. It can be seen that the Federal Government has made a considerable investment in an attempt to resolve many of the issues arising out of the high rates of separation and divorce.

Sharma, (2006:3) notes that it is unclear if the Government ‘is trying to prevent relationship breakdowns, or make them easier by making the process less adversarial’, stating that the Government’s proposed new Family Relationship Centres are little more than ‘symbolic politics’ so that the Government can be

'seen to be doing something' about the problem of divorce, but that 'in reality, these centres would do nothing at all to improve the system' (Sharma, 2006:8).

In a web-based Skynews Poll conducted the 'Willesee Across Australia' program on 7/7/03 the question was put: 'Do you believe Dads should have more rights in child custody?' The results were as follows.

Yes: - 98%

No: - 2%

(Skynews, 2003) The poll only allowed a person to vote once, so disallowing repeat votes. The result is quite remarkable.

2.4.3.3 The *Child Support Act (1988)*

In the late 1980's the Commonwealth Parliament introduced the *Child Support (Registration and Collection) Act (1988)* and in the following year, the *Child Support (Assessment) Act (1989)* to both complement the *Family Law Act (1975)* and to reform the law relating to the assessment and collection of child maintenance. In so doing, the Commonwealth Government created the Child Support Agency (CSA) (Dickey, 2002:16; CSA, 2005:1).

According to the CSA (2005:1) prior to the introduction of the *Child Support Act (1988)* child support could only be obtained by parents reaching an agreement, or by seeking an order from a court. Less than 30% of parents had court orders for child support and only 25% of those parents paid or received child support. In addition, Court orders were for low amounts usually \$10-\$30 a week and parents had problems with court access and enforcement so that Commonwealth welfare payments increased to bridge the gap.

The CSA (2005:1) states that the intent of the Child Support Scheme is to ensure that parents share in the cost of supporting their children and at the same time limit Commonwealth involvement and expenditure to the minimum necessary. Since the inception of the scheme the CSA (2005:1) reports that about 90% of child support liabilities have been paid and \$1.45 billion in child support was transferred between parents in 2001-02. About 1.2 million parents use the Child

Support Agency (currently a part of the Department of Human Services) and about 70% of parents pay regularly.

However, Green (1998:186) notes that the CSA is often used as a 'stick' with which ex-wives can hit ex-husbands over the head with, and that many non-custodial fathers have been unfairly assessed, have excessively high payments and feel 'hard done by' Green (1998:239). He also notes that the CSA system is 'unsound and unfair', citing three main reasons; firstly, CSA pay scales are based on a proposition of an unchanged standard of living after divorce, which is unrealistic; secondly, CSA pay scales are not based on what it realistically costs to raise a child, especially an infant, and thirdly, CSA pay scales are not based on the real needs and ability of the individual who pays (Green, 1998:241-43). Some of these issues have recently been addressed in new legislation.

A suicide note found from a Queensland father who gassed himself in his car said 'I won't have my life controlled by greedy family law solicitors anymore or have my life dictated to and controlled by the Child Support Agency whose sole purpose is to treat a man like a second-class citizen and completely strip him of his assets and his life's work'.

Greenwood, 1999:128

2.4.3.4 Changes to the *Child Support Act (1988)*

Since its inception, there have been 12 major legislative amendments to the *Child Support Act (1988)*, the most recent in 2006 being the *Child Support Legislation Amendment (Reform of the Child Support Scheme-New Formula and Other Measures) Act No. 146, (2006)*. It would appear that such significant amendments highlight the discontent expressed by many in the way that the Act was written and applied. The latest amendment makes provision for the implementation of new formulas used for assessing the annual rate of child support payable by a parent.

Under the new Act, the Secretary of the Department of Human Services is required to produce a yearly 'Costs of Children Table' to set out the costs to parents of raising children in various age ranges. The costs are then to be met by

both parents (by paying child support or by caring for their children) according to each parent's capacity to meet the costs. Provisions in the Act will assist the CSA to determine each parent's capacity to meet those costs. Parents will then be assessed by the CSA using six new formulas introduced under the Act regarding each parent's responsibility for the costs of the child. This is designed to ensure greater equity in both meeting the actual costs of raising a child and in having greater consideration of the parents' ability to pay (Australian Government, 2006a: 5-6).

The child support system, which has so heavily affected the lives of many non-custodial fathers, remains an ongoing challenge in attempting to get the balance right. Again, it remains to be seen what outcomes the latest round of reforms will produce.

2.5 Terminology

In this study an understanding of terminology, labelling and naming is important. To be able to understand the language used in later parts of the research and to comprehend its meaning, the terms must be clearly defined.

2.5.1 Labelling Theory

Names attach labels, and for many non-custodial fathers labels are also important, and negative labels an affront (Burns, 2004:1). For example, one label which has had some media prominence over time is *dead-beat dads* (see also section 2.4.5) which may create a certain negative view in the mind of Australian society about many non-custodial fathers (Martin, 2003a; Martin, 2003b; O'Brien, 2003; Burns, 2004:1).

Therefore, it is important to describe and explore some current terminology and to first briefly examine the role of Labelling Theory. Becker (1963) explained that

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitute deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a

quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an “offender”. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label.

Becker, (1963:9)

Siegel and Senna (1991:189) further explain that Labelling Theory is not so much concerned about what causes certain behaviour, but how official responses by authority figures influences the further behaviour of those so labelled (see also Hewett, 2007:1). In relation to fathers who do not have the daily care of their children, the labels may include words like *non-custodial father*, *dead-beat dad*, *Disneyland dad*, and such generalised terms as *no-hoper*, *loner* and *loser*.

It was concluded by Siegel and Senna (1991:192) that the result of such a legal, social and media process is a '*durable negative label and an accompanying loss of status*' (Italics theirs), and that negative labelling may then create a self-fulfilling prophecy. There are many elements of labelling theory which appear applicable to the situation of the non-custodial father, and more particularly the term 'dead-beat dad' which society (via the media; see Martin, 2003a; 2003b) seems to have created to describe a non-custodial father who does not pay the required amount of child support demanded by the government, expected by his ex-wife, or by society in general. (See section 2.5.5 for further discussion of this matter.)

Nevertheless, there does not seem to be any research, or appear to be enough evidence, to support the view that labelling theory plays a major role in the way that non-custodial fathers view themselves, and hence therefore continue to behave. According to Burns (2004:1) the attachment of labels to non-custodial fathers appears to be a media construct, and as such, more of an annoyance to non-custodial fathers, rather than becoming an influencing factor for how they continue to live their lives. However, Crawford (2002:1) notes that among the sub-groups with which men have been labelled by society, the 'separated father' is one such labelled group. The separated father group has a number of distinguishing features which Crawford (2002:1-3) notes include not being the

focus of research, dying earlier than non-divorced men, mainly living apart from their children, suffering from mental illness and being physically unwell.

2.5.2 Non-Custodial Fathers

Parkinson (2003:16) notes that the terms custody and access were formally abolished by the *Family Law Reform Act (1995)*. The term non-custodial father is therefore no longer officially used. From 1995 until May 2006 the term *custody*¹⁷ was replaced with the term *residence*. Also at the same time the term *non-custodial* was replaced by the term *contact* and the term *access* was also replaced by the term *contact* (Baker & McMurray, 1998:202; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, 2003:9; Australian Government, 2006b:147-8).

This meant that a father who was no longer the primary carer of the children, and who had them living with him for significantly less than 50% of the time was the *contact parent*. The children's mother became the *resident parent*. Non-custodial fathers had *contact visits* with their children, rather than access. The new terminology seemed to be an attempt to de-stigmatise the respective parents' status. However, the new terminology failed to adequately represent the actual circumstances of fathers who do not have their children living with them (Campbell and Pike, 1998:7 & 10). Changes to terminology did not bring about any material alteration to the fathers' (or mothers') situation or circumstances.

As of May 2006, the terminology changed once again. References to *contact* and *contact parent* were changed to 'care of' and person who has 'substantial care for the child' (Australian Government, 2006b:147-8). It would appear that in the new Act the word *contact* is generally replaced by the word *care*. It remains to be seen if the new wording will affect the common use language, and to date, there appears to be little evidence that it has.

Baker and McMurray (1998:202) note that changes introduced in the *Family Law Reform Act (1995)* were supposed to remove the element of custody whereby

¹⁷ And its derivatives, ie: non-custodial father and custodial mother (or vice-versa).

the custodial parent has 'care and control of day to day activities' of the children to the new concept of shared parental responsibility via parenting orders.

Changes to the *Family Law Act (1975)* through the *Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act (2006)* included changes to terminology 'to assist understanding, certain terms have been removed from the *Family Law Act*, or replaced with more family-friendly terms and do not imply ownership of children' (Australian Government, 2006c:2). The Government (2006c:2) outlined that changes to terminology are meant to focus both the court and the parents on the needs of their children 'to think more broadly about what parenting means and the impact of the proceedings upon their children'.

The latest changes to terminology include 'replacing references to "residence" with "lives with", replacing references to "contact" with "spends time with" and "communicates with" and removing the current categories of "residence orders", "contact orders" and "specific issues orders" and referring instead to "parenting orders"' (Australian Government, 2006c:2).

Therefore, the correct formal term for a father (or mother) who does not have custody of his (or her) children is now rather unclear, but may technically be a *father who spends substantial and significant time with his children* (Australian Government, 2008:156-57). The term 'allocation of parental responsibility' (Australian Government, 2008:161) as per the Parenting Order also appears to be a new synonym for who actually has custody (residence) of the children. The complicated nature of such new terminology will likely ensure the continued use of the old terms non-custodial father, custody and access.

Another element of terminology to be addressed in this area is the use of the word *maintenance* as opposed to *child support*. In the family law system in the United States of America the term *maintenance* can also refer to payments made to an ex-spouse for their own personal support (also the term *alimony*), (Maley, 2001:173; Whitehead, 1998:87). In 1989 with the advent of the Australian *Child Support Agency* the term *maintenance* in relation to children was officially no longer used, in favour of the term *child support* (Dickey, 2002:416; Maley, 2001:192).

However, to confuse the situation, Division 7 of the *Family Law Act (1975)* still contains provision for the Court to make maintenance orders in respect of children if an assessment is not possible under the *Child Support Act (1989)* and further makes provision under certain circumstances for a spouse to claim maintenance from his or her ex-spouse (Australian Government, 2008:279). It is little wonder that the term *maintenance* is used interchangeably with the term *child support* and sees the continuing use of the term *maintenance* (rather than *child support*) as used in the media to this day (Weston, 2007:27).

Baker and McMurray (1998:202) have noted that the terms 'non-custodial father' and 'access' are still widely used in the United States, and this is likely to have had an influence upon the use of certain terminologies in the literature worldwide. Therefore, as noted, this research shall, for clarity, continue to use the term Non-Custodial Father (NCF) as the primary descriptor of a father who is the contact or, under the latest 2007 legislation, the *substantial and significant time* parent. The term Non-Custodial Father also continues to be used extensively in the contemporary worldwide research literature.

2.5.3 Dumpers and Dumpees

The terms *dumper* and *dumpee* are used by Fisher (1992:13) to describe the two partners who are ending their relationship. According to Fisher, 'usually there is one person who is more responsible for deciding to end the love relationship; that person is the dumper. The more reluctant partner is the dumpee'. The dumpee will almost always have a much more painful and difficult experience of the separation and divorce than will the dumper (Fisher, 1992:13 & 300; see also Green, 1998:3).

Fisher (1992:13) describes dumpers as feeling guilty for hurting a former loved one, and dumpees find it difficult being rejected. Therefore, the adjustment processes are different for each. This research is primarily concerned with non-custodial fathers who are dumpees. Non-custodial fathers who are dumpers will usually have a different set of separation experiences, and may not experience much of what the dumpees do (see also Green, 1998:3-6).

2.5.4 Spouse, Wife, Partner, De-facto

Regarding the labelling of ones 'love relationship' (Fisher, 1992:5) in contemporary society much has changed from the given assumptions of the past. Not so long ago one could speak of one's wife or spouse and the meaning was clear. The terms husband, wife and spouse now seem to be ones that have fallen out of favour and common use, perhaps because of their assumed historic connotations of possession (Finlay, 1983:1-2). They have, over the past two decades, been replaced with the less value-ridden and somewhat more flexible term of 'partner', which was once previously and mostly confined to the business world (Delbridge, 1981:1263).

Naming (or labeling) of things within any society is important as the names (or labels) attach meaning, value and symbolism. The re-naming of the marital love relationship from husband/wife/spouse to the generic term partner would appear to have assisted in a transition towards the wider acceptance of the non-marital love relationship or what is now commonly referred to as the de-facto or cohabiting relationship (Delbridge, 1981:484 & 372).

For the purposes of this research, the terms spouse, husband, wife, partner and cohabiter, and all their plural forms, are also deemed to include de-facto relationships, and are all interchangeable and should be understood in the context in which they are used (Delbridge, 1981:484, 372, 1263 & 1667; Sarantakos, 1996:5 & 57).

2.5.5 Dead-beat dads

As noted above, (and discussed in section 2.5.1) dead-beat dads is a derogatory term used regularly in the media to label and describe non-custodial fathers who do not live up to ex-spouse, societal expectations and government regulations (Green, 1998:240; Amato, 1999:1; Brott, 1999:69). It is a term used in relation to how non-custodial fathers perform concerning the payment of child support for their ex-spouse and their children with whom they may or may not have contact (Green, 1998:240). Price (2001:1) differentiates between alleged dead-beat

dads, referring to them rather as *disenfranchised dads*, thus providing a rationale for their alleged negligence of their ex-spouse and children.

The role of the media is particularly important in relation to this label. Television presenter, Ray Martin, has featured segments on the Channel Nine program *A Current Affair* regarding *Dead-beat Dads* (21/5/03 and 23/7/03) where he refers to many non-custodial fathers as dead-beat dads in a derogatory manner (Martin, 2003a; Martin, 2003b). The ABC's 7.30 Report also aired a similar program on 24/7/03. Again, the program was disturbingly focussed upon the hardships of single mothers and the negligence and irresponsibility of many alleged dead-beat dads (ABC, 2003; see also Burns, 2004:1). During the same period, Channel Seven also advertised a future *Today Tonight* program with the leader: *Dead-beat dads - 3 wives and 5 kids, but he refuses to pay* (HSV7, 2003).

Pro-father radio program and website *Dads on the Air* lodged a complaint about one such airing by *A Current Affair* to the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), but with negative results. Despite a strong argument by *Dads on the Air* the ABA determined that there was no case to answer (Burns, 2004:1).

Dunlevy (2008) notes that parents, mainly dads, are fleeing from child support payments, with 'thousands of "deadbeat dads" fleeing to New Zealand or Britain, being the new havens to escape paying child maintenance'.

2.5.6 Disneyland Dads

*Disneyland Dads*¹⁸ is a term used by many non-custodial fathers to describe the life that they become locked into of fortnightly weekend access visits (Brott, 1999:90 & 2007:1). It is also a derogatory label used by some writers to describe fathers who fail to take their fathering responsibilities seriously (Swardenski, 2008:1), although has also been used by some researchers to examine the phenomenon in a more genuine manner (Stewart, 1999:539).

Many fathers do not have the physical space in their new residence or the activities necessary to successfully engage with their children during access

¹⁸ Green uses the equivalent term 'zoo father' (Green, 1998:97).

visits (Brott, 1999:217; Green, 1998:97-100). This often results in fathers having to take their children out on excursions to shopping centres and McDonalds, often for parental change-overs in a public place (*Sunday Herald-Sun*, 2003:82), and continually needing to buy things for the children to keep them amused. Green (1998:79) says of 'fortnightly fathers':

Not only is he not involved realistically in their lives, he feels totally removed from his children's lives. He is effectively sidelined. This pattern of access is accepted in Australia as the norm. It ought not be. It is not positive parenting at all.

Green, 1998:79

The Disneyland Dad lifestyle may contribute to the breaking down of the relationship between fathers and their children, as weekend activities seem both artificial and superficial, and simply not part of a normal regular family life (Green, 1998:108; Brott, 2007:2). Both fathers and children miss out on the normality of a day-to-day family life. As Dye (1997:263) puts it

...it's ridiculous to think that a man can be an adequate father given such restrictive access arrangements

Dye, 1997:263

2.6 Attachment and Bonding

The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature

Bowlby, 1988:3

Parker-Pope (2008:1) states that most studies show that over time the diminishment of romantic love is inevitable and the feelings of early romance are replaced by 'familiar, predictable feelings of long-term attachment'. John Bowlby's theories of attachment and loss provide insights into a basic system of human behaviour (Ainsworth, 1991:33). Attachment in Bowlby's terms can be said to be based on an affectional bond that Ainsworth defines as 'a relatively long-enduring tie in which the partner is important as a unique individual,

interchangeable with none other' (Ainsworth, 1991:38; see also Sonkin, 2005:1-2; Bollorino, 1996:2). As a result, there is a desire to maintain closeness to this partner. Ainsworth also starkly notes that

...inexplicable separation tends to cause distress, and permanent loss would cause grief; ... "attachment" is an affectional bond, and hence an attachment figure is never wholly interchangeable with or replaceable by another; ... a need to maintain proximity, distress upon inexplicable separation, ... pleasure or joy upon reunion, and grief at loss...

Ainsworth, 1991:38

2.6.1 Attachment Theory

British psychiatrist John Bowlby has played a foremost role in the development of theoretical models and understandings of the concept of attachment. Bowlby's work began in 1929 with his interest in how a child's experience of his or her family affected his or her development (Bowlby, 1974, 1979, 1980). Bowlby's observations and findings have been widely used as a basis for understanding how children, and to a lesser extent adults, form attachments with significant others in their lives, and of what is likely to happen when those attachments are severed (Bowlby, 1979:vii; Bretherton, 1991a:759-762 & 769). Bowlby defined attachment behaviour as:

...any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual ... (and) ... whilst especially evident during early childhood, attachment behaviour is held to characterise human beings from the cradle to the grave.

Bowlby, 1979:129

Attachment theory is seen as being very important in understanding the development of human relationships with significant others from earliest infancy, and for understanding continuing patterns of relationship behaviour by individuals throughout their childhood years and beyond into adulthood (Bollorino, 1996:2; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:4; Department of Human Services, 2000:2; Department of Human Services, 2004:95).

Bowlby (1979:67-69) further defines the *core* of an *affectional bond* as being the 'attraction that one *individual* has for another *individual*', maintaining that 'the essential feature of bonding is that the two partners tend to remain in proximity to one another'. Bowlby (1979:69) posited that if separation should occur, the individuals will go to great efforts to renew the proximity and attempts from outside sources to break the bond will be met with great resistance (see also: Ainsworth, 1991:33-38; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:3; Sonkin, 2005:1).

Worden (1991) summed up Bowlby's work by saying:

Bowlby's attachment theory provides a way for us to conceptualize the tendency in human beings to make strong affectional bonds with others and a way to understand the strong emotional reaction that occurs when those bonds are threatened or broken.

Worden, 1991:7

Traditional explanations of attachment behaviour focussed upon biological needs for food (in the case of infants, because the mother feeds the child) and sex (in the case of adults, needing a sexual partner for company and procreation) as being the primary motives (Harlow, 1958:573ff; Ainsworth, 1969:969ff). Bowlby concludes that both explanations are inadequate, noting that infants will become attached to *mother-objects* despite not being fed by them. He also notes that adults will have sex with partners where no affectional attachment bond exists, and also not have sex with a person where there is a strong affectional attachment bond (Bowlby, 1974:223ff; Bowlby, 1979:70; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:4).

Instead, Bowlby (1979:70) contends that attachments are formed to reinforce familiar contacts and to avoid strange situations. He notes that attachment bonding primarily serves the purpose of protection from predators, a function equally as important as food or sex for the survival of any species. Worden (1991:7) agrees that attachments originate as infants and endure in adults as part of the need for security and safety (see also Bretherton, 1991a:763; Bollorino, 1996:1; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:4).

Attachment Theory has not been without its critics. Treasure (2005:24) notes that criticism of Bowlby's attachment theory comes mainly from the feminist perspective, which argues that Bowlby's research was generalised from children who suffered a lack of maternal care. Treasure (2005:24) cites Holmes (1993) who criticises Bowlby for failing to analyse the importance of the caregiver role of fathers (see also Lee, 2003:5), further noting that much of Bowlby's research took place during World War II when fathers were absent which somewhat distorted the work and ignored issues of 'paternal deprivation'.

Lee (2003:4) cites Harris (1998) and the *nature-nurture* debate in her criticism of attachment theory, claiming that children do not always behave in the same manner as their parents. Lee (2003:5) also criticises Bowlby and Ainsworth in three areas. Firstly, Lee says that the model is based on observations made during stressful situations for a child, not unstressful situations. Secondly, Lee maintains that attachment behaviours are limited to those that occur with the primary attachment figure, usually the mother (being the contemporary view of the time). Thirdly, Lee notes, as with Holmes (1993) that fathers seem to have been excluded from the studies.

Lakoff (2005:3) notes that critiques of attachment theory are varied, with some critics suggesting there is a greater role for genetic predisposition (and vice-versa, see Harris [1998]), others suggesting that the results are culturally relative¹⁹ and others suggesting that attachment theory focuses mainly on early childhood, to the detriment of understandings of adulthood (Pendry, 1998:6).

Finally, Fraley and Shaver (1999:748-754) have noted in detail that some researchers have criticised Bowlby's work simply by failing to understand it and by distorting and mis-representing it in an effort to discredit it.

Criticisms levelled at Bowlby's and Ainsworth's attachment theory are not of a significant nature such that they would undermine the theory itself. An enormous body of academic work has continued to use attachment theory as its foundation, proving particularly useful regarding the newer work in relation to the role of

¹⁹ This particularly applies to criticism of Ainsworth's 'Strange Situation' technique (Pendry, 1998:4)

attachments in adult life and in divorce. Pendry sums up criticism of attachment theory as follows:

...although critics of attachment theory have challenged its findings over the last 30 years, no other discipline has presented empirical evidence that supports a more comprehensive overview of the phenomenon of attachment and its implications.

Pendry, 1998:8

Bowlby's work on attachment behaviour essentially concerns a child, who is the "attached" figure and the mother, who is the "attachment" figure. They could be described respectively as the "attacher" and the "attachee". Nevertheless, Bowlby notes that whilst (at that time) attachment behaviour had only been closely studied in children, his observations and theories are 'held to apply also to adults and to whoever is acting for them as their attachment figure - often a spouse, sometimes a parent, and more often than might be supposed, a child' (Bowlby 1979:132).

Whilst Bowlby's work concentrates on the child-mother relationship, this research has applied Bowlby's work to the husband-wife or "interspousal" relationship and to the father-child relationship. The following passage of Bowlby's is intensely relevant to this study and is worth quoting in its entirety:

Throughout the rest of a person's life he is likely to show the same pattern of behaviour, moving away from those he loves for ever-increasing distances and lengths of time yet always maintaining contact and sooner or later returning. The base from which an adult operates is likely to be either his family of origin or else a new base which he has created for himself. Anyone who has no such base is rootless and intensely lonely.

Bowlby, 1979:132

When men and women marry (and start a family) they create a new base from which to operate. During their courtship, they have (presumably) established an emotional bond, "fallen in love" and are in the process of forming a strong attachment. They are both then free to move away (to work and to socialise) in the knowledge that their attachment is secure and that they each have a "safe"

place to return home to. It does not take much imagination to conclude that a disruption to this arrangement could be catastrophic for all parties. Raphael (1984:177) notes that a marital pair usually has 'such closely interwoven ties that the loss of one partner may cut across the very meaning of the other's existence'.

In the event of separation and divorce, in most cases the mother and child attachment is left intact, whereas the father's attachment and proximity is, to a greater or lesser extent, severely disrupted (see Page & Bretherton, 2003). Put simply, mothers still have contact, proximity and attachment, but fathers do not. Has Bowlby given some indication and insight as to why so many non-custodial fathers are "rootless and intensely lonely"? This research has shown that many non-custodial fathers are indeed, at least for a time and, amongst many other things, quite rootless and intensely lonely.

Carter and McGoldrick (1999:374) acknowledge that for divorcing men it is a serious possibility that they will lose their children one way or another. They note that unless fathers make a positive effort to be in contact with their children, many of the social and emotional issues that arise during separation, divorce and possible remarriage will heighten the emotional distance between fathers and their children.

2.6.1.1 Parental and Family Upbringing:

Bowlby suggests that parents provide children with a secure base from which to explore the world (Bowlby, 1979:136). Bowlby says that early experiences that person has in his or her life will determine patterns of attachment behaviour displayed in later life (1979: 129-130). Bowlby suggests that

there is a strong causal relationship between an individual's experiences with his parents and his later capacity to make affectional bonds, and that certain common variations in that capacity, manifesting themselves in marital problems and trouble with children as well as in neurotic symptoms and personality disorders, can be attributed to certain common variations in ways that parents perform their roles

Bowlby, 1979:135

Note that Bowlby used the words 'strong causal relationship'. This clear statement is very significant to any research conclusion. Bowlby's work can provide both reasons behind the behaviour of many married couples, (in other words, an insight into some of the influencing "family of origin" factors that made them who they are) and insights into what their likely reactions shall be when separation and divorce occurs (in other words, what reaction they will have to suffering the loss of a primary attachment figure).

There develops a complex generational matrix of lives and relationships that spans three or more generations, continuing from one to another. It can be seen that each parent brings his or her behaviours as related to their own childhood and adolescent attachment experience with their own parents into the new marriage relationship. The newly married couple then interact together to form their own relationship, merging their own attachment experiences and responses, and, upon the arrival of children, then begin to react with their own children with certain attachment behaviour responses. This in turn dictates the attachment behaviour that is formed by their own children. It is a cyclic and never-ending flow from generation to generation and is diagrammatically represented in Figure 2.2 below (see Analysis).

'Despite the rich testimony from history and literature that fathers have a strong commitment to their offspring, the tendency has been to consider the bond of father to child as somehow less deeply rooted than the bond of mother to child' (Ainsworth, 1991:40). It has now become more acknowledged that a father's bond is equally as strong as the mothers. Chadwick reports that non-custodial fathers experience more depression, more anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and increased problems with general adjustment to life than do other fathers (1989:32). The closer the father was to his children prior to separation, the more likely such symptoms would be exacerbated.

2.6.2 Attachment versus Bonding

Attachment has been referred to by both Baldini (2006:1-2) and Ainsworth (1989:711-712) as being a biological/physiological affection for a child directed towards the significant adult figure. On the other hand, bonding has been

referred to as more of an emotionally based affection from the significant adult figure directed towards the child and which is less strong than that of the child's attachment to the significant adult figure.

Ainsworth (1989:711) reinforces this view noting that the main difference between an attachment and a bond is that a bond does not contain the 'experience of security and comfort obtained from the relationship with the partner, and yet the ability to move off from the secure base provided by the partner, with confidence to engage in other activities' (see also Department of Human Services, 2000:2). It has been assumed and apparently accepted by Baldini and Ainsworth that the child's attachment is far stronger than the adult's bonding²⁰.

However, this assumption is open to debate and has been challenged by Kruk (1992:83-4; see also Fraley and Shaver, 1999:738; Egan, 2004:3). Kruk argues that parents not only bond with their children, but also form emotional and proximal attachments with their children in a similar manner to that of their children towards their caring adult (parent). In a divorce and non-custodial situation this is significant, especially for a parent who has not only bonded with his or her child, but formed a strong attachment as well. The results of the separation can be extremely painful and quite devastating (Kruk, 1992:83; see also Bowlby, 1979:81-92)²¹. Baldini (2006:1-2) notes that there is a distinction between attachment and bonding in that children form firm attachments with their parent/caregiver, whereas adults merely bond with their infant/child. Baldini concludes that 'bonding is basically one-sided – the parents experience with his or her infant'. This view is not supported by Kruk (1992:83-4), Fraley and Shaver (1999:738-9) or Egan 2004:3). Indeed, it could be logically posited, as Bowlby himself notes (1979:82-3) that as grief and mourning experienced in separation and loss has clear and distinct elements and phases, and as these elements and phases are exactly what non-custodial fathers experience in relation to the loss of their children (as well as, and if not more strongly than in relation to their

²⁰ It is nevertheless of concern that there seems to be a great deal of interchangeability amongst authors regarding the terms attachment and bonding, including Bowlby and Ainsworth themselves, making a clear understanding of the definitions more difficult.

²¹ The same feelings can also be experienced by a parent when a strong bond and attachment has been formed and is broken with his or her spouse; but that is not the subject of this study.

spouse; see Fraley & Shaver, 1999:737-8), are they not by definition, *attached* to them, and not merely *bonded*? Baldini (2006:6) quotes Bowlby as saying that an attachment is a 'lasting psychological connectedness between human beings'. The important word here is *lasting*.

In summary, the assumption of Baldini and Ainsworth is that children are strongly attached to their parent/caregiver in a biological and physiological manner, whereas adults only bond with their children in a less strong emotional manner. Kruk and Fraley & Shaver seem to disagree, and doubts can certainly be cast upon the above assumptions of Baldini and Ainsworth.

2.6.3 Attachment versus Dependence

In further discussing elements of attachment, Bowlby (1979:132) clarifies that attachment behaviour is not "dependency" and that the two should be differentiated, especially from positive and negative connotations (see also Bretherton, 1991a:763). Table 2.1 below describes the essential differences between dependence and attachment as seen by Bowlby.

Table 2.1: Differences between Dependence and Attachment

DEPENDENCE:	ATTACHMENT:
Not specifically concerned with actual proximity.	Is concerned with actual proximity.
Not necessarily directed towards one individual.	Is usually and primarily directed towards one individual.
Does not imply an enduring bond.	Does imply an enduring bond.
Not necessarily associated with strong feelings.	Is associated with strong feelings.
Has no biological function attributed to it.	Has biological functions attributed to it.
Has a negative connotation about it.	Has a positive connotation about it.

Bowlby, 1979:132

Bowlby has indicated that many behavioural patterns of adolescents and adults can be related to the early attachment experiences. "Bonds of attachment" or

“affectional bonds”²² develop increasingly from the age of six months through to adulthood with lifetime pair bonding occurring at a number of levels, including friendships, sexual and reproductive relationships, (resulting in children), shared interest and shared history relationships, and even business relationships, and even through times of conflict, the bond (or attachment) may nonetheless be quite strong. Bowlby concluded that affectional bonds involving reproductive, caregiving and or attachment systems deserve particular attention due to their intensity (Hurding, 1985:87-88; Ainsworth, 1991:39 & 43).

Parkes and Hinde (1992:172-73) confirm what Bowlby has found, noting that:

...in all these instances individuals display a need for ready access to the attachment figure, desire for proximity to the attachment figure in situations of stress, heightened comfort and diminished anxiety when in the company of the attachment figure and a marked increase in discomfort and anxiety on discovering the attachment figure to be inexplicably inaccessible.

Parkes and Hinde, 1992:172-73

2.6.4 Attachment Behaviour in Adults

The existence and role of attachment behaviour in adult and married life is quite clear. Adults who marry are ideally placed in close proximity to each other to facilitate a close attachment to each other. Conversely, those who do not form a close attachment to their spouse in marriage are likely to experience painful loneliness (Weiss, 1982:179). Ainsworth described three primary classifications of attachment, being, *secure*, *resistant* and *avoidant*. Other authors have used variations in the wording of the three primary classifications, for example, *secure*, *insecure*, *anxious*, *resistant*, *ambivalent*, *avoidant*, *disorganized*, *disoriented* and *non-attached* (Hazan and Shaver, 1987:512; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:4; Fricker and Moore, 2002:184; Treasure, 2005:20-23; Van Wagner, 2007:2-5). However, in essence the classifications remain the same, despite variations in terminology. Each of the three attachment states has a number of characteristics

²² Unfortunately confusing terms used by Hurding (1985:87-88) and Bowlby (1979:127) which mixes the less-strong concept of bonding with the much stronger concept of attachment.

in childhood that also have outworkings in adulthood, as shown in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of Attachment in Childhood and Adulthood:

Characteristics of Secure Attachment	
As Children:	As Adults:
Able to separate from parent.	Has trusting and lasting relationships.
Seeks comfort from parents when frightened.	Tends to have high self-esteem.
Return of absent parents is met with positive response.	Comfortable sharing feelings with partner and friends.
Prefers parents to strangers.	Seeks out social support.
Characteristics of Resistant (Anxious) Attachment	
As Children:	As Adults:
May not appear to be comforted by the return of the parent.	Reluctant to become close to others.
Becomes greatly distressed when parent leaves.	Worries that their partner does not love them.
May be wary of strangers.	Becomes very distraught when a relationship ends.
Characteristics of Avoidant Attachment	
As Children:	As Adults:
May avoid parents.	May have problems with intimacy.
May not seek comfort or contact with parents.	Invests little emotion in social and romantic relationships.
Shows little preference between parent and stranger.	Unable or unwilling to share thoughts and feelings with others.

Van Wagner, 2007:2-5

Fricker and Moore (2002:184) found of the respondents in their research that the attachment of *securely* attached adults was

...characterized by trust and a desire for closeness without the need to merge completely with another. In this group, the self was considered worthy of care and the partner was esteemed and expected to be responsive.

Fricker and Moore, 2002:184

Regarding anxiously attached adults, Fricker and Moore (2002:184) found that their respondents

...on the other hand, had a desire to merge with another. Their relationships were characterized by clinging and neediness, as the partner's responsiveness was uncertain. Self worth was low and the partner was often idealized.

Fricker and Moore, 2002:184

And finally, regarding *avoidantly* attached adults, Fricker and Moore (2002:184) found that their respondents

...reported discomfort with closeness and an expectation that the partner would be unresponsive. They found it difficult to trust and depend on others and so dismissed the importance of the relationship in order to keep emotions at low levels of intensity.

Fricker and Moore, 2002:184

Sonkin (2005:48-9) reports that research into attachment in adult romantic relationships has demonstrated three important findings. Firstly, the attachment status of the parent will predict the attachment status of the parent's child. Secondly, there is continuity of attachment patterns from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. Thirdly, adults displaying insecure attachment have greater difficulty managing life generally and personal relationships specifically.

Fricker and Moore (2002:184) and Fraley (2004:2) note that Hazan and Shaver (1987) used Bowlby's attachment theory as the basis for constructing a new understanding of adult love. Hazan and Shaver (1987:521-23) found that attachment styles as described in infancy could also be seen in adulthood which resulted in predictable differences in the way that love can be experienced (see also Van Wagner, 2007:2-5). Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that the emotional bond that exists between adult romantic partners is a part of the same

attachment behavioural motivational system that brings about the emotional bond between an infant and parent/caregivers.

Fraley (2004:2) notes that Hazen and Shaver (1987) found that infant and parent/caregivers and adult romantic partners share the following features²³:

- Both feel safe when the other is nearby and responsive.
- Both engage in close, intimate bodily contact.
- Both feel insecure when the other is inaccessible.
- Both share discoveries with one another.
- Both play with one another's facial features and exhibit mutual fascination and preoccupation with one another.
- Both engage in 'baby talk'.

Fraley, 2004:2

That adult romantic relationships are like infant and parent/caregiver relationships, and that 'romantic love is a property of the attachment behavioural system, as well as the motivational systems that give rise to caregiving and sexuality' seem to be well established (Hazen and Shaver, 1987:511 & 523; Fricker and Moore, 2002:183-4; Fraley, 2004:2. Further, Fricker and Moore (2002:183-4) note that a number of subsequent studies have supported Hazan and Shaver's (1987) analysis of attachment history and working models in relation to adult attachment in romantic relationships, including Collins and Read (1990) and Mikulincer and Nachshon (1991). The works of Hazan and Shaver (1987), Fraley (2004) and Fricker and Moore (2002) are particularly important regarding the subject matter of this study. As Fraley notes

The idea that romantic relationships may be attachment relationships has had a profound influence on modern research on close relationships.

Fraley, 2004:2

²³ There is no reason not to assume that the same may apply to parents in relation to their children.

Without having explored theories of attachment at all, Sarantakos (1996:336) states that divorcees show a 'low attachment to their partner' and that 'the less attached spouses are to their partner, the more likely it is for them to divorce' (see also Worden, 1991:32; Fricker and Moore, 2002:183-4; Fraley, 2004:2; Hazan and Shaver, 1987:521-23; Van Wagner, 2007:2-5). It would seem that each partner's type of attachment plays a key role in not only the likelihood of a successful and enduring marriage, but also in the type of relationship each partner may have with their children (and ex-partner) should a divorce occur.

In summary, the research has shown that adult romantic relationships, and hence marriage relationships, shall be largely affected by the *attachment state* of the partners, that is, whether they be *secure*, *resistant* and *avoidant*. If the relationship ends, the response of the partners shall also be largely influenced by their type and level of attachment.

Page and Bretherton (2003:113-114) found that pre-school girls who have a close (secure) attachment and relationship with their custodial mother (hence being less anxious) are likely to be more socially competent, but have a distanced and less secure relationship with their non-custodial father. Conversely, Page and Bretherton (2003:114) found that pre-school girls who have a close (secure) attachment and relationship with their non-custodial father have a more conflictual relationship with their custodial mother (hence being more anxious) and are less socially competent. It is worth noting that Page and Bretherton (2003:115) found no such variance in pre-school boys.

2.7 Loss and Grief

2.7.1 Grief at Loss of Attachment

Having established the vital role that attachment theory and behaviour plays in the marriage, spousal and familial relationships, it is important to understand what occurs in relation to attachment behaviour in a situation of loss and grief. It was realised in the early 1960's by Parkes that there was a clear link between Bowlby's work on attachment and in gaining an understanding of grief in adult life (Bretherton 1991b:20). Bowlby and Parkes described a number of topics related to mourning (grief) in adults resulting from a loss of the object of attachment.

They are numbness, yearning and protest (hostility), disorganization and despair, thoughts and behaviour directed towards the lost person, appeals for help, and reorganisation (Bretherton 1991b:20). These are all acknowledged grief reactions (Worden, 1991:21-29).

People suffer anxiety and grief when an attachment is broken; the stronger the attachment, the greater the anxiety and grief (Raphael, 1984:179; Gee, 2001:6). Weiss (1982:195) in developing the ideas of Marris (1958) notes that attachment theory in relation to bereavement and grief helps to explain why Freud had difficulty understanding some of his patients' refusal to abandon a lost love object. Weiss notes that

...grief is a reaction to the disintegration of the whole structure of meaning dependant on this relationship rather than to the absence of the person lost

Weiss, 1982:195

The loss of such an important attachment figure results in a 'collapse of meaning, intense anxiety and hopelessness' (Weiss, 1982:195). Whilst this assessment has been well understood and accepted in relation to the death of a spouse or other close loved one, it has rarely been explained or explored in relation to the experience of separation and divorce.

Weiss (1982:196) concludes that the severed attachment and resultant loss of meaning is in fact more important than the actual loss of the person. The severed attachment shatters the understanding and meaning of life and the future, which the person had built around the person to whom they had become attached. The following two quotes are from Raphael's "The Anatomy of Bereavement" (1984).

I was stunned, numb with shock. It couldn't be true. It must be a dream.

Jennifer, aged 35 in Raphael, 1984:177

My whole being ached for her - I wanted her back - I could think of nothing else. Every minute I thought she'd come through the door again - that lilt in her walk. Again and again I'd hear her voice, see her in the crowd. Each time I thought of her it was like a knife in my heart.

Peter, aged 30 in Raphael, 1984:177

It is difficult to tell if the quotes are about the death or divorce of a partner; however, in Raphael's text they are about death. It has been said that 'divorce is like the death of a partner, but the partner is still alive' (source unknown). Being a separated and divorced husband, and in particular a non-custodial father, contains many death-like features and elements that provoke grief reactions; indeed, often substantial and prolonged grief reactions (Worden, 1991:3-4; Gee, 2001:6-7).

Martin (2001:10) concludes that divorce is a severe loss that can be construed as being akin to a death. Death means to surrender an attachment figure in the absence of the partner; divorce means to surrender an attachment figure in the presence of the partner. One man reflected on the hurt of losing his whole family in one horrendous afternoon, expressing the loss of his wife and children in the following words

It was like walking out of a room and closing the door on an entire life – leaving behind everything that was precious and normal; when I had opened the door my world had vanished - my faith in people, my sense of safety, my status as a father and husband.

Healy, 2006:5

This man was not a non-custodial father. This was Walter Mikac whose wife and two children were shot dead at Port Arthur in 1996. Fathers who have lost their wives and children through divorce have expressed almost identical words and sentiments to those above (Fisher, 1992:33ff; Green, 1998:3ff,).

Further, there is an old folkloric saying that goes "she died of a broken heart" which has been curiously usually applied only to women. This saying now has a scientific basis behind it. Researchers have determined that a sudden loss of a love one bring about death from "stress cardiomyopathy" (Wittstein, et al. 2005). Of the 19 patients in Wittstein's research who were evaluated with the condition, 95% were female.

Danish researchers have also concluded that 'Parents who lose a child run a serious risk of dying prematurely because of grief. It may lead to cancer, heart disease, heavy smoking and binge drinking' (*Herald Sun*, 2003:10). The researchers showed that parents who had lost a child before the child reached the age of 18 were more likely to die than those who had not. Amongst the many reactions listed by the researchers can be added the increased risk of suicide.

According to Carter & McGoldrick (1999:375), in dealing with grief, men need to mourn the loss of the intact family, give up fantasies of reunion, release their dreams for the future, restructure their ex-marital and parent-child relationships, restructure their finances, adapt to an independent and self-reliant lifestyle, realign their relationships, remain connected with the ex-spouses extended family and retrieve their hopes, dreams and expectations of the future.

Chadwick (1989:30) also notes that men suffer emotional reactions to divorce (sometimes acutely) that include denial, anger, and depression, but they generally move towards satisfactory divorce adjustment. He notes that the reactions by men to divorce are similar to those noted by Kubler-Ross in her work on death and dying, ie: the process of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Chadwick (1989:30, in quoting and agreeing with Fisher, 1981) posits that 'adjustments to acute reactions usually takes about one year, but can take three to five years'.

In overcoming grief, Raphael (1984:187) notes that the psychological mourning process involves reviewing many aspects of the lost relationship so that binding bonds can gradually be relinquished, thereby 'freeing the emotional investment for ongoing life and further relationships'. Thus Raphael says the grieving person thus 'reviews, piece by piece, memories, thoughts, and feelings associated with the image of the dead partner' (1984:187), except, in the case of divorce, the partner is not dead. Raphael continues, 'sadness and other intense feelings relevant to each of those memories are experienced intensely as each is faced, treasured, and reluctantly put aside. The process is inevitably painful, yet must progress' (Raphael, 1984:187).

Balswick & Balswick (1999:311) note in their stages of the divorce process that in stage two (separation), there is 'bargaining, depression, anger, ambivalence, guilt and regret'. Stage three involves 'legal issues, economic re-adjustments, mourning, co-parenting arrangements, reorientation of lifestyle, and a focus on one's own identity and emotional functioning'. The fourth and final stage is one of 'adjustment, which involves new activities and new goals'. These stages can be seen as synonymous with reactions and adjustments necessary to deal with the death of a partner.

Unfortunately, divorce is little acknowledged or discussed in the bereavement literature. Nevertheless, Gee (2001:7) notes that much of the literature regarding grief in divorce has its origins from the bereavement literature. Many authors (Bowlby, 1980:8; Worden, 1991:10; Crawford, 2002:1; Seppa, 1995:81) have commented that the effects of grief and loss through divorce are not quickly overcome and assimilated. Bowlby (1980:8) importantly notes that regardless of a loss being experienced by an adult or a child

...there is a tendency to underestimate how intensely distressing and disabling loss usually is and for how long the distress, and often the disablement, commonly lasts

Bowlby, 1980:8

According to Raphael (1984:179) the felt loss of the departed partner will vary depending upon the strength and closeness (the attachment) of the 'dyad relationship' (see also Gee, 2001:6). Raphael (1984:179) concludes that couples who have minimal contact and tend to lead separate lives will still feel the loss, but not as greatly as a couple who have closely and intensely felt values, interests, feelings, and sexuality and whose interactions are frequent and prolonged bringing about increased self-disclosure and closeness (see also Martin, 2001:10). Raphael (1984:179-80) describes the difference between a weakly attached couple and a strongly attached couple, noting that strongly attached couples will be greatly traumatized by the loss.

For most marriages, the separation is characterized by the dumper, (the initiator or leaver) and the dumpee, (the *opposer* or the *one left*) (Fisher, 1992:13;

Ahrons, 1999:386; Green, 1998:3; Gee, 2001:7). The effects of separation and divorce differ markedly whether one is the initiator or the opposer. This is especially true in relation to grief reactions. Initiators have already started grieving; opposers are usually taken by surprise (Uren, 2005:7; Ahrons, 1999:387; Green, 1998:3). The dumpee's immediate reaction is usually one of disbelief, shock, outrage and despair, with the dumpee having had no time to prepare, the power balance now being quite unequal. Emotions of grief and rejection are now overwhelming.

Divorcing couples are less likely to have strong relationships; otherwise they would not be divorcing (Sarantakos, 1996:336; Gee, 2001:6). Nevertheless, one party is likely to be much more strongly attached (the dumpee) than the other (the dumper), and hence feel the loss more strongly. A dumpee may therefore have more difficulty coping with a divorce situation (rather than that of death) when he or she thought that the relationship was alright, but has suddenly lost the relationship, yet the ex-partner now lives on elsewhere (gone, but not gone).

As Ahrons (1999:389) and Martin (2001:10) note, sudden departures as found in marital separation (as a precursor to divorce) usually create a severe crisis for the one left behind. Such ultimate rejection and abandonment leads to helplessness and may culminate in acting out behaviour, clinical depression, and suicide attempts. Ahrons (1999:385) notes that for many people, a divorce is the most traumatic event of their life. Usual methods of coping do not work and people act in a variety of strange ways. Coping with such a disaster usually involves stress, crisis, and adaptation.

According to Ahrons (1999:390) when separation occurs there is an instant loss of daily rituals with both the spouse and children. Cups of tea and reading the paper together in bed on the weekends, bedtime chats on the children's bed, reading stories and kissing the children goodnight, all vanish. Raphael (1984:190) also concludes that Birthdays, Christmas Day, Mother's Day and especially Father's Day all become very difficult times for single parents and are highlighted by an increase in especially male suicides during those periods.

5.7.2 Comparisons regarding attachment, loss and grief

The pain of separation tears asunder the bonds of attachment that have developed over many years (Ahrons, 1999:390). Weiss (1982) in Ainsworth (1991:38) notes that persons who have recently ended a marriage and have not yet found a new partner will experience loneliness attributable to a yearning for the lost attachment figure.

Ainsworth (1991:42) notes three basic behavioural characteristics of human sexual bonds. They are reproductive, attachment, and caregiving systems. These three systems create strong bonds between the couple, and usually with their offspring. Much research into human sexual pair bonds has focused on relationship breakup.

'It is clear that the attachment component is long lasting, tending to persist long after the pair has been parted, and even when the parting was much desired. There is a tendency to miss the partner and feel lonely' (Weiss, 1979 in Ainsworth, 1991:43). Imagine then how much more devastating the separation and grief if the parting is not desired.

Despite the rich testimony from history and literature that fathers have a strong commitment to their offspring, the tendency has been to consider the bond of father to child as somehow less deeply rooted than the bond of mother to child

Ainsworth, 1991:40

Ainsworth suggests that there is evidence to indicate that in Western society because fathers are so often preoccupied with a social expectation to be providers and to work that they have little real opportunity to develop the sort of attachment to their offspring as they otherwise might, and for any real mutual bonding to occur. It could be suggested that this is a function of contact time alone.

Assuming that the relationship is not totally negative or destructive, it is likely that the longer the attachment continues, the deeper the bonds will be felt. Ambivalent relationships constitute complications of their own. Having

established the importance of attachment within a family group, what then occurs when that attachment is sundered?

Where children are involved and ongoing contact is required, the attachment can never really be severed nor the grief fully resolved. Where power struggles, custody and financial battles remain, current arguments quickly fuse with an old marital fight. Such 'conflict-habituated' couples remain emotionally attached to each other, although in a negative and destructive way (Ahrons, 1999:392). Ahrons (1999:395) further notes that where such conflict cannot be resolved, 'children ... often lose a relationship with one parent (usually the father), are caught in painful loyalty conflicts about their parents, and suffer irreparable emotional damage'. Such occurrences may be traced to protracted and complicated grief over the loss of the spouse and children.

Weiss (1982:180) notes that many couples who have ended unhappy marriages discover that they are for a time still drawn to each other although they are entirely certain that their love for each other has ended. This would suggest lingering attachment behaviour. Weiss (1982:180) maintains that attachment behaviour at the strongest in infancy and declines in strength gradually; however when looking at the relationships of elderly couples who have been married for a significantly long time it is clear that the attachment bond is significantly stronger.

Weiss (1982:181-2) suggests that in adolescence, attachment is for the first time directed at non-parental figures and is at its strongest, and the loss associated with ending of early adult relationships in adolescence is at its most painful. I would disagree with this statement. Weiss (1982) maintains that the need for close attachments decreases with age. Again, I disagree with this statement.

Attachment is clearly a better basis for a reliable pair bond than the obvious alternative of sexual desire. Attachment once established is highly persistent. It resists extinction even when there appears to be no positive gain from the relationship. Sexual desire on the other hand is sometimes persistent and sometimes not. Attachment becomes more reliable the more established a relationship is. Sexual desire is often less urgent as a relationship is established.

Marris (1982:194) says that humans are not able to make sense of reality without relating reality to their personal lives. When people do not have a crucial relationship nothing seems to make sense any longer and the world has become meaningless. Marris maintains that it is the loss of meaning, not the loss of a loved person that provides grief. As the relationship is no longer central to one's life, the removal of the person does not cause intense grief.

However the resolution of grief is achieved, the recovery from severe loss depends upon restoring the continuity of meaning; until then the bereaved are vulnerable to recurring moods of futility and despair. In that sense all those who have suffered severe loss have to find their own terms in which to restate the meaning for their lives.

Marris (1982:196-197) notes that the loss of a relationship can have a range of individual effects; for example, it can undermine someone's trust in the goodness of life, undermine one's confidence in oneself and as a parent, undermine the worth of making plans for the future, or change profoundly the meaning of all other relationships. This can create a sense of vulnerability, of inescapable fragility, and uncertainty of our ability to protect what we love. It can also lead down the slippery slope of suicidal ideation.

Commenting on early loss and subsequent depression, Brown (1982:282) suggests that a broad range of experiences in childhood and adolescence may increase a later risk of depression. One experience Brown includes is the early loss of parent, noting that there is evidence to suggest that the loss of any close relative early on in one's life may influence the form of later depression.

One very worthwhile future study would be into the experiences and extent of depression in children from divorced families. There remains a gap in research, knowledge and understanding about grief and loss as related to separation and divorce, and as related to attachment and loss compliance as being the source of that grief and loss²⁴. Such a discourse is not currently reflected in the literature.

Weiss (1973:135) further notes that relationship break-ups produce sleep

²⁴ Noting the similarities, yet distinct differences in relation to the death of a loved one.

difficulties, an obsessive review of what has happened, and repeated dwelling upon how things could have been different. Weiss (1982:174) found that individuals who had recently ended marriages reported a feeling state they gradually characterized as loneliness. Their loneliness was not reduced by friendships; friendships did not make the loneliness easier for them to deal with by reassuring them that others felt as they did and that they were neither isolated nor odd.

However, the only relationships that seemed to actually allay their loneliness were those that had some sexual and emotional intimacy that resembled the marital relationship. Such relationships seemed to meet some of the criteria for attachments, and as Weiss (1982:182) notes, attachment and sexual desire are affected differently by threats. When a relationship is threatened, attachment needs become more powerful (as attachment is strongly associated with particular figures and resists redirection) yet sexual desire is likely to be suppressed. However, after the loss of an attachment figure has occurred, sexual desire seems more readily transferable to a new figure.

Thus concludes Weiss (1982:179) marriage not only imposes intimacy and so facilitates attachment, it may also punish with loneliness those people who for whatever reason fail to become attached to their spouses. Nevertheless attachment is not a synonym for love as attachment can exist where love doesn't. Attachment is a component of a relationship characterized by those maintaining them as relationships of love, but attachment seems to be absent from some such relationships.

2.7.2 Phases of Grief, Loss and Mourning

Bowlby (1979:67) acknowledges that people can be 'crushed by grief and die of a broken heart' and that 'jilted lovers can do things that are foolish or dangerous to themselves or others' (see also Crouch and Hinde, 2007:19). Society has found through bitter experience that people who have suffered immensely through separation and divorce may commit suicide and, where children are involved, sometimes murder their children as well (Bice, 2007:1; *Herald Sun* 'Grief Kills', 2003). The reasoning behind such actions requires further research

and is beyond the scope of this study. However, according to Gee and Houghton (2002:105) it is important to note that men who are separated are six times more likely to suicide than are men in a stable marriage.

Gee and Houghton (2002:105) have observed that in relation to the stages of grief 'the bargaining stage is often a big one with men and is usually followed by anger – it's all a part of the grief process involved in dealing with separation' (see also Gee, 2001:7). Worden (1991:22-29) concludes that grief can come in waves, varying in intensity and duration that wash over the grieving person, at times seeming to be totally consuming. The grieving person can feel totally powerless to be able to deal with the grief and it may result in long periods of uncontrolled weeping.

Bowlby (1979:83 and 1980:85) has observed and concluded that there are four phases of mourning and grief experienced by adults who have suffered a major loss (see also Bretherton, 1991a:765). They are:

Table 2.3: Bowlby's Four phases of Grief

Phase:	Observations:
One	Numbness that may last from a few hours to a week and may be interrupted by outbursts of intense distress and/or anger; includes <i>bargaining</i> for the return of the lost loved one.
Two	Yearning and searching for the lost person of significance that may last for some months or even years.
Three	A period of disorganization and despair.
Four	A period of reorganisation, to a greater or lesser degree.

Bowlby, 1979:83 and 1980:85

2.7.3 Psychological and Physiological Reactions to Grief

Psychological and physiological reactions to grief are complex, varied and correlate to a loss of an attachment figure. A number of authors describe a general symptomatology of bereavement that includes physiological reactions to grief of headaches, indigestion, chest pains, palpitations, dysphoria (anxiety & restlessness), weight loss or gain, sleep disturbance, aching and fatigue

(Raphael, 1984:186-189 & 210; Chadwick, 1989:31; Gee, 2001:7-8; Fisher, 1992:110-113; Worden, 1991:22-30). Raphael (1984 216-218) also notes that to this can be added a number of psychosomatic reactions to grief that may include skin complaints, (eg: rashes), viral infections (eg: cold sores), heart problems, and a variety of other 'stress-related' complaints. Depression is a major issue in relation to the reactions of the bereaved, and in its worst form can lead to suicide (Worden, 1991:22-30).

Raphael (1984:184) also describes a literally physical 'separation pain' setting in after the initial shock and numbness of the separation wears off. Raphael (1984:184) defines this as an 'intense physical longing for the presence of the separated partner'. Such pain can be physically felt and is an anxiety for the closeness, touch, sound, sight, and smell of the departed person.

Psychologically, Chadwick (1989:31) notes that divorced men suffer decreased emotional well-being after divorce, reporting depression, sadness, anger, loneliness, anxiety and severe and frequent mood changes. Such men noted that their lives were meaningless, lacked coherence and felt "rootless". They struggled with guilt, felt inadequate as parents, moved into bare and sterile apartments, and had little social contact. They mourned the lost marriage, the lost family, the past life, the future, and what might have been (see also Fisher, 1992:112-113; Bowlby, 1979:132). Raphael (1984:228) concludes that grief related to divorce is intense, but

...is inevitably more complicated [than death related grief] because of the pre-existing ambivalence and the perceived desertion. Guilt levels are high in such bereavements.

Raphael, 1984:228

Raphael also observes that such grief can become blocked through anger and longing and, as Gee (2001:6 & 9) has observed, may take at least a year or longer to resolve. The situation can be exacerbated when guilt and anger remain high, and long-term role difficulties can be more pronounced for the divorced than for the widowed (Raphael, 1984:228).

Gilding (1997:195) reports that Jordan (1988) found that when a wife left the marriage the husband was 'often unprepared and shocked' (see also Uren, 2005:1). Jordan (1996 in Gilding, 1997:195) noted that many respondents to his survey reported 'complaints and symptoms which are recognised in clinical practice as the outcomes of severe loss and bereavement'. Symptoms included distress and difficulties in health, everyday living, household chores, social initiatives, and handling work and finances (Jordan, 1996, in Gilding, 1997:195). Whilst the symptoms Jordan reports are somewhat generalized, they reflect elements of strong grief reactions (Worden, 1991:22-23). Sadly, Blacker (1999:294) reports that

...divorced men have three times the mortality rate of married men and are more prone to stress-related alcoholism and suicide

Blacker 1999:294

Jordan (1996 in Gilding, 1997:198) also reported that for some men (and women), especially those who were left by their spouse, divorce was a 'crippling' experience with one man noting that 'divorce is like death but the body is not disposed of'. Bretherton (1991 in Parkes, Stevenson-Hinde, and Marris, 1991b:21) found that the concept of grief is more a process toward attaining a new identity, rather than a state in itself (see also Fisher: 1992:6).

As noted earlier, research and statistics demonstrate that women are the main instigators of divorce (Maley, 2003:78). They more readily identify problems in their relationships, are more likely to make the decision to leave, and are less likely to attempt reconciliation (Gilding, 1997:195) resulting in men more often being the dumpee, rather than the dumper, thereby becoming vulnerable to experiencing a more prolonged and complicated grief reaction (Egan, 2004:3). Raphael (1984:228) concludes

...the loss of an intimate partner, always imperfectly loved, will inevitably be painful. Not only is there the crisis of loss, but also the difficult longer term social adjustments to new roles, identity, and interaction. The support of significant others will be vital to most of those who are so bereaved, particularly when the loss is sudden and untimely.

Chadwick (1989:30) notes that men suffer emotional reactions to divorce (sometimes acutely) that include denial, anger, and depression, but they generally move towards satisfactory divorce adjustment. Chadwick (1989:30) and Fisher (1992:114-5) further note that the reactions by men to divorce are similar to those noted by Kubler-Ross in her work on death and dying, ie: the process of denial, anger, bargaining, letting go (depression), and acceptance (resolution). Fisher (1981 in Chadwick, 1989:30) posits that 'adjustments to acute reactions usually takes about one year, but can take three to five years' (see also Bretherton, 1991a:765; Fisher, 1992:113-115). Further, Chadwick (1989:31) notes that depression in divorce is a major problem and is highly correlated with divorce, indicating that divorced individuals remain 'significantly more depressed up to four years after the divorce'.

Barlow & Durand (2005:210-211) note that grief may readily develop into depression, which may be characterized by poor appetite or overeating; insomnia or hypersomnia; low energy or fatigue; weight loss, low self-esteem; poor concentration or difficulty making decisions and a feeling of hopelessness (Barlow & Durand, 2005:210). If not resolved, the depression may become exacerbated to develop into Dysthymic Disorder.

Dysthymic Disorder is characterised by 'clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning' (Barlow & Durand, 2005:210). Barlow & Durand note that 'some grieving individuals require immediate treatment because they are so incapacitated by their symptoms' (Barlow & Durand, 2005:210). This research would indicate that five out of the six respondents bordered on Dysthymic Disorder, yet none received treatment.

Further, Kendall-Tackett cites that depression in mothers is 'stressful for infants' and that 'children raised with chronically depressed mothers have been found to have lowered IQ scores and may be at risk for developing depression as they mature' (Kendall-Tackett, 2000:805). There would be every reason to suspect that the same may be true for depressed fathers; that their interactions with their

children may be poor and the mental and emotional development of their children may therefore be at risk.

Physiologically, many effects of divorce have been reported. Research demonstrates that after separation and divorce the nutritional health of many men declines. In particular, evidence suggests that many men will consume more alcohol, smoke more cigarettes, do less exercise, eat “fast food”, eat irregularly and generally sink into nutritional ill health (Eng, et al., 2005:56).

Between 1986 and 1994, Eng, Kawachi, Fitzmaurice and Rimm (2005:56) studied the nutritional habits of 39,731 40-75 year old men and found that ‘Marital termination may have an impact by adversely affecting a range of health and dietary behaviours in men’. Eng, et al., (2005:56) found that such men eat less prepared foods and tend to focus upon convenience, takeaway or “fast” foods, to the detriment of their health and nutritional value.

Eng, et al., found that ‘Increased stress attributable to marriage break-up contributed to negative changes, most probably for cigarette and alcohol consumption ... better diet was a major benefit of remarriage, particularly as it commonly flowed a period in which health may have suffered because of other factors’ (Eng, et al., 2005:56; see also *Herald Sun*, 2004:1 1).

In summarising Dr Eng’s findings, the *Herald Sun* said in relation to mens’ health:

Blessed with a stable marriage, he enjoys a markedly better diet, eating more vegetables, and lean poultry and fewer sugary drinks. But things go awry if he loses her. Then he tends to hit the bottle, eat more fast foods and follow irregular meal times.

Herald Sun, 2004:11.

Dr Eng concluded that ‘men who remarried benefited once more from an improved diet’ (*Herald Sun*, 2004:11). The findings of this research are generally consistent with the findings of Dr Eng et al.

2.7.3.1 Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

One remarkable feature and result of the research is that five out of six of the respondents did not abuse alcohol. This is a most unusual result. Further, all six respondents did not abuse drugs. Curiously, the men in this study almost universally did not become involved in smoking or drinking behaviour (none of the men smoked) and did not overuse licit drugs or use illicit drugs. This is not consistent with the findings of Chadwick, Eng, et al. in that non-custodial fathers generally have been found to have increased their drinking habits.

From a perspective of the custody of children, Chadwick (1989:32) reported that non-custodial fathers experience more depression, more anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and increased problems with general adjustment to life. The closer the father was to his children (the more attached he was), then the more likely such symptoms will be exacerbated. Non-custodial fathers were also found to have increased their drinking habits, felt bewildered, frustrated, impotent, confused, powerless and angrier and more depressed than a father who experienced satisfactory custody arrangements. Chadwick (1989:34) concludes 'considering the stages from the death and dying literature, divorced men do show the emotional reactions of anger and depression to divorce' (see also Gee, 2001:8).

Bereavement and re-establishment will take time in every circumstance. The length of time will vary greatly depending upon the depth of felt relationship held by both the leaver (the dumper) and the left (the dumpee). The ensuing grief reaction may vary from relief and be mild, with re-establishment taking little more than a year. Conversely, difficulties may set in with the grieving process becoming protracted and complicated, possibly taking as long as three to four years or more to finally come to terms with, and for some, never being resolved at all (Gee, 2001:9; Worden, 1991:71).

2.7.4 Grief and Anger

Bowlby (1974:247) postulates why anger occurs when there is a temporary loss of an attachment figure. He concludes that anger following loss serves two functions. Firstly, to assist in overcoming obstacles to reunion, and secondly, to discourage the loved person (the attachment figure) from leaving again. What then of the purpose of anger if the loss is permanent? Bowlby (1974:247)

concludes that during the early phases of grieving the bereaved person does not actually believe that the loss is permanent and that the lost person can be brought back again (see also Worden, 1991:3; Gee, 2001:7).

Bollorino (1996:3) explains that a further descending spiral may develop from a mix of anxiety and anger aroused by actual or perceived threats of desertion, so that furious anger may develop, yet the person dare not express it in case the attachment figure actually does leave, or not return, and hence such anger is then often repressed and re-directed against others. Bollorino concludes

...loss or threat of loss of the attachment figure is seen as the principal pathogenic agent in the development of psychopathology

Bollorino, 1996:3

Further, Bowlby (1974:247) maintains that the bereaved person is reproaching the lost attachment figure who, he contends, is 'at least in part responsible for what has happened'...and to...'in fact have deserted' the attached partner (see also Fisher, 1992:114; Gee, 2001:8). Therefore, anger is directed towards the lost person and towards anyone else who may have been a part of the loss or may be obstructing the reunion.

This may explain why a husband may become so angry with his wife when she leaves him (or vice-versa). The dumped husband is in all likelihood mustering the biological and emotional energy to fight to retain his partner, and secondly, seeking to chastise the allegedly errant partner so that she will not leave him again. In considering the role of anger, Ahrons (1999:388) notes that

...unresolved grieving for losses is a major deterrent to making a healthy adaptation to divorce. Clinicians need to be aware that when anger is the major coping mechanism of a divorcing spouse, uncovering the grief may need to be a very slow process.

Ahrons, 1999:388

The anger may well be symptomatic of the non-acceptance of the reality of the separation; Ahrons (1999:388) further notes that if the acceptance of reality does not occur; the ensuing depression may be so overwhelming, that the person may

not be able to function properly (see also Fisher, 1992:111; Worden, 1991:27; Chadwick, 1989:31).

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the key background, concepts, theories and issues that form the foundations of this research. The nature of marriage and divorce in Australia has been examined and trends in marriage and divorce have been reviewed with reference to the impact of divorce upon spouses, children and families. The research shows the changing nature of families in Australia and that the impact of divorce on the Australian community, both individually and collectively, is enormous.

The history of family law in the western world has been explored and more specifically, the American and Australian experiences. The *Australian Family Law Act (1975)* and *Child Support Act (1988)* were explored, along with recent developments and changes to those Acts and relevant terminology used in the study has been defined and considered as being an important factor in understanding later parts of the research.

The second major section of the chapter explored and considered Bowlby's theories of Attachment and Loss in connection with the marriage relationship, families and separation. The relatively new concept of adult-to-adult attachment was explored, along with differentiating between attachment, bonding and dependency and the various levels of attachment. Grief and loss were explored, along with the physiological and psychological reactions to grief and loss and issues of anger in grief. It can be seen that adults form attachments to their partners and children (and vice-versa). When the attachment is broken, especially suddenly (by the disclosure of an affair or desertion) or against their will, the person who is dumped suffers a grief reaction, and sometimes acutely.

The following chapter will consider the methods to be used to further explore the connections between attachment and the loss of that attachment in relation to the experiences of the non-custodial father.

Chapter Three: 'Making Sense...'

'Making Sense of the Stories people Tell'

McLeod, 1994:105

3.1 Introduction

McLeod (1994:105) notes that narrative case studies use 'qualitative techniques to elicit and analyse descriptive accounts' that will assist the researcher in 'making sense of the stories people tell about aspects of their experience'. This chapter describes the theoretical and academic methods and practical tools used in this research that help to make sense of the stories that have been told.

This chapter describes the proposed study and considers methods of qualitative analysis, naturalistic inquiry and inductive grounded theory. Purposeful sampling is described, along with phenomenological and Heuristic inquiry. The interview process, case study, data collection, and analysis processes are also described, along with a consideration of methodological errors to avoid.

3.2 Theoretical Framework and Research Design

The research is qualitative in nature, conducting an exploration using the primary technique of individual interview within a case study framework. A systematic investigation is undertaken with a small group of respondents to discover and assess key experiences, issues, and challenges facing non-custodial fathers. The research explores the non-custodial father's experiences of attachment, loss and grief and of how such experiences, issues and challenges affected their relationships, and in particular, with their children.

The research was flexible, open-ended and used defined and proven research techniques. It is significant that at the time of commencement of the research project, little other work had previously been undertaken in this field of study. As a result of the research it is envisaged that new questions and problems will emerge that have not been previously considered. Both emic (insider localized)

and etic (outsider generalizing) positions will be utilized including idiographic (case based) 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973:6). The research first takes an emic perspective in that the study is based upon the interviewee's perceptions of their own experiences, and the data and conclusions then formed around those experiences. An etic approach is used when relating the data collected from the interviewees to the academic and theoretical frameworks and in drawing conclusions (Holloway, 1997:53).

The research was conducted in the context of the interviewee's own life, and designed and planned to an extent to still remain flexible so as to allow for emergent and unanticipated issues and events to be explored and taken into account.

3.3 Qualitative Method

Qualitative analysis was seen as most appropriate primary method for this type of research, principally due to the small sample size and detailed intensive nature of the case study interviews. As the quantitative method usually takes a more extensive and statistically analytical approach it was viewed as being unsuitable for the purposes of this research.

3.3.1 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative methodology principally reflects the role of subjective judgment in generating data. Such methodology may typically involve the attitudes or opinions of human subjects and observational research which involves the judgment of an observer, in this case, being the researcher. Common themes are sought from a body of information and interpreted, as are discrepancies and inconsistencies (Isaac and Michael, 1997:218). Qualitative research produces

a description and analysis of reality that is typical for a particular setting by taking into account the conditions and the context under which the phenomenon occur.

Holloway, 1997:79

This is an important observation that should not be overlooked in relation to this research.

3.3.2 Naturalistic Inquiry

The research has utilized naturalistic inquiry methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:289-331), which Isaac and Michael (1997:218) note are strongly akin to qualitative methodology. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Isaac and Michael (1997) note that in building trustworthiness²⁵ into qualitative and naturalistic research methodology, four main emphases ought to be applied, as follows:

1. **Internal validity:** to eliminate rival explanations for the research findings, as opposed to the explanations advanced by the researcher.
2. **External validity:** to generalize research findings from the study to other appropriate settings.
3. **Reliability:** to see if the findings can be replicated more generally.
4. **Objectivity:** to eliminate objective bias by ensuring that methods are public observable and allow agreement by multiple observers. (Lincoln & Guba 1985:290-294; Isaac & Michael, 1997:221).

Issues of interviewer-interviewee trustworthiness were considered in providing for external and internal reliability and objectivity. Within the case study framework, the researcher used tape-recording, extensive note taking and journaling techniques, as well as exploring various issues that arose in greater detail so that extrapolations from the specific to the general could be sought.

3.3.3 Inductive Grounded Theory

Further to the use of qualitative and naturalistic inquiry methodology, the study also takes a grounded theory approach as described by Scott and Usher (1999).

²⁵ In research, the issue of 'trustworthiness' relates to the credibility and validity of the qualitative research method and application.

According to Scott and Usher (1999:41) the grounded theory journey is 'essentially one of discovery - theory develops from the data which are collected and not by the testing of deductively formulated hypotheses'. Scott and Usher, (1999:42) add that 'the emergent theory is "grounded" by returning to the data and validating it against actual segments of the text'. Grounded theory is also seen by Sarantakos (1993: 433 & 434) as the 'direct study of social reality', and induction as 'the process of making conclusions from the specific and the concrete to the general and abstract'.

McLeod (1994:93-96) and Scott and Usher (1999:43) note that inductive grounded theory has three strategies and principles, described as follows:

1. **Accumulation:** the observation and collection of new facts that reinforce existing facts.
2. **Induction:** the described observations and accumulated facts infer some form of law.
3. **Instance confirmation:** further instances of the same facts confirm the inferred law.

This research carried out the task of accumulation by examining literature (existing facts) including contextual information and trends regarding marriage and divorce, the impact of separation and divorce, Australian families and single parent families, legislative background and considerations, terminology and, in particular, Bowlby's theories of attachment, bonding, loss, grief and anger. The research then conducted purposeful sampling via in-depth interviews, and records the information (new facts) as provided by the interview respondents.

The task of induction was performed when the observations, new information and facts were compared to the literature and to Bowlby's theoretical model. The conclusions of the research enabled a form of new "law", hypothesis or theory to be proposed as a result. By grounding elements of the proposed new law to examples of observations and new facts, instance confirmation was also achieved.

3.3.4 Phenomenology

Husserl, (in Sarantakos, 1993:47) argues against positivism²⁶, stating that Phenomenology (of which Husserl was the principal founder) is about people not being passive recipients of the objective world about them, but being 'active creators of their world and have a consciousness that communicates to them in everyday experiences and knowledge'. Patton (2002:107) suggests that Phenomenology does not reject the existence of the objective world, but argues that it is experienced through ones consciousness. Sarantakos (1993:47) argues that Phenomenology is about 'getting at the essence of the experience of some phenomenon' and to 'look beyond the various layers constructed by actors in the real world so that the essential structure of their consciousness and its basic properties becomes clear'. Patton (2002:106) sums up Phenomenology by stating 'there is an essence or essences to shared experience'. It is this "essence" of shared experience that this research seeks to discover.

Patton (2002:107) adds that Phenomenological study 'focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how they experience what they experience'. He maintains that 'there is no separate (or objective) reality for people. There is only what they know their experience is and means' (Patton, 2002:106). Therefore, the Phenomenological method is a suitable approach to research of this nature.

3.3.5 Heuristic Inquiry

Moustakas (1990, in Patton, 2002:107) is credited with the origins of Heuristic²⁷ Inquiry, being a form of Phenomenological Inquiry that brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher, noting that 'the self of the researcher is present throughout the process'. Heuristic Inquiry incorporates 'creative self-processes and self-discoveries'. In the Heuristic method the researcher asks: 'What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?' (Patton, 2002:107).

²⁶ Positivism – Comte's view that society and social relations can be understood by scientific analysis rather than metaphysical assumption (Sarantakos, 1993:3-4).

²⁷ 'Heuristic' is from the Greek word *heuriskein* meaning 'to discover' or 'to find'.

Holloway (1997:88) observes that Heuristic Inquiry is a 'conceptualisation that assists in understanding and guides researchers towards discovery'. It 'explores the process of discovering meaning in the experience of individuals' (Holloway, 1997:89). Patton (2002:107) notes that there are two key elements to Heuristic Inquiry. They are:

1. 'the researcher must have personal experience with and intense interest in the phenomenon under study'.
2. 'others (co-researchers) who are a part of the study must share an intensity of experience with the phenomenon'.

The above two elements are central to this research. The researcher has direct experience of the subject matter, and so do the interview respondents, who, in one sense, can be seen as "co-researchers". Patton (2002:107) further notes that Heuristic Inquiry is not about casual experience, but focuses on 'intense human experiences'. The researcher explores the intense personal experiences of the respondents to give a detailed understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, as Douglass and Moustakas note:

Heuristics is concerned: with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behaviour.

Douglass and Moustakas (1985:42)

The research uses idiographic interpretation²⁸ to research and describe the individual experiences of the small sample group of non-custodial father's so as to gain an in-depth understanding (Holloway, 1997:91). After analysis of information derived from the interviews, explanations were proposed in connection with Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief, and research results have been presented. Tentative applications from the specific to the general are therefore possible, although it is important that such applications are not over-estimated, over-stated or over-applied.

²⁸ *Idiographic* (from idiosyncratic) method is to research and describe individual unique cases, as opposed to *nomothetic* (from the Greek 'proposed law') method, which researches and describes generalities, laws and rules (Holloway, 1997:91 & 107).

To summarise, the study uses qualitative analysis and naturalistic inquiry, combined with inductive grounded theory, purposeful sampling and case studies as seen through phenomenological and heuristic filters to produce an interpretation and a result. The summary is shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.1 on the following page.

3.3.6 Ethical and Privacy Considerations

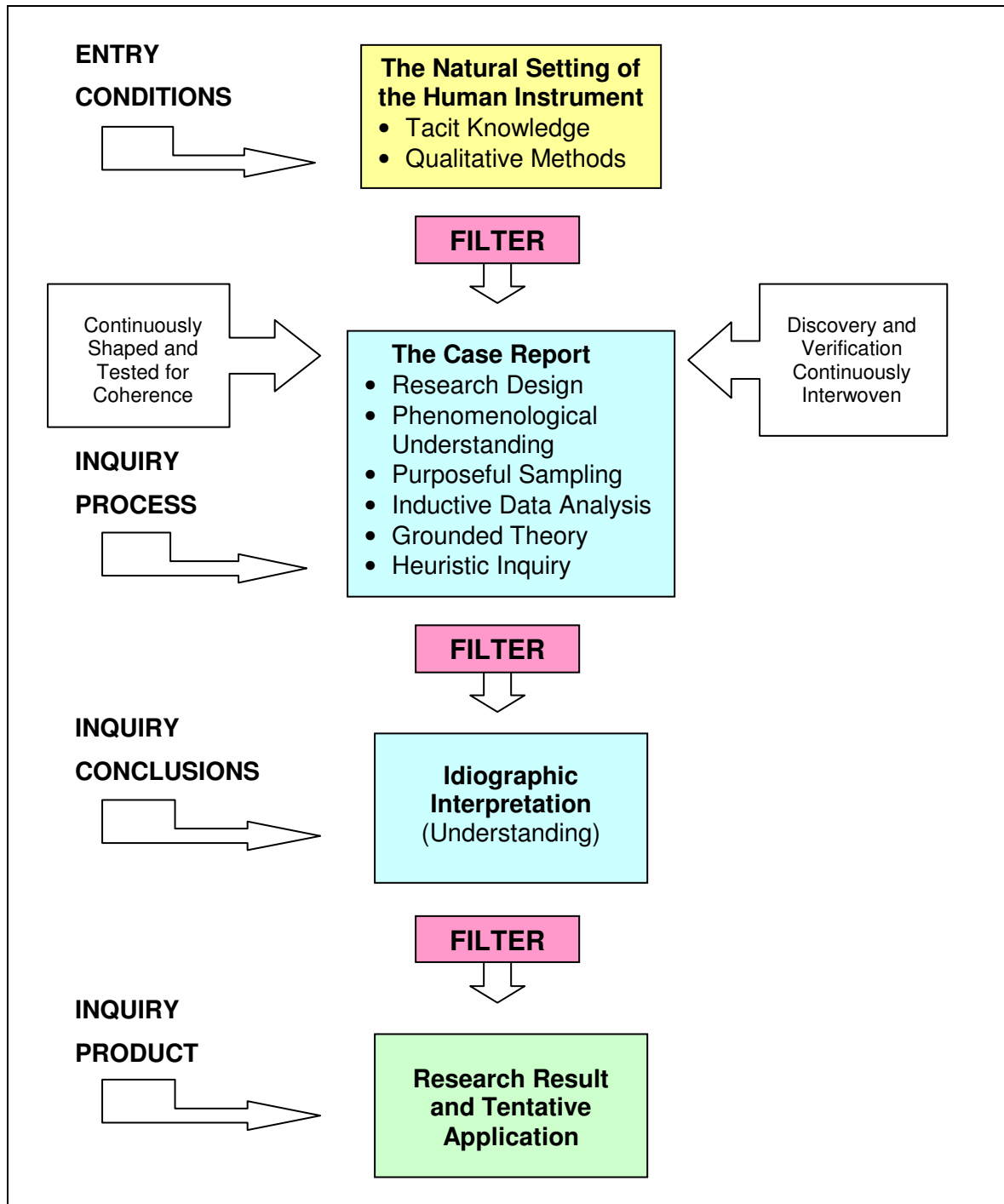
The respondent interviews were structured in accordance with RMIT University's 'Post Graduate Research Rules and Ethics Committee' requirements, and all obligations were fulfilled. The research project's Ethics Application was formally completed and approved by RMIT University's 'Ethics Committee' and all respondents were provided with a 'Plain Language Statement and Consent Form'²⁹. All confidentiality requirements have been rigorously adhered to.

Completed and signed Consent Forms from all respondents are held by the researcher. Interview tape recordings are held by the researcher and kept locked in a safe. The tape recordings shall be destroyed upon completion of the project. All names of all persons who participated in the research project have been changed and no information of a personal nature has been shared between respondents or with any other person either involved with, or not involved with the research project.

To further obscure the identities of the respondents, the details of each respondent's stories have been to some extent mixed with the stories of other respondents (without loss to the content or context of the interview) so that the respondents' identities cannot be recognised by the details of the experiences and their privacy is fully protected. It is important to note that all of the details of each non-custodial father's story are a completely true account as given by the respondent and so trustworthiness has been attained and validity assured.

²⁹ Note that a post-bushfire copy of the Ethic's documentation is unable to be appended as the RMIT University Ethic's Committee was unable to locate a copy of the researcher's Ethic's Application.

Figure 3.1 The Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry



Adapted from: JE793 'Approaches to Research in Education' Class Notes. RMIT University. 2000.

3.3.7 Methodological Errors to Avoid

There are a number of potential errors in this type of research that needed to be avoided. The author sought to be free from a number of the more common errors as discussed below. Isaac and Michael (1997:91) have written in some detail

about a range of common research errors. Errors relevant to this study are as follows.

3.3.7.1 The ‘post-hoc’ error:

‘Post-hoc’ error arises when there is an assumption that simply because one event follows another that there is therefore a ‘cause and effect relationship’; that is ‘after this, therefore, because of this’ (Isaac & Michael, 1997:91).

Post-hoc error may arise from mere coincidence or because of a range of other complex factors that have not been taken into proper account, if at all. Post-hoc error appears to be rather common and may be attributed to a lack of academic rigour, bias, or occur in the promotion of a specific and pre-determined agenda³⁰. The researcher is careful not to make any rash and relies on clear evidence before drawing assumptions regarding cause and effect, any conclusions.

3.3.7.2 The ‘typical case’ error:

A further error to be avoided is that of the ‘typical case’. Isaac and Michael (1997:92) maintain that there is rarely such a thing as a typical case which, when cited, is more often than not ‘usually biased and non-representative’ and is usually ‘more ideal than typical’ in favour of the author’s bias.

The researcher does not maintain that respondents interviewed were typical cases of non-custodial fathers. Indeed, the respondents were randomly selected, albeit purposefully, to investigate a hypothetical connection between an academic theory and each individual respondent’s personal experiences. Each of the respondent’s contributions is individually unique.

3.3.7.3 The ‘experimenter bias effect’ error:

A final potential error to be avoided is that of ‘Experimenter Bias Effect’ or the ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ (Isaac & Michael, 1997:91). This may be difficult to object-

³⁰ Unfortunately, this error is commonly seen in what is often referred to as ‘policy relevant research’ as commissioned by Government or Corporations in pursuit of a pre-determined outcome which matches the Government’s or Corporation’s current policy position.

ively avoid, as a researcher may tend to seek what the researcher hopes (or intends) to find and ignore other evidence, thereby to 'project (bias) into methodology and treatment that subtly shapes the data in the direction of forgone conclusions' (Isaac & Michael, 1997:91).

Particularly during the interview process, there may be a temptation to focus upon specific elements or topics of what the researcher hopes or expects to find, rather than upon the larger whole of what is actually to be found. Indeed, Isaac and Michael (1997:91) suggest that the interviewer may even subtly influence interviewees to give the sort of response that the interviewer wants, and this may be difficult to guard against.

In pursuing a certain hypotheses it is only natural to seek out desirable data that will confirm the hypotheses. Greater effort has been devoted towards actually seeking out data that will not work in favour of the hypothesis and to rigorously, fairly, and as far as possible objectively review and consider all data from a number of perspectives. The researcher has attempted to treat all of the data in just such a rigorous and fair manner.

A further potential pitfall of this type of research is that unless care is taken the researcher could become subjective and this would compromise the integrity of the inquiry process and its outcomes.

3.4 The Technique of Case Study

The research technique or strategy of case study is a comprehensive all-encompassing empirical approach incorporating logical design, and specific data collection and analysis techniques. It is a study which looks intensively at the background, the current status, and the environmental interactions of a given social unit, or of an individual or group, institution or community (Yin, 2003:14; Isaac and Michael, 1997:52 and Stake (1994) in Mark, 1996:220).

Case studies are an in-depth investigation of a specific social unit to give a complete and well-organised picture of that unit. Case studies may encompass an entire life cycle or only a selected intensive segment; they may examine

specific factors or examine a totality of elements. The case study will tend to concentrate on a small number of units across a large number of variables and are useful in pioneering new ground as the source of fruitful hypotheses (Scott & Usher, 1999:88; Isaac & Michael, 1997:52; Stake (1994) in Mark, 1996:219-221; Sarantakos, 1993:306-7).

The case study is:

An empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Yin, 2003:13

Case studies provide useful anecdotes and examples which illustrate more generalised findings, although are difficult to carry out and attract some criticism (Yin, 2003:13; Isaac and Michael, 1997:52). Because of a narrow focus, case studies have limitations regarding how representative they may be. They may have a lack of rigor, may provide little basis for scientific generalisation, and may take too long and produce too much information that is difficult to interpret.

Valid generalisations may not be possible from limited samples and may suffer from the subjective biases of the researcher's preconceptions. Further, certain data may be either included or excluded or assigned high or low significance on the basis of the researcher's subjective interpretations that may influence outcomes (Yin, 2003:10-11; Miller and Whicker, 1999:182; Scott & Usher, 1999:88-9; Isaac and Michael, 1997:52). Nevertheless, Yin (2003:10) maintains that case studies are like experiments and, whilst not generalisable to whole populations, are generalisable to theoretical propositions.

Stake has identified three types of case study which have different goals, as follows:

1. Intrinsic case studies: to better understand a single case.

2. Instrumental case studies: to better elaborate a theory or understand a general social issue.
3. Collective case studies: to better understand a specific social issue or group or class of persons.

Stake (1994) in Mark, (1996:219)

This research utilises the collective case study type as it focuses on a specific social issue which relates to a specific group or class of persons.

3.5 Research Sample

3.5.1 Purposeful Sampling

The research involved utilising the technique of 'purposeful sampling' (Isaac and Michael, 1997:223; Patton 2002:45) to 'understand certain select cases in their own right rather than to generalise results to a population' (Isaac & Michael, 1997:223). Whilst such purposeful sampling may provide understanding of select cases, the results may nevertheless be transferable to the wider population, given due care and diligence in the interpretation and application of research results.

As part of the purposeful sampling method, the research utilised what Isaac and Michael (1997:224) describe as 'homogeneous samples' so as to 'describe a particular sub-group in depth to illuminate major issues'. Patton (in Isaac & Michael, 1997:223) calls purposeful sampling 'powerful' as it provides for 'information rich cases for study in-depth; cases from which one can learn most about issues central to the purpose of the evaluation and the needs of decision makers'. This precisely encapsulates the methodological aim of this research.

The respondents in this research are part of a sub-group referred to as non-custodial fathers. The respondent fathers were purposefully sampled to gain in-depth insights about their experiences. An information rich resource was thereby developed enabling a comprehensive understanding of their experiences, which was then used as a basis to further explore the hypothesis.

Regarding the sample size, seven³¹ non-custodial fathers were to be interviewed and this was seen as a sufficient number. Sarantakos (1993:143) notes that sample size is not relevant if actual numbers are not of primary importance to the research (ie: a quantitative project). The sample size 'should be evaluated in the context of the study' and 'generalisations are associated with quality rather than quantity' (Sarantakos, 1993:143; see also Yin, 2003:10). Stake (1994, in Mark, 1996:221) also argues that the 'opportunity to learn' from a smaller number of individual cases is more important than having a larger sample size.

The terms dumper and dumpee were described in Chapter Two, Section 2.5.3. These terms are important when considering who was to be interviewed. As seen in Chapter Two, dumpers usually feel guilty for hurting a former loved one. They have determined to sever the relationship themselves and leave, and appear (outwardly at least) to suffer less from attachment and loss issues. Conversely, dumpees find it difficult being rejected, hence deeper emotions arise regarding issues of attachment and loss. Because the adjustment processes appear to be different for each, it is the dumpee that this research is primarily concerned with. This distinction is important to make clear from the outset.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study it was important to locate non-custodial fathers who are dumpees. Indeed, the researcher actually found it difficult to locate dumper non-custodial fathers at all, and, once discovered, dumper non-custodial fathers were reluctant and much less inclined to want to talk about their experiences.

The sampling was purposeful and deliberate yet relatively random as contacts were made with non-custodial fathers through casual conversation with a range of different people in a range of different settings. The researcher either met non-custodial fathers personally in random environments, or was given the contact details of separated and divorced men who were non-custodial fathers by other people who were aware of the research project.

Upon being approached, some men were found to be unsuitable for a range of reasons. For some, the events had occurred a long time ago and their children

³¹ Although one respondent later withdrew, leaving only six. See Section 3.5.2.1.

had grown up and were now independent. For others, the events were still too raw and painful; the researcher concluding that it may not be in the best interests of that person to be formally interviewed at that time. The researcher inevitably used some personal discretion as to who would be suitable to be interviewed.

Upon determining who would be suitable to interview and upon formally asking them to participate in the research, the researcher did not have anyone refuse to be interviewed. Eventually, seven 'dumpee' non-custodial fathers were purposefully selected for sampling.

3.5.2 The Research Instrument – The Interview Process

As McLeod (1994:79) notes, interviews are a widely used qualitative data-collection technique and are a flexible way of gathering detailed and personal research data. Lofland (in McLeod, 1994:79-80) describes an interview process whereby the researcher creates a list of potential questions, structures or arranges them into groups according to pre-determined themes to be explored, and determines an effective order in which to ask the questions. This semi-structured interview is viewed as effective whereby the researcher is comfortable and can anticipate in advance the areas where inquiry will occur. It is not an unstructured or open-ended interview process, but has defined start, middle and end points (McLeod, 1994:79-80). This is the interview method and structure adopted for this research.

The interview questions were carefully considered, crafted and categorised. They consist of both "open" and "closed" questions and delve into some deeply personal areas of life. The interviews were to thoroughly explore deeply personal issues, objectively obtain information required for the research, be a positive experience for the respondents and interviewer alike, and ensure that a high level of interviewer skill and competence is utilised to conduct the interviews successfully (McLeod, 1994:79-86; Sarantakos, 1993:189-196).

The study also used the technique of Conversational Analysis as described by Holloway (1997:36). Not only did the interviewer focus upon the spoken word, but

also on the non-verbal behaviour, facial expressions, gestures and other body language, and in particular, the emotions resident behind the unspoken words.

All seven respondents were eager to participate and were keen to have someone to talk to so that they could share their experiences in a personally deeper manner. For most respondents the interviews also proved to be a cathartic experience where they could express their feelings and emotions in a safe environment. All respondents requested various degrees of anonymity.

Respondents were asked to answer the interview questions in an interview of 60-90 minute's duration. Each respondent was asked to agree in writing to the tape-recording of the interview. A range of questions were asked as per the Interview Schedule³². Each respondent was given a copy of the interview questions prior to the commencement of the interview and asked if they were happy to proceed; all agreed.

Each respondent was advised that he was free to decline to answer any particular question and that he may elect to suspend, discontinue or terminate the interview at any stage of the proceedings. Respondents were also advised that if they were to become uncomfortable during the interview then the interviewer will ask the respondent if he wishes to continue with the interview or not. The interviews were not intended to become de-facto counselling sessions. The interviews were held at a variety of venues, being either the respondent's home, the interviewer's home or at a neutral venue as mutually determined and agreed. All of the fathers interviewed were dumees³³ in that their wives chose to leave them.

The seven interviews averaged one and a half hours in duration producing an overwhelming amount of data, some of which has been filtered, other data which remains unfiltered (Schwandt & Halpern in Holloway, 1997:43). Debriefing took place with each respondent after the formal part of the interview had concluded. There was no necessity for gatekeepers (Holloway, 1997:77) and the author had free and ready access (Holloway, 1997:20) to all respondents as required. It was

³² Note that it has not been possible to locate a post-bushfire copy of the Interview Schedule.

³³ However, it later transpired in the interview that 'Ian's' separation had been mutual, and actually implemented by Ian.

not necessary to re-contact any of the respondents to clarify any matter which they had raised as they had all spoken quite openly, clearly and definitively.

Holloway (1997:49) describes the process of the interviewees 'disengagement' after research involvement with subjects. There has been no ongoing dialogue about either the research or the interviews since the time that the interviews took place and the researcher has not had any ongoing contact with the interviewees since. It would appear that respondents involved themselves in the interviews as much for their own personal reasons as for any actual interest in the research or its outcomes.

3.5.2.1 Additional relevant background information:

Originally, the earlier research proposal was to interview twenty subjects and also to hold at least two focus groups. In consultation with RMIT supervisors, such extensive interviewing was deemed unnecessary to achieve a reasonable sample, and the focus groups were also deemed unnecessary for a study of this nature and size. Also, because of the sheer volume of taped information, the interviews were not literally transcribed, but were re-listened to, with relevant note-taking occurring.

In early 2006, well after the interviews had been concluded, one of the interviewees declined to proceed with his participation in the research project. He requested that his involvement in the research be terminated and his material not be used. He also lodged a formal complaint against the researcher with the RMIT Ethics Department.

The respondent was a member of a small community-based Association Committee along with the researcher, and a range of issues arose which polarised the Committee. Unfortunately, it transpired that the respondent and the researcher held opposing views and the respondent attempted to use the researcher's study as a weapon against the researcher in the matter related to the Association dispute. After thorough investigation and consideration, the RMIT Ethics Committee concluded that there was no case for the researcher to answer: This unfortunate occurrence reduced the number of useable interviews to six.

3.5.3 The Data

3.5.3.1 Collection and Analysis

Having read and studied the relevant theoretical and academic background literature in preparation for the interview process, the interviews were commenced. During the course of each interview, extensive note-taking was carried out by the researcher. After each interview was concluded, the researcher listened to the tape recording of the interview once more whilst re-examining the written notes, making relevant additions regarding what may have been missed during the interview itself.

Once the seven interviews were concluded, the researcher was able to identify recurring patterns, categories or themes. Both major and minor themes began to emerge and having re-visited and reviewed each of the interviews it became clear that the categories were 'saturated' (Scott & Usher, 1999:42).

The interview questions brought out key responses that led to the development of major and minor themes, which could be further broken down into component parts, and features of each respondent's replies. These were then documented and a number of tables encapsulating the resultant themes were constructed and are found within the findings contained in Chapter Four, where the themes are outlined and explained in basic form.

3.5.3.2 Data Presentation and Interpretation

The themes, having been described in Chapter Four, are more thoroughly examined and discussed in Chapter Five, with the results being analysed and compared with the academic and theoretical literature and written in an academically meaningful yet readable manner. The inter-relationships between the hypothesis, the academic theory, the data, and the themes were established and synthesized. In some cases, the themes were suggestive of the theory, in others not. By examining the data in relation to the academic theory, themes within the hypothesis were able to be challenged and negated, modified or confirmed.

The three strategies of Inductive Grounded Theory were applied to the data with positive outcomes. Whilst the sample of six respondents appears small, the collection or accumulation of data (1st strategy – refer to page 85) from the respondents nevertheless inferred and reinforced existing facts (2nd strategy). Further, the process of induction infers some form of law with further instances of the same facts confirming the inferred law (3rd strategy), (Scott and Usher, 1999:43).

Generalisability is only possible within a certain context. Generalisability of findings cannot usually be claimed in qualitative research as it produces ‘only a slice of the social situation, rather than the whole’ (Holloway, 1997:78). Holloway notes that ‘the purpose of qualitative research is to uncover the essence of a phenomenon, not to generalise from a single case or a small number of cases’ (Holloway, 1997:79). Indeed, it is the essence of this topic that the research seeks to discover and understand. Nevertheless, it is the researcher’s conclusion that a good deal of generalisability is applicable from the results of this research, and tentative applications, in the correct manner, can be made.

To conclude, the data collection and analysis in this research has resulted in the development of a number of themes through the emergence of a number of recurring patterns. The themes were then matched to the work of Bowlby and other authors and conclusions drawn in relation to matters of attachment, loss and grief.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the academic foundations which underpin the rationale for the research project. The chapter has described the theoretical models used in the research, and the methods used to collect, collate and analyse the data. The theoretical basis and rationale for utilising case studies has been considered by examining appropriate and relevant academic approaches, which include qualitative analysis, naturalistic inquiry, inductive grounded theory, purposeful sampling, and phenomenological and heuristic inquiry.

This chapter has considered the way in which the interviews are to be undertaken, and described the type of dumpee respondent required to give relevance and validity to the research. The use and value of the case study approach has been considered, along with consideration of a range of methodological errors to avoid which informs of possible limitations to the study. .Finally, methods of data collection and interpretation have been considered which shall be developed in greater detail in the following Chapters.

* * * * *

Chapter Four: 'I didn't want the marriage to end'

'Quote was to be here...'

Source was to be here.

NB: Please note that there were no copies of any of the versions of Chapter Four to be found after the bushfire. The chapter was approximately 12,000 words in length and contained extensive and detailed data and respondent quotations in relation to the findings derived from the interviews held with each respondent. The data was arranged in themes and sub-themes, and within each theme the relevant experiences, observations and comments of each respondent were recorded. What follows is a reconstructed recollection of the essence of what was contained in this chapter based upon the headings found in Chapter Five.

4.1 Introduction

There were six interview respondents who were all given pseudonyms to keep their identity anonymous. They were named 'Tom', 'Ian', 'Trevor', 'George', 'Simon' and 'Malcolm'. The research methodology focussed upon a small number of 'in-depth' respondent interviews rather than a larger number of broad, yet less detailed interviews.

The interview questionnaire instrument was divided into themes to make categorisation and analysis more manageable. Interviews were held over an average duration of 90 minutes in a comfortable and relaxed setting at either the respondent's home or the researcher's home. Each interview began with the respondent being invited to 'tell their story' about what had happened with the marital separation and the events that followed on thereafter up until the present time. From there the interview moved through in methodical fashion to the various themes and sub-themes.

The interview questionnaire and hence the findings and analysis were all divided up into four main themes, along with sub-themes that warranted further exploration, as follows:

4.2 Theme One: Justice Issues

This theme considered the respondents' experiences, views and perceptions of the justice or 'fairness' of their experiences under the following sub-themes.

4.2.1 Sub-theme Separation and justice issues

This sub theme considered how the respondents' experienced the actual circumstances of their separation and of how he subjectively viewed it in relation to what was 'fair', 'just' and 'right'. This sub-theme also examined the respondents' view of the Family Law Act and its impact upon his individual circumstances. All respondents felt as if they had been 'badly done by' in this area.

4.2.2 Sub-theme Grief reaction

This sub-theme considered the respondents' grief reaction to the separation and events that ensued thereafter. It examined and considered all of the usual signs and symptoms of severe grief and loss and all respondents were found to be so affected.

4.2.3 Sub-theme Depression and anger

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of depression and anger, noting their signs and symptoms of depression. All respondents were found to have been significantly depressed, with all experiencing at times greater or lesser degrees of mild to extreme anger.

4.2.4 Sub-theme Child Support

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of the payment of Child Support and the Child Support system. Remarkably, all respondents were consistent payers of their Child Support obligations; however, none of the respondents were happy with the system which they felt was unfair and required

them to pay too much, especially for children that were still toddlers. Most respondents thought that the child support payments were in fact ex-spouse support payments and they were annoyed that they had little or no say in how the payments were spent.

4.3 Theme Two: Health & Wellbeing

This theme considered the respondents' experiences, views and perceptions of their own personal health and wellbeing during and after the separation under the following sub-themes:

4.3.1 Sub-theme Personal Health

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of their personal health in broad subjective terms and in particular to areas where they felt a large degree of personal loss. The sub-theme also considered the following two issues:

4.3.1.1 Housing

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of the loss of their usual and past place of residence and the effect that had upon them and their children, which in almost all cases was quite deleterious.

4.3.1.2 Loneliness

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of new found loneliness and the effect that had upon them. In all cases this was found to be quite problematic and in some cases severe.

4.3.2 Sub-theme Physical Reaction

This sub-theme considered the respondents' actual physical reaction to the separation, including issues such as nausea, debility, rashes and other illnesses that the respondents attributed to their separation and loss of their spouse and children.

4.3.3 Sub-theme Nutrition

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of food consumption, diet and nutrition. In almost all cases the respondents ate poorly and lost weight, although in one case the respondent reported eating much better and in another, the respondent reported gaining a good deal of weight.

4.3.4 Sub-theme Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of alcohol consumption and the use of other licit or illicit drugs. Surprisingly, in all cases the respondents reported that they did not 'turn to alcohol' or make use of other licit or illicit drugs. This was against the trends shown in most literature.

4.3.5 Sub-theme Suicide

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of suicidal ideation and any attempts at suicide. In all cases the respondents had contemplated suicide with one or two having made a plan, but fortunately none attempted it.

4.4 Theme Three: Children Issues

This theme considered the respondents' experiences in relation to their previous and ongoing relationships and involvement with their children under the following sub-themes:

4.4.1 Sub-theme Access with Children

This sub-theme considered the respondents' overall satisfaction with their new situation. In all cases the respondents were found to be most dissatisfied with the new arrangements with the exception of one father who had managed to arrange majority care of his children in view of the fact that his ex-spouse was increasingly moving towards a position where she did not want the full-time care of the children.

4.4.2 Sub-theme Relationships with Children

This sub-theme considered the respondents' overall satisfaction with their relationships with their children. In all cases the respondents were found to be most dissatisfied with the way that their relationships were being interrupted, stunted, and the negative personal distance being created between them and their children due to them not being able to play an active and daily part in their children's lives.

4.4.3 Sub-theme Attachment and Loss Compliance

This sub-theme considered the respondents' 'attachment and loss compliance', which is defined as being the degree with which the respondents' experience complies with, or conforms to, what would be expected with a strong or weak attachment to their children and their reaction to the loss of that attachment. It was found that five of the six respondents demonstrated strong attachment and loss compliance in that their reaction to the loss of their spouse and children had a severe and debilitating effect upon their lives.

4.4.4 Sub-theme Education

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of their involvement, or lack of involvement in their children's ongoing education. All respondents had little or no ongoing involvement in their children's education, and all were dissatisfied with what became a decreasing level of involvement over time.

4.5 Theme Four: Relationships with Others

This theme considered the respondents' experiences in relation to their previous and ongoing relationships with others around them, particularly friends and work colleagues. It was found that all respondents had difficulty in this area, with many friends being lost as a part of the process, but with others providing strong support.

4.5.1 Sub-theme Ex-wife

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of their ongoing involvement with their ex-wife. It was found that all six respondents had a hostile relationship with their ex-wife, finding it difficult to forgive her for leaving them.

4.5.2 Sub-theme Extended Family

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of their involvement with extended family, in particular, their ex-spouse's side of the family. Five of the six respondents were unhappy with the new arrangements and felt cut-off or removed from relatives, especially grand-parents from their ex-spouse's side of the family.

4.5.3 Sub-theme Re-partnering

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of re-partnering following their separation and divorce. Four of the six respondents had re-partnered although in some cases the new relationships were not going well, with those who had re-partnered the earliest having the most difficulties.

4.5.4 Sub-theme Special Events

This sub-theme considered the respondents' experience of their involvement in special events such as Christmas Day, Father's Day and school holidays. Five of the six respondents reported much dissatisfaction with their current level of involvement and of their difficulty and anguish about participating in such events.

4.6 Issues of Attachment, Loss and Grief

The chapter then considered in quite some detail the issues that arose for each respondent in relation to their attachment to their spouse and children, their response to the loss of that attachment, physical proximity and involvement, and the grief reactions that ensued as a result.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Finally, the Findings Chapter was reviewed in its entirety giving an overview of what had been discovered from the respondents as a result of the interview process.

* * * * *

Chapter Five: ‘Divorce is like death...’

‘Divorce is like death but the body is not disposed of.’

Male divorcee, cited in Gilding, 1997:198

5.1: Introduction

In many of the divorce recovery seminars he held, Fisher found that participants would say to him words to the effect of ‘how did you know about the conversation that I had with my ex-wife the other day?’ Fisher replied to them:

Although each of us is an individual, with unique experiences, there are similar patterns that all of us go through while ending a love relationship. When I talk about patterns, you will likely find it will be more or less the pattern you’re experiencing.

Fisher 1992:6

It is the ‘patterns’ that Fisher mentions that this research has examined in more detail by hearing directly from non-custodial fathers themselves. Patterns, or themes, including issues of justice (feeling fairly treated), issues of child support (maintenance) and levels of access (contact), issues of physical and mental health (sickness, grief, depression and anger), issues of custody (residence), issues of what occurs during contact or access times (ie: activities, relationships, etc), and continuance and development of short and long term relationships (attachments) with their children (and their ex-spouses) and other family members have all been considered in this research.

The initial observations derived from the interviews appear to confirm the researcher’s hypothesis, in that each respondent experienced a personally intense and chronologically and socially significant grief reaction surrounding issues of attachment and loss regarding the sudden loss of his wife and children. The findings also appear to confirm much of the existing research material about the response of males to divorce and their experiences thereafter.

An area of particular concern and focus for this research is the mental health of non-custodial fathers during the first two years after separation and the related issue of suicide. In this research, whilst all respondents contemplated suicide, thankfully, none attempted it.

Respondent Tom said 'the first year was like a dream; the second year reality hit - and it was worse'. He said, 'I felt detached from society and unrelated to the world'. As Weitzman (1985:xiii) confirms, the fathers felt a great sense of loss, having now passed the point where one can chose another course of life.

5.2 Justice Issues

The separation and divorce experience was extremely traumatic for five out of the six respondents³⁴. This confirms Fisher's view (1992:13, 90-104 & 300) regarding the differing experiences of 'dumpers' and 'dumpees'. Nevertheless, despite the trauma, all of the fathers interviewed ultimately survived the rejection, grief and loss experience.

5.2.1 Separation and justice issues

Five out of the six respondents did not want to get divorced and this is a usual dumpee response (Fisher, 1992; Maley, 2001 & 2003; Gee & Houghton, 2002). Having been dumped in the first place by their partner when they felt that they had 'done nothing wrong' (Jordan, 1996) they thought that it was unfair that they should be so heavily penalised (Maley, 2001 & 2003).

Five out of the six respondents had issues regarding the nature of justice in their particular case, and with the "no-fault" system in principle, expressing great dismay regarding the perceived lack of justice regarding their individual situation. Again, this is a usual dumpee response (Kruk, 1992; Fisher, 1992; Jordan, 1996; Maley, 2001 & 2003; Francis, 2005). All of the respondents talked of issues that can broadly be described as 'justice' issues, and which fall into the following three main areas:

³⁴ Rather than trauma, Ian felt more a sense of relief.

Firstly, whilst in some circumstances the respondents could see (in retrospect) why their marriage was in trouble, they did not think that their partner should have had the unilateral right to end the relationship and break up the family. All six respondents viewed the marriage as a legally binding contract that their partner should not be just allowed to break without consequences or penalty and just be allowed to walk away from the marriage removing their children and their assets from them in the process (Maley, 2001 & 2003; Francis, 2005). This appears to be a common theme amongst dumper non-custodial fathers.

Secondly, pursuant to the above, the respondents were also incensed about having to pay large amounts of child support about which they had no input as to how it was spent. Five out of the six respondents thought that the majority of their payment was spent on supporting their ex-spouse and the money did not go towards the child. Some respondents elected to pay their child support liability directly towards school fees and/or health insurance and/or child care centre fees so that they at least felt as if the payment was being directly spent on the child.

Thirdly, as a part of their concerns about justice and fairness, five out of six respondents complained bitterly about their ongoing lack of contact with their child, including not having any ongoing involvement in the child's education (Baker & McMurray, 1998). These respondents reported that their ex-partner regularly frustrated their attempts to have regular contact with their child and, in concert with school staff, managed to keep them out of the education process, especially when it came to making decisions about the child's subject choices and sporting involvements. Nevertheless, these respondents were still expected by their ex-spouses to pay school fees and the cost of books, excursions and sport equipment.

The respondents expressed the view that if separated people, both men and women, think that there is no fault, no blame, no accountability, then it gives them permission to do and act as they please without real legal or moral ramifications (Maley, 2001 & 2003; Francis, 2005). The first casualty to this is justice, the right and wrong of the circumstances and events. Then come the individual repercussions, which are always originally extensively underestimated

by the sepearatees (both husband and wife) the children, grandparents and extended family. As Tom so succinctly put it: 'This is just so unfair'.

Francis (2005:8) argues that 'The most significant threat to marriage is the "no-fault" principle facilitating divorce on demand'. Frances adds, 'In no other area of legal contract does the law reward the one who breaks the contract and punish the victim' (2005:8). Francis' statement sums up the view of the respondents.

Under the old "fault" paradigm, certain behaviours were viewed as inappropriate within a marriage relationship, and indeed, for many still are; morally, nothing has changed. If either party transgressed the marriage contract, then there was grief for everybody, but there were consequences for such inappropriate behaviour, and ultimately, some sense of justice (albeit usually inadequate) for all, to both the transgressor, and the transgressed.

Under the new idealistic "no-fault" paradigm, no moral judgement was attached to any behaviour within marriage as being either appropriate or inappropriate³⁵. If, as from 1975, there was no longer any such thing as inappropriate behaviour, then there could be no guilt; if there were no guilt, there would be no grief and if there were no grief or guilt, then everyone could ideally find their own justice. If you just "didn't love your spouse any more" then you could just walk away without any regard or consequence. This was the ideal, yet to attempt to eradicate fault and erase guilt is simply ideological nonsense and quite contrary to human nature.

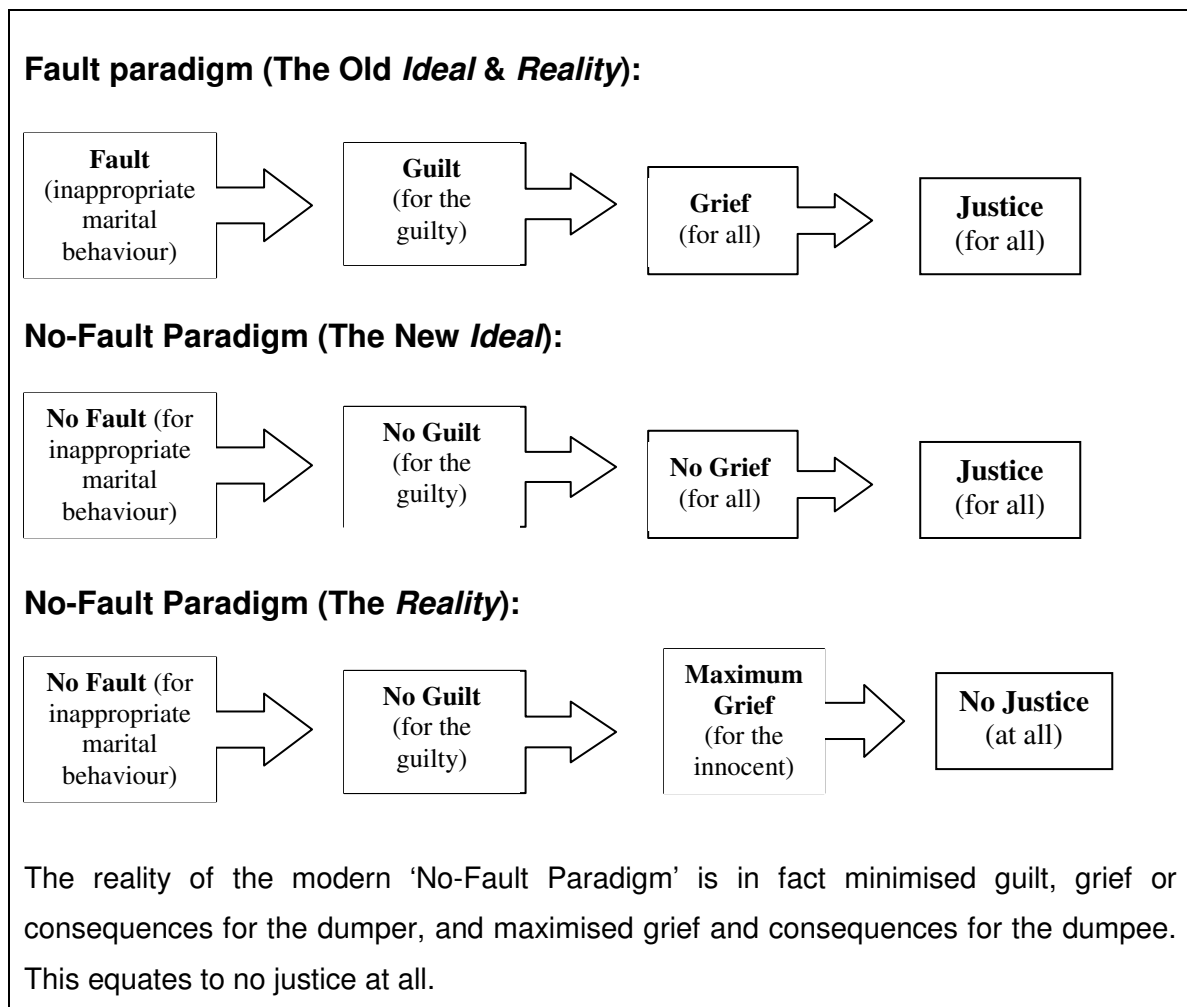
The reality under the idealistic "no-fault" paradigm is that people choose, for whatever reason, genuine or inane, to behave badly, or to walk out of their marriage (be the dumper) and then are able to be largely immune from many of the consequences, especially the emotional ones. So there is no justice for anyone; not for the transgressor (no accountability), not for the transgressed (no compensation, but penalty instead), not for the children (denied contact with a parent, usually the father), not for the extended families (also denied contact with the children); everyone loses (Kruk, 1992; Jordan, 1996; Gee, 2001; Maley, 2001

³⁵ Notwithstanding matters such as domestic violence or other matters that are actually illegal behaviour.

& 2003; Gee & Houghton, 2002; Francis, 2005). Attempts to do away with concepts of right and wrong, of fairness, are ultimately completely foreign to human nature, and will be resisted strenuously. The cry will always ultimately be made “But this is not fair!”

The old and new paradigms of fault, guilt and justice are shown diagrammatically in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: Divorce Law and the Fault/No-Fault Paradigm



Many individuals and groups have for a very long time been calling for reform of this foundational “no-fault” flaw in the Family Law Act. It is a flaw that has been strongly identified by the respondents in this research. It is time that this foundational matter was taken seriously and addressed.

5.2.2 Grief reaction

Five out of six respondents suffered from an acute grief reaction, and this is typical (Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Green, 1998; Gee, 2001; Martin, 2001; Crawford, 2002; Gee & Houghton, 2002). Notwithstanding this result, all six respondents suffered from subsiding grief, and this is also typical. Whilst one respondent (Ian) did not have an acute grief reaction, he nevertheless did suffer a degree of grief regarding the loss of his previous lifestyle, his close proximity to his children, his shared past and his lost future (Myers, 1985; Worden, 1991).

Respondents described a loss of self-esteem, a loss of self-confidence, a loss of weight and a sense of loneliness. The most commonly expressed emotions by the respondents were, in order of experience, shock, anger and depression, and this accords with the literature (Chadwick 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Martin, 2001).

Tom exhibited many of the overt symptoms of the stages of grief and loss. Indeed, the researcher was particularly struck by the profound level of grief, and ongoing grief, which Tom displayed, even nine years after the event. Tom says that he 'lost the ability to dream, to have a vision for the future, and that's only just coming back after six years' and that he 'gradually came to terms with it and was accepting it' (the divorce).

Trevor reported that he still 'has vivid memories' of the whole separation period. He says that his primary emotions at the time of the separation were, in order of importance, grieving, depression and anger. He says that he was 'committed to the marriage, but felt betrayed' and that he 'had the rug pulled out from under him'. He said 'I had to voluntarily give up the children as I had no choice'. After enduring some terrible hardships, Trevor has persevered with his relationship with his children, going to a lot of effort and expense to visit and maintain contact. He believes that this has paid off.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the dumper non-custodial fathers suffered a great deal of grief subsequent to the loss of their marriage, spouse, children, lifestyle and anticipated future (Bowlby, 1980; Raphael, 1984; Myers, 1985; Worden, 1991; Kruk, 1992; Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; *Herald Sun*, 2003; Egan, 2004; Hannum and Dvorak, 2004; Small, 2005).

5.2.2.1 Depression and anger

As noted above, all of the six respondents experienced grief of one type or another. Five of the six respondents indicated either directly or indirectly that they experienced depression at one level or another. Care must be taken to differentiate between the “feeling sad” levels of depression to being clinically depressed. All respondents experienced depression characterized by poor appetite or overeating; insomnia or hypersomnia; low energy or fatigue; weight loss, low self-esteem; poor concentration or difficulty making decisions and a feeling of hopelessness (Worden, 1991; Barlow & Durand, 2005).

Whilst all respondents experienced various degrees of depression, none seemed to progress to the Dysthymic Disorder (Barlow & Durand, 2005:210-211) stage to the point where they were significantly impaired in their daily functioning, although Tom, Malcolm and Trevor may have come close. Fortunately, none became so depressed that they attempted suicide. It is also worth reiterating that none of the six respondents sought professional help to deal with their depression.

Further, whilst Kendall-Tackett (2000:805) has discovered that depression in mothers is ‘stressful for infants’ and that ‘children raised with chronically depressed mothers have been found to have lowered IQ scores and may be at risk for developing depression as they mature’ the question should be asked if the same may be true for depressed fathers? If the father’s interactions with their children are also poor then is the mental and emotional development of their children also at risk?

All respondents exhibited varying degrees of anger about what had occurred. As Bowlby has noted (1979:69) aggressive behaviour can play a key role in the biological maintenance of affectional bonds in two ways. Firstly, by attacking and frightening away intruders, and secondly, by punishing an errant partner, be it a wife, husband or child.

Here is a paradox that Bowlby suggests explains much puzzling and pathological aggressive behaviour This behaviour, which Bowlby essentially implies is a

biological self-defence mechanism, would certainly account for much aggressive behaviour attributed to fathers who have been forcibly removed from their attachment figures, being their wife and children. Bowlby also notes that ‘any attempt by a third party to separate the bonded pair is strenuously resisted’ (1979:69). Could this also provide a partial explanation as to the aggressive behaviour of many non-custodial fathers towards the Family Court and Child Support Agency?

Fortunately, none of the six respondents became so angry that they became violent. It is also worth reiterating that none of the six respondents sought professional help to deal with their anger. Clearly, depression and anger feature highly in the experiences of non-custodial father’s during and after the process of separation and divorce (Bowlby, 1974 & 1979; Chadwick, 1999; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Bollorino, 1996; Ahrons, 1999; Kendall-Tackett, 2000; Gee, 2001; Barlow & Durand, 2005).

5.2.3 Child Support

All six respondents had issues with the child support system and this is usual (Price, 1997). However, curiously, five out of the six respondents did not have a child support debt, and this seemed rather unusual. Nevertheless, as Trevor put it ‘as if things were not bad enough already, along came the Child Support Agency’.

Despite their feeling of injustice and unfairness, and despite their unpleasant interactions with the CSA, all respondents met, or attempted to meet, their Child support obligations. There is no clear explanation for this, other than each respondent felt compelled to obey the law³⁶ and were “law-abiding citizens” who sought to do the “right thing” by their children and society. There was nevertheless a very large degree of resentment against their former spouses in relation to the payments (Jordan, 1996; Green, 1998).

A number of the respondents said that they really thought their child support

³⁶ In reality, did they have any choice?

payments were actually about the 'redistribution of wealth from men to women', especially in relation to the calculated rates for younger children. The respondents felt that each contact with the CSA (or the Family Court system) simply served to 'reopen the gaping wound'. This situation was made worse for Trevor as he had remarried and was not only paying Child Support for his four children in Western Australia (who he rarely saw), but was also providing for his new wife's two children. Meanwhile, the Child Support Agency, whilst knowing where Trevor's new wife's non-paying ex-husband lives, operates his business and knows that he earns well over a six-figure income, insists they cannot get any payments from him. This type of situation appears common and the inequity of it must be addressed (Myers, 1985; Kruk, 1992; Fisher, 1992; Jordan, 1996; Sarantakos, 1996; Edgar, 1997; Tacey, 1997; Green, 1998; Ahrons, 1999; Alexander, 1999; Amato, 1999; Brott, 1999; Greenwood 1999; Gee, 2001; Maley, 2001 & 2003; Price, 2001; Crawford, 2002; Gee & Houghton, 2002; King, 2002; Hannum and Dvorak, 2004; Marsh, 2004; Child Support Agency, 2005; Francis, 2005; Karvelas, 2005; Small, 2005; Australian Government, 2006a; Trewin, 2006; Dunlevy, 2008).

5.2.4 Theme Summary

The concept of justice is a major issue for the respondents and has a flow-on link to issues of child support. Their experiences were made all the more difficult to deal with as they were compounded by grief and depression.

It could be argued that elements of the grief and subsequent depression experienced may be linked to the perceived lack of justice and fairness also experienced by the respondents, and, as seen in the next section, may also have an impact in relation to overall physiological, psychological and emotional health.

Grief is a natural part and process of suffering loss, but does not necessarily need to be linked to depression. It would appear that depression following grief may be linked to the circumstances of that loss and the events following soon after. Worden (1991:30) notes that whilst many of the physiological symptoms of grief and depression are similar, it is the loss of self-esteem that turns grief into depression. Worden (1991:31) notes that Freud thought that in grief, the world

looks poor and empty, whilst in depression the person *feels* poor and empty. It would seem that five of the six respondents experienced both:

The concept of “no-fault” divorce and its ramifications for child support payments is clearly problematic. It is unlikely that until this foundational issue is resolved the experiences of many dumptee non-custodial fathers shall be any different.

5.3 Health and Wellbeing

The respondents consistently reported areas of personal loss in many areas of their lives. Their loss particularly affected their overall sense of self-esteem and can be summarised into the following areas:

- Loss of sense of self - who am I now? ‘I was a husband and father, yet now I have no-one and am no-one. I am alone, it’s only me and nobody cares.’
- Loss of manhood - as a man I am a failure. ‘I have failed to provide for the needs of my wife and family. As a man I have failed my wife as a husband and I have failed my children as a father.’
- Loss of sexuality - my masculinity has been drawn into question. ‘My wife has chosen someone else over me, or worse still, my wife has chosen no-one over me. I am that bad that she would rather be by herself than be with me.’
- Loss of direction - now I am derailed and off course. ‘Before I knew where I was heading, I had goals and aims in life, plans for our family; now I have nothing. I don’t know where I’m going and I have no idea how I’ll get there or why I’ll even bother going there.’
- Loss of confidence - I am such a failure I cannot be anything. ‘I certainly cannot do anything right. I am no good and will never be able to achieve anything. What I thought of as my own ability was obviously a lie. I really am hopeless; I’m quite useless really.’

- Loss of competence - I am such a failure I can't do anything. 'Clearly I couldn't manage a relationship with my wife, or with my kids, so what's the point. Obviously my level of skill in relationships is way below par; I'm hopeless; I'm not good at anything.'
- Loss of past history - my past is gone. 'All of our shared experiences, our extended family, our shared life, our photo albums, our whole life together, her side of the family, it is all gone and all meaningless. What was it all about? Did it ever happen? Did it even exist? Do I even care?'
- Loss of future - I have no future. 'Without my wife and children there is nothing. I have nothing left to look forward to. There is no point or purpose to work, to making an effort, to having goals, dreams or aspirations. My children are gone and I am too old to have any more - what is the point of anything? There is no point.'
- Loss of employment - I can't work. 'Indeed, there is no point in me working. The reason I was working so hard is now gone, so what's the point; I might as well give up. In fact, if all I'm working for now is to pay the child support and I don't even get to see my kids, or have a say in how it's spent, then forget it - I'm not interested, I'd rather not work at all!'
- Loss of residence - my home was my castle. 'I've even had to move out of my own home. All the work that I put into making that place a home for our family, the money I spent, the time that it took, all for nothing, just so she can have it all; I really miss that place, and I didn't even get to keep hardly any of my favourite things. Now I'm stuck in this grotty flat and I hate it.'

These are the sorts of sentiments that were expressed by the respondents and have been heard expressed repeatedly by dumper non-custodial fathers (Fisher, 1992; Green, 1998). Is it any wonder to see why suicidal ideation figures so highly in the lives of dumper separated and divorced non-custodial fathers? For some, the despair and futility of it all becomes too much and tragically they choose to succumb. There is an adage that says 'suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem' and this is very true. It is proven to be true by the many

non-custodial fathers who survive and get through the feelings of futility and despair and come out the other side.

5.3.1 Housing

All of the respondents spoke of the difficulty of losing their family home which in all instances was left with the ex-spouse as a part of the settlement, Additional grief and loss was experienced by the respondents' loss of their 'home base' which in many cases had taken a lot of time and expense to create.

The loss of their home had a particularly difficult impact upon the non-custodial fathers as they had not only lost their family home (either forcefully or by their own consent) they now faced having to make the transition from living in their own comfortable home to a small flat or caravan some distance away.

The experiences of the non-custodial fathers confirms the findings and observations of Green, 1998; Brott, 1999; Gee and Houghton, 2002; Dowrick, 2004; & de Vaus, et al, 2007, who note that the loss of the family home can have significant and detrimental psychological effects on separated fathers, and their children, especially during visitation where there is often neither the room, nor the activities for proper father-child engagement.

5.3.2 Loneliness

In relation to being lonely, one of the respondents commented that after his wife and children left, the greatest challenge he faced was that of loneliness. The feeling was common amongst the respondents, that they were completely alone, that were invisible, that few people, if anyone, gave a damn about them, and that the feeling is inconsolable (Weiss, 1973 & 1982; Trewin, 2006b). One respondent said 'It seems as if your world has stopped but the rest of the world goes on around you, and that literally nobody even notices that you're there. It is very demoralizing, very depressing; a lonely sense of hopelessness.' Feelings such as these reflect the sense of loss regarding both what has gone in the past, and what was anticipated to have come in the future, but is also now gone.

This confirms the work of Weiss (1973:81) who notes that 'there is no greater loneliness that when a marriage breaks down', especially if the relationship has degenerated to the point where communication no longer occurs. He notes that the loneliness of the divorced and widowed can be worse than those who have never married, especially for those who married young, as they may have never learned to live with loneliness in their earlier life.

Respondents noted that they also lost friends and relatives as a result of the separation and divorce, and this compounded their loneliness, which for most only found resolution with new social activity and a new relationship.

5.3.3 Physical Reaction

Five out of six of the respondents experienced physical reactions that were severe and ongoing. This is a usual response as found in the literature (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001). All six respondents experienced anger, a usual initial grief and shock response experienced by dumppees, and five out of six of the respondents experienced depression, again being a typical and usual response. All six respondents experienced disturbed sleep patterns; a finding wholly consistent with the literature and four of the six respondents lived alone after their separation, again being typical and unfortunately all too common occurrence (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001).

Simply functioning at a basic level on a day-to-day basis became very difficult for most respondents, especially during the early stages after the separation. They found it difficult to get to sleep at night, often staying up (watching television or trawling the internet) until the early hours of the morning. This of course increased tiredness and meant that many found it difficult to "get going" in the morning. Five of the six respondents stopped working soon after their separation, with all six experiencing lethargy and depression for some time. Eventually, at differing intervals ranging from a few weeks to a number of months all six respondents started working again.

For five of the six respondents daily life became exceedingly difficult for many months following their separations. Some felt that they could no longer work and either scaled down or gave up their employment. However, none of the respondents reported reducing their work hours or quitting their jobs specifically in order to avoid paying child support.

The respondents initially tended to “let themselves go” in terms of personal care, and hygiene, ie: teeth cleaning, deodorant, clothing, etc. and can be dogged by chronic health difficulties, ie: skin rashes, back pain, headaches, etc.

Whilst five out of the six respondents were involved in less exercise, one respondent became obsessed with fitness (push-bike riding), which he described as a ‘coping mechanism’ response to his situation. Whilst none of the respondents would probably recognise or state it, each situation would also appear to symptomatically correlate with the loss of an attachment figure, being both the children, and in most cases, the spouse as well (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001).

5.3.4 Nutrition

All six of the respondents experienced a negative effect in relation to their diet, which is usual. Five of the six respondents consumed an increased amount of take-away food, which is again usual, and five out of the six respondents experienced weight loss, again being a usual response. This result is confirmed by the work of Eng, et al. (2005).

For the first few months all six respondents reported that their diet had been negatively affected by the separation with all but one respondent (George) moving towards easy and convenient take-away or fast-food meals. Even just the thought of having to prepare a meal was too much of a drain on six of the respondents. Typically, the meals were McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Red Rooster, hamburgers and Pizzas. Some frozen ‘TV’ type dinners of the McCain’s variety and packaged dehydrated Continental type meals were also heavily utilised from supermarkets by the six respondents. The respondent

(George) who did not resort to take-away or fast foods reported that his diet actually improved after the separation; a part of his recovery was to focus upon cooking good and healthy meals, even though he nevertheless lost weight in the early months after the separation. One respondent (Simon) reported that he put on a great deal of weight (which he still retains) due to his extensive eating of take-away food.

Research demonstrates that after separation and divorce the nutritional health of many men declines. In particular, evidence suggests that many men will consume more alcohol, smoke more cigarettes, do less exercise, eat “fast food”, eat irregularly and generally sink into nutritional ill health (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001; Eng, et al., 2005). This was also the experience of the respondents.

5.3.5 Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

One remarkable feature and result of the research is that five out of six of the respondents did not use or abuse alcohol. This is a most unusual result. Further, all six respondents did not abuse any drugs. Curiously, the men in this study almost universally did not become involved in smoking or drinking behaviour (none of the men smoked previously) and did not overuse licit drugs or use illicit drugs. This is not consistent with the findings of Chadwick (1989), Green (1998) or Eng et al. (2005) in that non-custodial fathers generally have been found to have increased their alcoholic drinking habits after separation (see also Raphael, 1984; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Sarantakos, 1996; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001; Crawford , 2002).

One reason for this variation may be that most of the respondents indicated that excessive alcohol or other drug abuse had not previously been a part of their lifestyle (“so why start now?”) and also expressed a ‘faith and trust in God to see them through the tough times’. Indeed, one respondent (Simon) who had been a “bit of a drinker” actually stopped drinking altogether for three years. Only one respondent (Trevor) said he experienced a “brief bout” of excessive drinking, but that it only lasted a short time (“a couple of weeks”).

5.3.6 Suicide

Each person who experiences separation and divorce has a unique physical reaction and emotional response to it. By far the most extreme response to separation, divorce and loss of access to children, by non-custodial fathers in particular, is suicide. Five out of the six respondents reported suicidal ideation - they seriously contemplated killing themselves - and this is consistent with the literature (Douglas, 1967; Chadwick, 1989; Sarantakos 1996; Blacker 1999; *Herald Sun*, 2001; ABS, 2005; Bice, 2007; Crouch & Hinde, 2007). Fortunately, all six did not attempt suicide, and this may be considered to be unusual, although no statistical analysis has been made.

The most recent ABS Statistics show that in 2005, 1,657 males committed suicide in Australia. That's 4.5 men killing themselves every day; one male suicide every five and a half hours, every day of the year and this figure does not include other male deaths that cannot be classed as suicide as the actual intent of the deceased remains unknown³⁷. Suicide is a major issue facing both non-custodial fathers and the community generally, although remains firmly hidden from the community due to a media blackout of the subject to avoid copy-cat suicides. In relation to non-custodial fathers, the subject of suicide contains enough material for another research project of its own, as they are viewed as being highly represented in suicide statistics (Fisher, 1992; Green, 1998; Brott, 1999; Crawford, 2002).

All respondents to this study had episodes of suicidal ideation, either before or after their separation. Fortunately however, for one reason or another (and all had very different reasons) none chose to follow through with their ideation. Whilst some respondents made detailed plans of how to carry out their suicide, none of them actually attempted suicide, citing various reasons from not having the courage, to thinking it selfish regarding their children's future, to the "intervention of God" preventing them. There is no discernable pattern.

Separation and divorce have produced many unintended consequences from the

³⁷ For example, a man who crashes his car into a tree so that it appears to be a road accident.

desperately tragic and sad, to the quite bizarre³⁸. Many of these consequences can be directly traced to the effects of attachment breakdown, loss and grief, and feelings of rejection by individuals and as expressed at times collectively.

5.3.7 Theme Summary

The theme of Health and Wellbeing has shown that the experiences of dumper non-custodial fathers is very challenging, and includes loss of self-esteem and confidence, loss of housing, loneliness, poor nutrition and overall condition, possible alcohol and other drug abuse, and the over-arching and very real spectre of suicide.

Fortunately, the respondents in this research did not succumb over the long-term to the obvious physical signs of deterioration in physical health. However, in relation to the psychological and emotional trauma, healing is likely to take a great deal more time to achieve.

5.4 Children Issues

The respondents were universally unhappy with their relationships with their children. They described issues of access, geographical location, regularity of visitation, involvement in education, negative influences of new partners, and grappling with the fact that the children were no longer present in their everyday lives as all being sources of constant emotional pain.

Whilst none actually recognised it as such, what they were actually describing was the effects of a broken attachment and their response to the loss of major attachment figures in their life.

5.4.1 Access with Children

Five out of six of the respondents had regular contact with their children, which is

³⁸ Ranging from murdering one's ex-spouse, to murdering one's children, to murdering Family Court Judges (or their wife), to blowing up buildings, to forming vigilante groups, to forming mens' action and/or support groups, and staging individual protests.

unusual (Australian Government, 2006c; Trewin, 2006c). However, all six respondents said that the level of contact they had with their children was inadequate; this concurs with the literature (Baker & McMurray, 1998; Wroe, 2003; National Marriage Coalition, 2004).

They further felt bewildered, frustrated, impotent, confused, powerless, angrier and more depressed than fathers who experienced satisfactory custody arrangements (Chadwick, 1989:32). Non-custodial fathers may suffer the significant effects of what could be termed "multiple bereavement" through the loss of their wife and one or more children. This is consistent with the loss of primary attachment figures.

5.4.2 Relationships with Children

All six respondents said they were dissatisfied with, and have less than satisfactory relationships with their children. They felt that the lack of time they were able to spend with their children contributed largely to the poor relationships. They also thought that in many cases their ex-partners created barriers to prevent them from having adequate or fulfilling access.

There is no doubt that for the respondent non-custodial fathers the access arrangements, the amount of involvement, and the quality of their relationships with their children was grossly inadequate (Chadwick, 1989; Sarantakos, 1996; Hines, 1997; Baker & McMurray, 1998; Dickson, Charles & Craddock, 1998; House of Representatives, 1998; Alexander, 1999; Maley, 2001 & 2003; Crawford, 2002, Page & Bretherton, 2003; Wroe, 2003; Egan, 2004; National Marriage Coalition, 2004; AMP.NATSEM, 2005; Ruschen, Prior, Sanson & Smart, 2005; Australian Government, 2006c; Trewin, 2006c).

5.4.3 Attachment and Loss Compliance

The critical part of this research shows that all six respondents had attachment and loss compliance issues. Attachment and loss compliance was earlier defined in Chapter Four as being the degree with which the respondents' experience

complies with, or conforms to, what would be expected with a strong or weak attachment to their children and their reaction to the loss of that attachment.

Five of the six respondents demonstrated strong attachment and loss compliance in that their reaction to the loss of their spouse and children had a severe and debilitating effect upon their lives. There is little doubt that a connection can indeed be made between Bowlby's theories of attachment and loss and the experiences of dumpee non-custodial fathers.

As has been noted in earlier chapters, the role of attachment in relationships, especially between a child and an adult, has been clearly defined amongst a wide body of literature and research. What has not been so clearly defined or described are the effects of a loss of attachment on an adult in relation to a situation or circumstance, in this case separation and divorce, whereby the child attachment figure is lost (Harlow, 1958; Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1974, 1979 & 1988; Brown, 1982; Marris, 1982; Weiss, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Collins & Read, 1990; Ainsworth, 1991; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Worden, 1991; Bretherton, 1991a; Parkes & Hinde, 1992; Bollorino, 1996; Ahrons, 1999; Egeland & Erikson, 1999; Department of Human Services, 2000 & 2004; Fricker & Moore, 2002; Fraley, 2004; Sonkin, 2005; Treasure, 2005; Van Wagner, 2007). Attachment and loss compliance is an important part of this research and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

5.4.4 Education

All respondents had little or no involvement in their school-age children's education, confirming Baker and McMurray's 1998 findings. All five respondents³⁹ said that they were dissatisfied with their level of involvement in their children's education and that it had decreased over time. This is usual and in accordance with other research (Baker & McMurray, 1998).

A negative social stigma was especially felt to be attached to the non-custodial father in the school setting where the five respondents described feeling rather

³⁹ George's children were not of school age.

like 'a pariah' and 'some sort of child molester type person' as a result of the separation. Again, this concurs with the literature (Sarantakos, 1996; Baker & McMurray, 1998; House of Representatives, 1998; National Marriage Coalition, 2004). Some respondents thought that this was most likely as a direct result of false, misleading or exaggerated information told to school staff by their ex-spouse, and they were very annoyed about that as it dramatically reduced their ability to have a working relationship with the school.

The five respondents wanted to be involved with their children's education, but most felt 'driven away' and 'unwelcome' to participate. It would appear that the custodial parent (in this case the ex-wife) controlled the child's educational agenda, with assistance from the school institution. This is a situation that has needed to change for some time so that both parents can play an equal part and role in their children's education.

Fortunately, changes made to the *Family Law Act* in 2006 in relation to shared parenting and a presumption of 'equal shared parenting' may mean that non-custodial parents are able to have greater involvement in their child's education. However, this remains to be seen, as a memorandum issued to principals of independent schools in South Australia still seems to reinforce many of the pre-existing restrictions exercised against a non-custodial parent (Anderson, 2007).

5.4.5 Theme Summary

The theme Children Issues is a pivotal part of this research, as it defines and describes the nature of the respondent's non-custodial father's relationship with his children by way of attachment and involvement. The theme has considered the father's actual physical access to his children, and the quality of their relationships. In this research, both have been found to be inadequate for the respondents.

Attachment and loss compliance has also been considered, and is the subject of more detailed analysis later in this chapter. It is clear that all respondents (except Ian) have experienced a strong negative reaction to the loss of their spouse and children, indicating that a strong level of attachment was in place at the time, that

the attachment was severed, and significant emotional distress encountered as a result.

Finally, the level of the respondent's involvement in their school-age children's education was examined, and again found to be typically grossly inadequate, with all respondents having less involvement in their children's education over time. Whilst changes have been made to the law in this area, it remains to be seen if the legislation will alter what appear to be ingrained patterns of behaviour by custodial (residence) parents and educational institutions in relation to educational access by non-custodial fathers.

5.5 Relationships with Others

Maintaining relationships of both a work and a personal nature became difficult for some respondents. All respondents reported that to a greater or lesser degree they withdrew from many forms of personal and social contact, and this is consistent with the literature (Sarantakos, 1996; Maley, 2001; Wroe, 2003; AMP.NATSEM, 2005; Trewin, 2006c). Some respondents indicated that they withdrew from relationships with workmates, and all indicated that their social relationships were particularly adversely affected. All respondents confirmed that they felt all alone and that no-one really understood or had any idea what they were going through. Most respondents insisted that no-one could possibly have any idea of how they felt unless the person had actually been through it themselves.

Respondents reported a clear social stigma about being a separated non-custodial father, especially with their friends. Some respondents noted that men were wary of them in relation to their own partners in case the non-custodial father expressed some "interest" in the friend's partner, and likewise, in case the non-custodial father's friend's wife expressed interest in the recently separated friend. This experience tended to be a contributory factor towards the demise of some friendships and further isolation in some social settings whereby other men did not include the non-custodial fathers in socialising where the mens' female partners were present.

Socially, reactions towards the respondents were on a continuum of sympathy (especially soon after the separation event) to disdain and distance. Curiously, most respondents reported in their own way that their pre-separation friends fell into one of three categories. The friends either:

1. Chose between either the father or the mother and maintained an ongoing and sympathetic friendship with that person only.
2. Departed altogether and did not stay friends with either party.
3. Stayed friends with both parties, although this tended to be rather rare and did not endure, with the person(s) ultimately falling into one of the above two categories.

Either way, the separated parties could expect to lose about two-thirds to three quarters of their pre-separation friendship group, usually necessitating the establishment of an all new friendship group.

5.5.1 Ex-wife

All six respondents said that they have a hostile relationship with their ex-wife and this is in accordance with the literature (Sarantakos, 1996; Jordan, 1996; Maley, 2001; Wroe, 2003; AMP.NATSEM, 2005; Trewin, 2006c). Whilst there may be an apparent media generated urban myth that ex-spouse can nevertheless “live happily ever after”, it is by far the exception rather than the rule, and that is confirmed in the literature (as above) and via the experiences of all six respondents in this research.

In nearly all cases, the respondents found it very difficult to even consider forgiving their ex-spouse for what had occurred, and most seemed to remain quite bitter long after the separation and divorce had occurred, being consistent with the findings of Jordan, (1996).

5.5.2 Extended Family

Five out of the six respondents said they were dissatisfied with their relationships with their extended families, and this is a usual response (Seppa, 1995; Brott, 1999). In particular, grandparents and relatives (uncles and aunts) missed out on regular, if any, access with their grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Again, this accords with the literature, which indicates that it is particularly difficult for relatives of the non-custodial parent to remain in contact with grandchildren, nieces and nephews after separation and divorce (Seppa, 1995; Brott, 1999).

Fortunately, changes to the *Family Law Act* in July 2006 have introduced certain rights to extended families, and in particular for grandparents, to have contact with their related children whereby grandparents who are of the view that they are being denied contact with their grandchildren can make an application to the Family Court for contact orders to be issued. However, it remains to be seen whether or not many grandparents will want to instigate Court action to have their right to see their grandchildren legally enforced.

5.5.3 Re-partnering

At the time of the interviews, four out of the six respondents had entered into a new relationship and this is not unusual. The waiting time for the respondents before entering into a new relationship varied from six months to six years, which is also viewed as usual. Most of the respondents yearned for and became sexually active at the earliest opportunity, perhaps validating the observations of Weiss (1982) and Ainsworth (1991) in searching for a new partner to overcome the loneliness attributable to a yearning for the lost attachment figure.

Most of the respondents are now in new relationships, which most describe as more fulfilling than their earlier partnerships. Most have learnt from their experiences and are happier than before. In one case however, the respondent is now unhappier than before.

Ian remained single for many years and continued to have regular access with his two boys. Recently, Ian remarried but his eldest boy does not like his father's new wife, so has stopped visiting; Ian now needs to have access visits with his eldest son elsewhere. Ian's new wife does not like Ian's eldest son either, so has

not been happy to have him in their unit, although she is happy to have and baby-sit the younger boy. Ian's new marriage relationship is not going well and they have many issues to deal with. It appears that some men who "jumped straight into a relationship" found that the relationship was not a success and did not last. This is especially compounded if the couple married early.

"Rebound" relationships are rarely successful and this has been borne out by both the experiences of the respondents, and in the literature (Weiss, 1982; Fisher, 1992; Green, 1998).

5.5.4 Special Events

Five out of the six respondents said they were dissatisfied with how special events were managed within the now separated family unit, and this is a usual response (Dye, 1997; Green, 1998; Brott, 1999; Stewart, 1999; Swardenski, 2008). There is no doubt that Christmas is an exceedingly difficult time for non-custodial fathers, as is Father's Day and the father's birthday (Ahrons, 1999; Raphael, 1984). There is a great deal of emotional pain present at such times, producing symptoms of physical illness and depression along with a range of other emotional effects (eg: crying, isolationist behaviour, excessive eating or drinking, spending sprees).

Especially during the early years following separation and divorce, these events remain difficult for dumped non-custodial fathers to manage.

5.5.5 Theme Summary

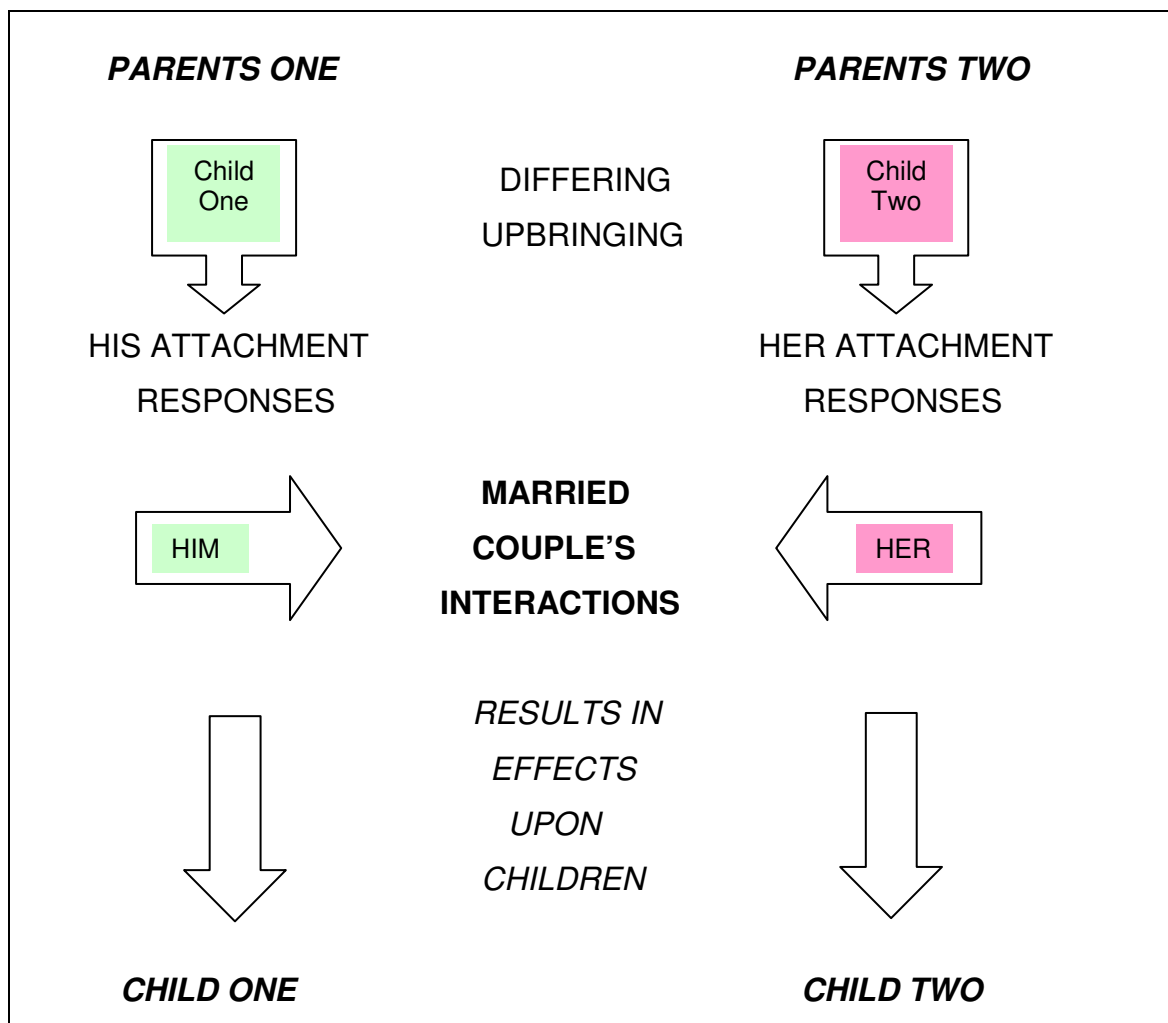
There are few new revelations to be found amongst these themes, only confirmation of existing knowledge. What is of concern, however, is that a number of the respondents had entered into relationships with new partners, and those new relationships do not appear to be very satisfactory. This may correlate with findings that second marriages have a higher failure rate than first time marriages.

5.6 Issues of Attachment, Loss and Grief

NB: The following sections had been completed in the most recent pre-bushfire version, but were lost in the bushfire.

This research asserts that the attachment between a parent and child is a lasting connectedness that is two-way - being equally strong between child-adult and adult-child, and that it is stronger than the idea of simply bonding. Any disruption to the connection, such as brought about by divorce and a non-custodial situation, where one parent sees little of his or her child(ren), can have serious and lasting repercussions to not only the connectedness of the child-adult relationship, but also to the adult-child relationship.

Figure 5.2: Generational Attachment Cycle



What then occurs with children when one attachment figure leaves the child's environment and returns only spasmodically? Clearly, there will be an effect upon the child's relationship with the attachment figure, and the relationship can only be but diminished. Furthermore, deviant patterns of attachment behaviour can be developed.

Grief:

References:

Marris, 1958; Bowlby, 1979 & 1980; Weiss, 1982; Raphael, 1984; Bretherton, 1991a; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Seppa, 1995; Green, 1998; Ahrons, 1999; Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Gee, 2001; Martin, 2001; Crawford, 2002; Gee & Houghton, 2005; Uren, 2005; Healy, 2006; Bice, 2007; Crouch & Hinde, 2007;

Attachment is not Dependence:

References:

Hurding, 1985; Ainsworth, 1991; Bretherton, 1991a; Parkes & Hinde, 1992;

Attachment vrs Bonding:

References:

Bowlby, 1979; Ainsworth, 1989; Kruk, 1992; Fraley & Shaver, 1999; Egan, 2004; Baldini, 2006.

5.6.1 Implications for Separation and Divorce:

The stronger the attachment the more pain that will be caused upon the loss of the attachment figure (Reference).

Women who have ended their marriages have often said they became "dis-engaged" or "dis-attached" from the relationship or. "left the marriage emotionally" (which may equate to a similar thing) a long time before the actual separation occurred⁴⁰. For reasons that are different for every individual case, one marriage partner disconnects from the relationship and the attachment to the

⁴⁰ This sort of comment is, anecdotally, attributed far more often to women than to men, but may simply indicate and reflect that women recognise and are able to verbalise the gradual process of dis-engagement far more readily than men.

“attachment figure” or “significant other” is broken down. From that point onwards, unless the attachment can be recovered and re-constituted, there is probably not much that can be done to save the relationship. For most marriages, this is usually a gradual process that occurs over some time, except for a catastrophic event that may occur, such as infidelity or the death of a child for which the partner is held accountable.

It stands to reason that the stronger the attachment, the greater the devastation of the loss. Those not particularly strongly attached to their partners or children will not feel the loss as greatly (Fraley, et al). It is curious that no-one (or ‘few’ & why is it curious: Refs?) really disputes the reality of human attachments and attachment behaviour theory. However, the subject rarely appears to be clearly stated, addressed or acknowledged in the world of popular culture and the media, yet its impact remains so remarkably profound upon everyday relationships and lives, especially in matters of marriage, family and children.

Many non-custodial fathers often do not have a residence large enough to accommodate their children and have few activities for the children to participate in at their often cramped and/or shared premises see Brott.

One ex-husband made the comment

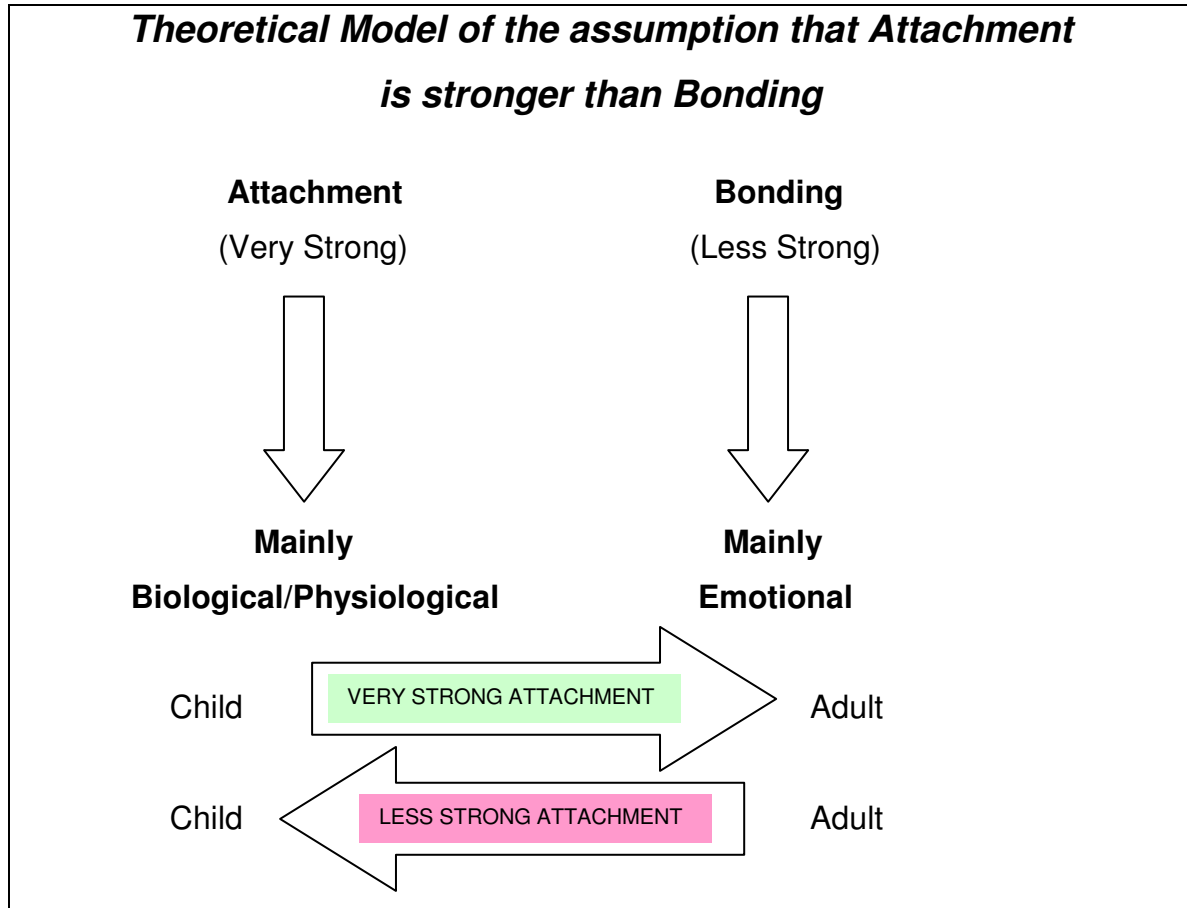
...it's as if she has died and the children have died with her. One minute they were all here, the next minute they're all gone. But they're not dead. They are living somewhere else, somewhere where I can't be with them or see them when I want to...

‘Despite the rich testimony from history and literature that fathers have a strong commitment to their offspring, the tendency has been to consider the bond of father to child as somehow less deeply rooted than the bond of mother to child’ (Ainsworth, 1991:40). It has now become more acknowledged that a father’s bond is equally as strong as the mothers. Chadwick reports that non-custodial fathers experience more depression, more anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and increased problems with general adjustment to life than do other fathers

(1989:32). The closer the father was to his children prior to separation, the more likely such symptoms would be exacerbated.

Figure 5.3:

Theoretical Model of Assumed Attachment versus Bonding Relationships.



Living alone a risk factor, See Raphael, 1984:199 & Pp210 & Campbell/Pike Pp4.

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed issues identified in the research as being critical to the responses of non-custodial fathers to their experience of separation and divorce. Justice issues had a profound effect upon the mental health of the respondents as they tried to grapple with issues of “fairness”; Personal health issues by way of the respondents physical reaction, nutritional requirements, use (or non-use) of alcohol and other drugs and contemplation of suicide proved to be challenges that all faced. Issues of access to, and the education of their children also proved to be large challenges. The respondents’ reactions to their relationships with their

children was a pivotal part of this research, as it defined and described the nature of the respondent dumppee non-custodial father's relationship with his children by way of attachment and involvement. The fathers' actual physical access to their children and the quality of their relationships was considered in detail, and both have been found to be most inadequate.

Finally, the chapter has considered the theme of attachment and loss compliance. It is clear that all except one of the respondents experienced a strong negative reaction to the loss of their spouse and children, indicating that a strong level of attachment was in place at the time that the attachment was severed, and significant emotional, psychological and physical distress was encountered as a result.

* * * * *

Chapter Six: 'I do not think it has been for the best'

'I do not think it has been for the best. I have lost everything: the love of my wife and the life of my son. I am unable to be the father I wanted to be.'

Male divorcee, 'Warwick', in Green, 1998:3

NB: Please note that the following chapter was the first version of the Conclusion chapter. A subsequent second version was completed in early January 2009; however, it too was consumed by the bushfire. Whilst some of the recommendations may not appear consistent with, or to have originated from the data revealed in Chapter Five (Analysis), they are nevertheless recommendations which were derived from the original yet missing Chapter Four (Findings) and reflect the views of the respondents in their interviews.

6.1 Introduction

This research set out to show that there is a connection between the experiences and reactions of non-custodial fathers to separation, divorce and the loss of regular access to their children, and Bowlby's theories of attachment loss and grief. The research has done that.

It can be concluded that in a specific and defined situation where a female partner leaves her male partner against his wishes, taking the children to reside with her, then is it likely, indeed probable, that if the (dumpee) father has a strong attachment to his (wife and) children he will suffer from a significant and acute grief reaction that is akin to the death of his wife and children. It is also likely that the greater the father's level of attachment to his (wife and) children is, the greater the intensity of his grief reaction is likely to be.

However, it must be conversely noted that given different circumstances, being that that if the father is relatively happy to see his wife and children leave (indicating a low level of attachment) or, if it is the father who chooses to leave

the marital home (becoming the dumper) and leave his wife and children, then there is likely to be little if any obvious grief reaction.

The research has also shown that the experiences of the respondent non-custodial fathers are, with one exception, consistent with the referenced literature, the exception being in relation to the respondent's lack of alcohol and other drug misuse. Whilst none of the respondents found the experience of separation and divorce pleasant, and whilst some of the respondents indicated they had grown as a person as a result of the process, all were of the view that they would rather it hadn't happened and that their original marriage relationship and family had been a success.

6.2 Context

The experience of separation and divorce is placed within the context of Australian culture. The contemporary western culture tells us to 'have a career, limit or delay having children as long as possible and don't let the children inhibit your freedom' (LaHaye, 1982:23). Yet what is the outworking of such a culture? Hughes (1983:12-21) has described five heavily culturally influenced reasons why marriages (and hence families) in western society are crumbling.

1. Society has an increasing *acceptance of temporary or serial marriage*. It is now understood by many that when entering a marriage, it would be nice if it lasts, but that it's not really expected that it will. It's a modern form of 'pot-luck' and Russian Roulette, no longer "till death us do part" but "til divorce us do part", that is, if it "doesn't work out" or "we don't love each other any more". If children are involved, the view is that "they will be OK" and "they will survive".
2. Couples have *inadequate preparation for marriage*. Many couples have unrealistic expectations of what marriage really entails or what it is really about. Many such unrealistic expectations arise from the Mills & Boon type novel and Hollywood movie industries. This research has seen that fewer couples today are married in a ceremony that truly represents or understands the nature of Christian marriage and fewer still go through a pre-marriage preparation course.

3. The prevalence of *sex prior to marriage* has been attributed to high divorce rates. This research has described where Sarantakos suggests that pre-marriage co-habitation (ie: “living together”) has been strongly and positively linked to higher divorce rates (Sarantakos, 1996:340). Many couples may marry on the basis of physical/sexual attraction and involvement that is *Eros* love, rather than the deeper unconditional committed love that is *Agape*. Even the affectionate love of *Storgé*, or the brotherly/sisterly caring love of *Philia* may not be enough to hold a couple together (Lewis, 1963; Wright, 1983:105).
4. The *changing of male and female roles* within marriage has been attributed to many marital breakdowns. The fixed roles of old have become fluid roles. Role confusion results in a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what, resulting that nobody is clear about what they should be doing. Consensus prevails and power struggles emerge leading to conflict and a lack of direction. Spousal relationships, children and stable human development all suffer. Added to this is the emergence of “the working mother” which has added a whole new range of stressors to the average family.
5. The romantic love that established the marriage proves inadequate to sustain it. Romantic love is indeed important to the establishment of a marriage but of itself will not be a sufficiently strong enough base upon which to build a lasting marriage and family. The media in all its forms heavily promotes this aspect of marriage to the exclusion of more important relational facets that will provide for a successful and lasting union (Hughes, 1983:1 2-21; Wright, 1983:5).

Dobson (1996:196-7) maintains that many married couples have an unrealistic view of marriage that has been created by the media. Romantic excitement has become the most important aspect of marriage and ‘when this “feeling” component of the relationship is missing, the family is doomed. It’ll just have to be scrapped. Not even the welfare of the children is important enough to preserve the marriage’ says Dobson. Many years ago there was a strongly held view that marriages ought to “stay together for the sake of the children”; however,

apparently the opposite view now prevails, that a divorce ought to occur for the sake of the children (Voth in LaHaye 1982:161). Adherents to this view are clearly unaware of the lifetime ramifications of family breakdown upon children and parents alike.

And so Hughes concludes:

We face a culture which mocks long-term relationships, despises effort, ridicules discipline and prefers to accumulate things rather than develop relationships, and seeks its own self-centred pleasure at the expense of another's.

Hughes, 1983:22

If the broader cultural existential factors as described above are combined with the personal behavioural attachment factors as described in this research, then the implications for spousal and family relationships are clear. For many, separation and divorce will be an inevitable outcome.

It is of concern that this situation indicates that as individuals we lack an understanding of the essential elements our human interpersonal relationships of which we receive little or no information or training about throughout our lifetime, yet play a major role in how we live out our lives and of what will happen to us in our relationships. As long as the above continues, western society may well be destined for continued personal and greater collective pain.

As this research has shown, schisms of divorce and remarriage break the flow of normal life cycle development and may result in dysfunctional families and human beings. After divorce, a range of new issues to be dealt with are introduced, ie: remote access to children, step children, having to care for children that are not ones own, having other adults raise ones own children when one may wish to be raising them oneself but is not allowed to, and many others. There is much emotional pain that has been shown to make the successful transition between the various life stages of human development more difficult. Given the failure of one marriage and family, it may then become even more difficult to negotiate the new issues and tasks of a second family.

So for many, rather than being one continuum of developmental stages from the cradle to the grave, life will begin to more likely resemble a game of snakes and ladders. One might successfully negotiate a group of developmental life stages only to find that via the tragedy of family breakdown and divorce or of sickness and death, one has to start all over again. The dating scene, the courting scene, remarriage, stepchildren, new babies at a late age and the implications of that for later life developmental stages, all must all be dealt with, and are by no means easy.

6.3 Answering the Research Questions

The research questions specifically related to the experiences of non-custodial fathers following separation and divorce and of how their relationships with their children have been affected as a result. Further, the research questions considered if there is any connection between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief.

The research questions were:

1) What are the experiences of non-custodial fathers?

The research has shown; both in the literature and through the interviews with the respondents that their experiences during the process of separation and divorce, and the time ensuing from that period were not at all pleasant. The respondent non-custodial fathers did however note that they got through it all and that they survived.

2) What challenges do such experiences present to them?

The research demonstrated both through the literature and through the interviews with the respondents that they experienced a myriad of challenges. The challenges included issues related to physical and emotional health, housing, employment, finances, extended family (relatives), old and new friendships, access, contact and relationships with their children, their children's education, involvement with lawyers, the Family Court and the Child Support

Agency, temptations towards alcohol, drugs, sex and suicidal ideation, relationships with the ex-wife, new intimate relationships, re-partnering and re-marriage, step-families and step-parenting. It is clear that these issues present an enormous challenge, especially considering that most of them are concentrated into a brief period of about two years after the time of separation and divorce.

3) In what way have their experiences and challenges affected their lives?

Most respondents indicated that their experiences had, particularly in the early stages, been very negative and affected them very badly. The duration and intensity of the very negative period varied for all respondents, from a fairly brief period for some, stretching out to a very long, if never-ending period for others. All respondents had to essentially completely rebuild their lives and start all over again from scratch. Whilst some respondents indicated that in retrospect they saw the experience as a cleansing and growing time and were now “in a better place” than they had been before, they nevertheless all regretted the experience and would have preferred that it had not happened at all.

4) How do such experiences and challenges affect non-custodial father's relationships with their children?

According to both the literature and this research, the experiences and challenges that (dumpee) non-custodial father's face during and subsequent to their marital separation and divorce have profound negative affects upon their relationships with their children that sometimes take many years to recover from, if such recovery is indeed possible. In all but one case (with George's babies) all of the respondents experienced a breakdown in their relationship with their children from which they found it extremely difficult to recover from personally, or to recover with the affected child.

5) Can a connection be made between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief, and if so, what are the implications, if any, for individuals and the community?

This research has shown through the literature and the respondent interviews that a connection can indeed be made between Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief and experiences of non-custodial fathers in the loss of regular daily contact with their children. It has further been seen that once such an attachment is broken it can be difficult to repair.

The nature of the connection between Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief and experiences of non-custodial fathers is complex, and can be described as follows:

6.4 Attachment, Loss, Grief and Divorce

1. The theoretical foundation for the existence of a strong "attachment" between a child and its parents as identified by Bowlby and Ainsworth is academically and empirically established and confirmed beyond reasonable doubt.
2. Individuals establish an "attachment type" during the course of their lifetime through their experiences in infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
3. The theoretical foundation for the existence of "bonding" between parents and their children is academically and empirically established and confirmed.
4. The theoretical foundation for the existence of attachment between parents and their children is less academically established; but holds empirical merit.
5. Although empirically observed for some time, the theoretical foundation for the existence of attachment as a state of being in adult romantic relationships has been recently academically and empirically established and confirmed, although requires further exploration and analysis.
6. The theoretical foundation for the existence of attachment between children and their parents and between romantic partners is academically and empirically established and confirmed.

7. Many marriages fail because of personal lifetime issues of attachment inadequacy and because of attachment incompatibility in marriage.
8. Despite the paucity of literature on the topic, many non-custodial fathers are deeply attached to their children and the depth and type of attachment to their children will determine:
 - a) their response to the separation, divorce and loss of regular contact with their children.
 - b) the ongoing nature of their relationship with their children, if there is a relationship at all.
9. The non-custodial father's grief reaction and its intensity and duration will be determined by factors related to the non-custodial fathers own personal attachment type and the depth of attachment established with his (wife and) children.
10. Therefore, the response of many non-custodial fathers to separation, divorce and loss of regular contact with their children is psychologically, physiologically and emotionally quite understandable and relatively predictable.
11. Non-custodial fathers themselves are generally unaware of the above, so do not have the personal resources to know, understand or manage what is happening to them.
12. Government policy makers and many welfare professionals seem quite oblivious to the above and therefore Government legislation, policy initiatives, and outcomes and welfare counsellors fail to take into account the above.
13. Specifically, the Family Court and Child Support Agency both seem quite oblivious to the above and fail to take it into account either in policy and decision making or in the application of policy.

6.4.1 Attachment in death, separation, divorce and suicide.

The effects of separation and divorce differ from death in two major ways.

1. In death, the separation (and hence severed attachment) usually only involves one person. In separation and divorce involving children, the separation (and hence severed attachment) involves at least two and possibly more people hence exacerbating the effect.
2. In death, finality can be attained, as the deceased person is conclusively gone and will not be returning. In separation and divorce, the person(s) are still alive and living somewhere else, yet the person who has suffered the loss (the non-custodial father) is no longer permitted to have unfettered access to that attachment figure. There is no finality. Further, the lost attachment figure(s) may reappear in the non-custodial father's life at various intervals⁴¹, meaning that the loss experienced through separation is not only a 'once-off' as through death, but a recurring event which in itself can prove very traumatic.

These two factors combine to produce a great deal of emotional anguish and stress for the non-custodial father, a stress that some may not be able to bear – hence the contemplation, and in many cases the completion, of suicide.

Again, it is worth emphasising the important difference between dumpee and dumper non-custodial fathers, and the important place of choice in relation to the effects of a lost attachment. Dumper non-custodial fathers made the choice to leave. This in itself would indicate that the type and depth of attachment to the spouse and children was not strong, and so the dumper non-custodial father may not feel the loss of attachment strongly, if at all. (Sadly, the same may not be said of his spouse or children left behind who may nevertheless be strongly attached to him!)

Conversely, the dumpee non-custodial father did not have a choice and had little if any say in his spouse and children leaving him. The effect of the separation and divorce on the dumpee non-custodial father will also depend a great deal on the strength of attachment to both spouse and children, but especially the

⁴¹ Ranging from every few days to perhaps once every few years.

children. The stronger the attachment (“love”) of the children, the worse the effect for the non-custodial father. It could be said that the greater the father cares and is involved with his children, the greater the felt loss. It is reasonable to conclude that the attachment to children in some non-custodial fathers is so strong that they cannot bear the loss and so turn to suicide to relieve their pain.

6.4.2 Counselling the Non-custodial Father

Bereavement and re-establishment will take time in every circumstance. The length of time will vary greatly depending upon the depth of felt relationship held by both the ‘leaver’ (the dumper) and ‘the left’ (the dumpee). The ensuing grief reaction may vary from relief and be mild, with re-establishment taking little more than a year. Conversely, difficulties may set in with the grieving process becoming protracted and complicated, possibly taking as long as three to four years to come to terms with.

In counselling the separated or divorced non-custodial father, there is a clear role for the counsellor to be aware of the process of grief, issues of protracted and complicated grief, and the elements of attachment theory so as to determine the level of attachment and the depth of the relationship(s). Such awareness will assist the counsellor in determining an appropriate counselling technique for the individual.

6.5 Value of the Research

At the micro level the research has had value in a number of ways. The research assisted the respondents in coping and dealing with their own reactions and issues, and may lead to the development of improved relationships with their children. The respondents reported a cathartic effect having gone through the interview process, one that led to a greater understanding by the respondents about themselves, their relationships with their children and their relationships with their ex-spouses,

The research may also provide valuable insights and understanding useful to individual welfare professionals in working with non-custodial fathers. There are

clear implications for grief counselling in relation to issues of severed attachment and for ways of assisting affected non-custodial fathers to self-manage the grief that naturally comes from a broken attachment without resorting to suicidal ideation as the “only way out”.

At the macro level, it is hoped that by engaging with the theoretical elements of the topic and by analysing aspects of government policy the research results may have important implications for future policy development. The promotion of sound academically based research can be used to generate policy changes and program initiatives throughout the community. The research has also revealed an underlying lack of understanding of the experiences of non-custodial fathers and a lack of resources and facilities available to assist them in resolving their issues.

The promotion of sound academically based research can be used to generate policy changes and program initiatives throughout the community. The research results may also inform community perceptions via media attention and thereby create greater awareness, interest and understanding. The research is a first step towards building an understanding of an increasing social problem within the community and may alert the community to the broader issues regarding the role of attachment in all human relationships.

6.5.1 Project Strengths and Limitations

The research project had a number of strengths and limitations, described as follows:

Project Strengths

- The study had a strong theoretical base upon which to build its assumptions.
- The study was exploratory by nature and hence flexible and open-ended.
- The study was not an area that has been the subject of extensive research.
- The researcher had experience in the topic.

- The study provides a launching pad for further research.
- The study used well-defined and proven research techniques.

Project Limitations

- The researcher having had experience in the topic may have had a personal bias in terms of objectivity of interpretation, and this may have been problematic. However, this was addressed via regular meetings and discussion with the research project supervisor and has ultimately not been viewed as an issue.
- The small sample group may be perceived as a problem, however, this provides for in-depth analysis as per Geertz's (1973) 'thick description'. Nevertheless, the small sample group is viewed as sufficient to establish the main themes and to establish sufficient repetition of those themes.
- The analysis of 'feelings' into concrete, assessable and measurable outcomes may have been problematic. However, feelings can be grouped, categorised, and assessed to form a reasonable hypotheses and conclusions. Applicability and generalisability may then be formulated.
- The broad nature of the topic resulted in many interesting sidetracks and dead-ends. The researcher needed to exercise discipline to remain focussed.

6.5.2 Future Development - additional research

It is proposed that there is scope for the further development of the research project. A second phase of the study could be continued and developed at the PhD level. At this higher level, a future project could seek to assess the relationship of key non-custodial parent issues as related to government policy.

Particular attention could be given to recent changes in both the *Family Law Act* and the *Child Support Act* to assess the efficacy of those changes with reference to matters related to attachment, loss and grief as experienced by non-custodial parents generally.

6.6 Recommendations:

As a result of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: *No-fault divorce.*

1. That the underlying philosophy and principle of “no-fault divorce” be rigorously scrutinised to determine its impact on the initiating of divorce and the subsequent outcomes of divorce arrangements and settlements.
2. That the elements of “right and wrong” and “justice and fairness” be re-introduced into divorce legislation and proceedings.

Recommendation 2: *The Family Court.*

1. That despite recent changes to the Family Law Act, the apparent bias in the Family Court system towards mothers being awarded majority custody of children be recognised and addressed.
- 2) That despite the recent establishment of Family Counselling Centres, additional services, especially financially subsidised counselling and Family Court related legal aid services, be put in place for fathers experiencing divorce.
- 3) That in view of the high suicide rate amongst males, the need for affirmative action be recognised for the above recommendations.

Recommendation 3: *Counselling.*

1. That greater recognition be given by government and community-based agencies to the acute grief element and attachment and loss issues experienced by many fathers in response to their separation and divorce.

2. That greater recognition be given by government and community-based agencies to the frequency and severity of suicidal ideation experienced by fathers in their response to separation and divorce.
3. That urgent consideration be given as to how to address the high rate of male suicide, and that active efforts be made to discourage attempts at suicide in relation to suicide being seen as some sort of solution.

Recommendation 4: *Child Support.*

1. That the ongoing reviews of the Child Support System include amendments to the formula that would include:
 - Assessments being made on after-tax income, not pre-tax income.
 - Assessments being made on the basis of the real costs incurred in the raising of children at their various life stages, not on the basis of some arbitrary formula.
 - Equity in relation to the pursuing of non-payers.
 - Consideration be given to the numbers of children supported by a paying father.
 - Maximum limits set on payments so that fathers are not financially ruined.

Recommendation 5: *Government response to divorce.*

1. That Government becomes increasingly cognisant that divorce is essentially bad for people, bad for society, and very costly in financial, physical and emotional terms, so should be avoided at all costs and held as a “last resort when all else has failed”, not as a “first port of call”.

2. That Government take immediate and affirmative steps by way of a publicity campaign to actively discourage the concept of divorce as a solution to relationship and family problems.
3. That State and Federal Governments implement much more comprehensive education and training courses in “relationship education” into secondary schools.

6.7 Chapter Summary

The research project has demonstrated the original hypothesis; that some non-custodial fathers in the Australian community at the time of, and following soon after a separation and divorce, are experiencing and suffering from acute and disturbing grief reactions to the separation from not only their children, but from their spouse. It is a reasonable proposition that the grief reaction finds its basis in the loss of primary attachment figures that are of vital significance to the non-custodial father’s very sense of being.

Put simply, since it is apparently so well known that divorce and single parenting damages adults and children in a variety of ways, and it is known that for a myriad of reasons it is a less desirable state of existence than a complete biological family, why then do we as a society continue to promote separation and divorce by virtue of that fact that we tolerate it to the extent that we do and fail to take adequate steps to prevent it?

The human spirit is remarkably resilient. For most of those affected by separation and divorce, time heals many of the wounds and a process of adjustment gradually takes place, although things can and never will be the same again. The respondent non-custodial fathers in this research reported that the raw pain gradually subsided over time, but there still remains a large physical and emotional hole in their lives that can never be repaired, and that is what real and significant loss is all about – a pain that never goes away.

Reference List:

The original Reference List was 36 pages long with many and varied references from books, Journal articles, websites, newspapers, magazines, and television programs. The following list of references has been re-constructed from sources cited in the body of the retrieved thesis. Note that it has not been possible to locate all references cited in this thesis.

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Non-custodial Fathers' Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief

PART TWO

This paper comprises:

Section One: setting the scene

Section Two: draft Journal Article

Abstract and Explanatory Note

to Part Two:

Section 1 of this presentation comprises an Exegesis of the original Research Thesis. It is entitled 'Out in the Cold - Non-custodial Fathers, their Children and their Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief'. This was the first title given to the draft thesis some ten years ago which was later replaced by a more appropriate and succinct new title. The section provides an abbreviated version of the first 3 chapters of the thesis which gives the reader some background material to the project, which then leads on to the draft Journal Article. Note that the Reference List is incomplete as it has not been possible to locate all of the references cited in the work.

Section 2 of this presentation comprises a draft Journal Article which has been written with a view to publication in the near future so that the work and knowledge gained from the research project has not been in vain and is not lost.

* * * * *

David Barton
September 2010

PART TWO

Section One

‘Out in the Cold’

*Non-custodial Fathers, their Children and their
Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief.*

1. Introduction

This research is about a small sample of non-custodial fathers, their experiences of separation and divorce and the challenges they have faced as a result. It considers their experiences of attachment, loss and grief associated with their separation from their wife and children and the significant others around them.

The work of Bowlby (1974, 1979, & 1980) and Worden (1991) is used in this research to develop a theory regarding the experiences of attachment, loss and grief amongst the sample of non-custodial fathers. The literature and this research show that the effect of separation brings about the type of grief responses that would usually follow a severe trauma of loss. The theory posits that a father, having formed a strong attachment to wife and children, experiences enormous grief when the attachment is suddenly broken through separation and divorce, and that such a grief response can be temporarily debilitating.

The research demonstrates that many non-custodial fathers experience significant grief that can be understood through the framework of John Bowlby's theories of attachment and loss. This has implications for the way in which society, policy makers and regulators consider and manage issues of separation and divorce for parents, and in particular, for men and their children.

2. Paradigm and Rationale

Family breakdown continues to be a significant issue within contemporary society; there are regular articles and programs in the media about the subject. However, it would appear that apart from the recognition of high male suicide rates and the role of family breakdown as major contributor (Davies & Waldron, 2003a:11 & 2003b:13), little emphasis has been placed on the social and emotional effect of family breakdown upon men, and in particular, their relationships with and participation in the lives of their children (Price, 1997:1-3).

Divorce is a major and serious issue facing the social, economic and emotional health of the Australian community. Nevertheless, Farrant (2001:6) quotes

Family Court Judge, Justice Buckley, remarking that men's family law lobby groups rely 'too much on anecdotes, instead of credible research to argue about problems in family law and child support' and that they run a 'very great risk of distorting reality, whilst reducing complex issues to, at best, a mere litany of half truths'. Divorce researchers Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000:xxx-xxxi) seem to agree with Justice Buckley. They note that:

Only face-to-face interviews over many hours within the context of a trusting relationship, where the interviewer is free to follow unanticipated topics that arise in natural conversation, lead us to the human experience behind the statistics.

Wallerstein, et al., 2000:xxx-xxxi

Views such as Justice Buckley's and those of Wallerstein, et al., are not mutually exclusive. If valid research is to be conducted into marriage and family breakdown, and if the community is to ascertain appropriate changes to family law and social policy bringing about shifts in community perceptions as a result, then research described by Wallerstein, et al., is essential. This research seeks to address this issue in a small way.

3. Policy Context

The policy context of the research revolves around two Federal Government Acts: the *Family Law Act (1975)* with numerous subsequent amendments, the most recent being in March, 2007 (Act No.23) and the *Child Support Act (1988)* also having a number of subsequent amendments, the most recent being in June, 2007 (Act No. 82). These two Acts and their subsequent amendments have been controversial in their formulation, implementation, application and outcomes, as Milburn writes:

Over the past several decades, individual men have exacted violent revenge against the Family Court, their ex-partners and their children. They have committed murder-suicides, stabbed or shot ex-partners outside the Family Court, hired hit-men to kill their ex-wives, murdered a Family Court judge and the wife of another judge, bombed the home of another judge, and bombed a Family Court.

This is a tragic litany. The subject of separation, divorce, family breakdown, property settlements, custody, child support and access are highly emotive matters that draw media attention on an almost daily basis. As a result, many community organisations, lobby groups and individuals have applied a great deal of pressure on the Federal Parliament to bring about substantial policy and practical changes to the family law and child support systems (see the internet websites of 'Dads in Distress', 'Fatherhood Foundation', 'Dads on the Air', 'Men's Rights Agency', and even the political 'Non-custodial Parents Party').

The implementation of the previous Howard Government's *Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act (2006)* and the passage of the *Child Support Legislation Amendment (Reform of the Child Support Scheme- New Formula and Other Measures) Act (2006)*, demonstrates that Government's commitment to attempt to address the many policy and practice issues confronting the family law and child support systems.

From a policy perspective however, issues within the family law and child support systems remain some distance from resolution. Nevertheless, there is hope that incremental change will bring with it incremental improvement.

4. Hypothesis

The research has as its hypothesis that during and soon after separation and divorce, many non-custodial fathers in the Australian community may suffer from acute grief reactions, not only regarding their children, but in relation to their ex-wives as well. This grief reaction may have flow-on effects to every aspect of their lives and their relationship with their children over what may become a prolonged period.

Ochiltree (1990:137) notes that when not awarded custody of their children, non-custodial fathers suffer as they no longer regularly see them, and consequently over time participate less, and are less involved in their children's lives. Whitehead (1998:15a) has also observed that 'by every measure durability,

quality and solidarity - the father-child bond is weakened by the widespread shift from the nuclear to the post-nuclear family'. Whitehead (1998:154-5) further notes that there is a 'steady emotional and financial disengagement of fathers from their children' and there are 'persistent feelings of estrangement and resentment reported by their children'. This research seeks to examine these matters in more detail.

McMurray and Blackmore (1993:156) confirm that research demonstrates considerable inner anxiety in post-separation fathers; a condition that is little recognised or acknowledged (see also Edgar, 1997:306-7). Such anxiety may have detrimental effects upon non-custodial fathers individually, and may produce flow-on effects for the community generally.

5. Aims of the Research

McMurray and Blackmore (1993:153) observe that after marital and family separation many fathers no longer have custody of, and hence regular access to, their children (see also Hines, 1997:376). Family Court of Australia (2001:1) statistics show that whilst the number of custody or residence orders being made in favour of fathers increased over time (from 2,042 in 1994-95 to 2,585 in 2000-01) mothers nevertheless continued to receive a significantly higher number of residence orders than fathers.

The research will show that for many fathers the result of not being awarded custody of, or regular access to, their children will often result in depression, debility, withdrawal and detachment. This occurs not only in relation to their children, but also for a period of time to life in general.

The research aims to broadly examine existing research and add to the body of knowledge in relation to this specific subject. The research project will consider the theoretical background of Bowlby's (1974, 1979, & 1980) work in the area of attachment, loss and grief and relate his work to the project's practical components and findings derived from the interview and analysis process.

6. Research Questions

The research questions specifically related to the experiences of non-custodial fathers following separation and divorce and of how their relationships with their children and significant others were affected as a result. Further, the research questions considered if there was any connection between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and theories of attachment, loss and grief.

The research questions are:

- 1) What are the experiences of non-custodial fathers?
- 2) What challenges do such experiences present to them?
- 3) In what way have their experiences and challenges affected their lives?
- 4) How do such experiences and challenges affect non-custodial father's relationships with their children and significant others?
- 5) Can a connection be made between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief, and if so, what are the implications, if any, for individuals and the community?

7. Literature

There is significant literature both of an academic and popular nature about marriage, marital relationships, separation and divorce, loss and grief, post-divorce recovery and parent-child relationships. However, up until the early 1980's little had been written about non-custodial fathers, as the occurrence of the non-custodial father was a relatively new phenomenon. It has only been in the closing decade of the 20th Century that non-custodial fatherhood has been publicly recognised as an issue⁴² (Sarantakos, 1996:414; Edgar, 1997:249;

⁴² It could be suggested that there was a time lag effect from the introduction of the Australian Family Law Act in 1976, to the recognition of the problem of non-custodial fatherhood in the early 1980's.

Tacey, 1997:42; Maley, 2001:134; Crawford, 2002:1-3).

7.1 Separation, Divorce and its Impact

The issue of which partner initiates a separation and divorce is pertinent to this research and therefore requires brief examination. (Ahrons 1999:387) estimates that in Western countries in two thirds to three quarters of cases the partner who initiates the separation is the female (see also Gee, 2001:7). Gee and Houghton report that

...in more than 60 per cent of relationships, women initiate the separation, often to the shock and disbelief of their male partner.

Gee and Houghton, 2002:105

This is the female as *dumper*, male as *dumpee* combination, (see 'Terminology' in 2.4 below). Fisher (1992:308) noted that once a couple has separated for the first time it is most unlikely that they will reconcile permanently. Gee and Houghton, (2002:105) also report that 'many women do give their partners another chance' but that 'final separation usually follows one or two earlier temporary separations and reconciliations'.

According to Sarantakos (1996:344-347) and Maley (2003:42) separation and divorce have a huge social impact and place a massive financial burden on both individuals and the community. There is little doubt that the divorce rate will remain at a high level for the foreseeable future, with Trewin (2006b:11) stating that in considering indicators of family life, the high number of divorces might reflect 'a greater prevalence of unhappy marriages, or greater acceptance of dissolving unhappy marriages'.

It is children who suffer greatly from the impact of divorce, and for most it will alter the rest of their lives (House of Representatives, 1998:34-35; Maley, 2001:142-49; Egan, 2004:3). As the divorce rate has climbed, so has the number of children affected by it. Trewin (2004:138) notes that in the 10-years from 1991 to 2001 there was a steady increase in the number of children under

the age of 18 years experiencing the divorce of their parents. In 1991 it was 46,700 and by 2001 it was 53,400.

What is known is that divorce in Australia generally results in a number of negative consequences, especially for children. For example, there are lowered living standards for those involved and financial poverty for both mothers and fathers (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; Crawford, 2002:2; National Marriage Coalition, 2004:8; AMP.NATSEM⁴³, 2005:14; Newman, 2009:403). Emotional hardship has been observed in mothers, fathers and children (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; National Marriage Coalition, 2004:12). Further, an overall lack of trust in relationships and high alcoholism and suicide rates are observed in men (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; Crawford, 2002:4-5). With regard to children, behavioural and educational difficulties have been noted (Sarantakos, 1996:346-7; House of Representatives, 1998:35; National Marriage Coalition, 2004:e).

8. Terminology

8.1 Non-Custodial Fathers

Parkinson (2003:16) notes that the terms custody and access were formally abolished by the *Family Law Reform Act (1995)*. The term non-custodial father is therefore no longer officially used. From 1995 until May 2006 the term *custody*⁴⁴ was replaced with the term *residence*. Also at the same time the term *non-custodial* was replaced by the term *contact* and the term *access* was also replaced by the term *contact* (Baker & McMurray, 1998:202; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, 2003:9; Australian Government, 2006b:147-8).

This meant that a father who was no longer the primary carer of the children, and who had them living with him for significantly less than 50% of the time was the *contact parent*. The children's mother became the *resident parent*. Non-custodial fathers had *contact visits* with their children, rather than access. The

⁴³ The reference AMP.NATSEM 2005 is a report that the AMP Society contracted the consulting company NATSEM to conduct on their behalf regarding the financial impact of divorce in Australia.

⁴⁴ And its derivatives, ie: non-custodial father and custodial mother (or vice-versa).

new terminology seemed to be an attempt to de-stigmatise the respective parents' status. However, the new terminology failed to adequately represent the actual circumstances of fathers who do not have their children living with them (Campbell and Pike, 1998:7 & 10). Further changes to terminology did not bring about any material alteration to the fathers' (or mothers') situation or circumstances.

The latest changes to terminology include 'replacing references to "residence" with "lives with", replacing references to "contact" with "spends time with" and "communicates with" and removing the current categories of "residence orders", "contact orders" and "specific issues orders" and referring instead to "parenting orders"' (Australian Government, 2006c:2). This research continues to use the term 'non-custodial father'.

8.2 Dumpers and Dumpees

The terms *dumper* and *dumpee* were used by Fisher (1992:13) to describe the two partners who ended their relationship. According to Fisher, 'usually there is one person who is more responsible for deciding to end the love relationship; that person is the dumper. The more reluctant partner is the dumpee'. The dumpee will almost always have a much more painful and difficult experience of the separation and divorce than will the dumper (Fisher, 1992:13 & 300; see also Green, 1998:3).

Fisher (1992:13) described dumpers as feeling guilty for hurting a former loved one, and dumpees feeling rejected. Therefore, the adjustment processes are different for each. This research is primarily concerned with non-custodial fathers who are dumpees. Non-custodial fathers who are dumpers will usually have a different set of separation experiences, and may not experience much of what the dumpees do (see also Green, 1998:3-6).

9. Attachment Theory

British psychiatrist John Bowlby has played a foremost role in the development of theoretical models and understandings of the concept of attachment. Bowlby's

work began in 1929 with his interest in how a child's experience of his or her family affected his or her development (Bowlby, 1974, 1979, 1980). Bowlby's observations and findings have been widely used as a basis for understanding how children, and to a lesser extent adults, form attachments with significant others in their lives, and of what is likely to happen when those attachments are severed (Bowlby, 1979:vii; Bretherton, 1991a:759-762 & 769). Bowlby defined attachment behaviour as:

...any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual ... (and) ... whilst especially evident during early childhood, attachment behaviour is held to characterise human beings from the cradle to the grave.

Bowlby, 1979:129

Attachment theory is seen as being very important in understanding the development of human relationships with significant others from earliest infancy, and for understanding continuing patterns of relationship behaviour by individuals throughout their childhood years and beyond into adulthood (Bollorino, 1996:2; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:4; Department of Human Services, 2000:2; Department of Human Services, 2004:95).

Bowlby (1979:67-69) further defines the *core* of an *affectional bond* as being the 'attraction that one *individual* has for another *individual*', maintaining that 'the essential feature of bonding is that the two partners tend to remain in proximity to one another'. Bowlby (1979:69) posited that if separation should occur, the individuals will go to great efforts to renew the proximity and attempts from outside sources to break the bond will be met with great resistance (see also: Ainsworth, 1991:33-38; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:3; Sonkin, 2005:1). Worden (1991) summed up Bowlby's work by saying:

Bowlby's attachment theory provides a way for us to conceptualize the tendency in human beings to make strong affectional bonds with others and a way to understand the strong emotional reaction that occurs when those bonds are threatened or broken.

Worden, 1991:7

Bowlby (1979:70) contends that attachments are formed to reinforce familiar contacts and to avoid strange situations. He notes that attachment bonding primarily serves the purpose of protection from predators, a function equally as important as food or sex for the survival of any species. Worden (1991:7) agrees that attachments originate as infants and endure in adults as part of the need for security and safety (see also Bretherton, 1991a:763; Bollorino, 1996:1; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:4).

Attachment Theory has not been without its critics. Treasure (2005:24) notes that criticism of Bowlby's attachment theory comes mainly from the feminist perspective, which argues that Bowlby's research was generalised from children who suffered a lack of maternal care. Treasure (2005:24) cites Holmes (1993) who criticises Bowlby for failing to analyse the importance of the caregiver role of fathers (see also Lee, 2003:5), further noting that much of Bowlby's research took place during World War II when fathers were absent which somewhat distorted the work and ignored issues of 'paternal deprivation'.

Lee (2003:4) cites Harris (1998) and the *nature-nurture* debate in her criticism of attachment theory, claiming that children do not always behave in the same manner as their parents. Lee (2003:5) also criticises Bowlby and Ainsworth in three areas. Firstly, Lee says that the model is based on observations made during stressful situations for a child, not unstressful situations. Secondly, Lee maintains that attachment behaviours are limited to those that occur with the primary attachment figure, usually the mother (being the contemporary view of the time). Thirdly, Lee notes, as with Holmes (1993) that fathers seem to have been excluded from the studies.

Finally, Fraley and Shaver (1999:748-754) have noted in detail that some researchers have criticised Bowlby's work simply by failing to understand it and by distorting and misrepresenting it in an effort to discredit it.

Criticisms levelled at Bowlby's and Ainsworth's attachment theory are not of a significant nature such that they would undermine the theory itself. A large body of academic work has continued to use attachment theory as its foundation, proving particularly useful regarding the newer work in relation to the role of

attachments in adult life and in divorce. Pendry sums up criticism of attachment theory as follows:

...although critics of attachment theory have challenged its findings over the last 30 years, no other discipline has presented empirical evidence that supports a more comprehensive overview of the phenomenon of attachment and its implications.

Pendry, 1998:8

Whilst Bowlby's work concentrates on the child-mother relationship, this research has applied Bowlby's work to the husband-wife or "interspousal" relationship and to the father-child relationship. The following passage of Bowlby's is intensely relevant to this study and is worth quoting in its entirety:

Throughout the rest of a person's life he is likely to show the same pattern of behaviour, moving away from those he loves for ever-increasing distances and lengths of time yet always maintaining contact and sooner or later returning. The base from which an adult operates is likely to be either his family of origin or else a new base which he has created for himself. Anyone who has no such base is rootless and intensely lonely.

Bowlby, 1979:132

In the event of separation and divorce, in most cases the mother and child attachment is left intact, whereas the father's attachment and proximity is, to a greater or lesser extent, severely disrupted (Newman, 2009:411; see also Page & Bretherton, 2003). Put simply, mothers still have contact, proximity and attachment, but fathers do not. Has Bowlby given some indication and insight as to why so many non-custodial fathers are "rootless and intensely lonely"?

9.1 Attachment Behaviour in Adults

The existence and role of attachment behaviour in adult and married life is quite clear. Adults who marry are ideally placed in close proximity to each other to facilitate a close attachment to each other. Conversely, those who do not form a close attachment to their spouse in marriage are likely to experience painful loneliness (Weiss, 1982:179). Ainsworth (1991) described three primary

classifications of attachment, being, *secure*, *resistant* and *avoidant*. Other authors have used variations in the wording of the three primary classifications, for example, *secure*, *insecure*, *anxious*, *resistant*, *ambivalent*, *avoidant*, *disorganized*, *disoriented* and *non-attached* (Hazan & Shaver, 1987:512; Egeland & Erickson, 1999:4; Fricker & Moore, 2002:184; Treasure, 2005:20-23; Van Wagner, 2007:2-5). However, in essence the classifications remain the same, despite variations in terminology. Sonkin (2005:48-9) reports that research into attachment in adult romantic relationships has demonstrated three important findings. Firstly, the attachment status of the parent will predict the attachment status of the parent's child. Secondly, there is continuity of attachment patterns from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. Thirdly, adults displaying insecure attachment have greater difficulty managing life generally and personal relationships specifically.

It is well established that adult romantic relationships are like infant and parent/caregiver relationships, and that 'romantic love is a property of the attachment behavioural system, as well as the motivational systems that give rise to caregiving and sexuality' (Hazan & Shaver, 1987:511 & 523; Fricker & Moore, 2002:183-4; Fraley, 2004:2. Further, Fricker and Moore (2002:183-4) note that a number of subsequent studies have supported Hazan and Shaver's (1987) analysis of attachment history and working models in relation to adult attachment in romantic relationships, including Collins and Read (1990) and Mikulincer and Nachshon (1991). The works of Hazan and Shaver (1987), Fraley (2004) and Fricker and Moore (2002) are particularly important regarding the subject matter of this study. As Fraley notes

The idea that romantic relationships may be attachment relationships has had a profound influence on modern research on close relationships.

Fraley, 2004:2

In summary, the research has shown that adult romantic relationships, and hence marriage relationships, shall be largely affected by the *attachment state* of the partners, that is, whether they be *secure*, *resistant* and *avoidant*. If the relationship ends, the response of the partners shall also be largely influenced by their type and level of attachment.

9.2 Loss and Grief

Having established the vital role that attachment theory and behaviour plays in the marriage, spousal and familial relationships, it is important to understand what occurs in relation to attachment behaviour in a situation of loss and grief. It was realised in the early 1960's by Parkes that there was a clear link between Bowlby's work on attachment and in gaining an understanding of grief in adult life (Bretherton 1991b:20). Bowlby and Parkes described a number of topics related to mourning (grief) in adults resulting from a loss of the object of attachment. They are numbness, yearning and protest (hostility), disorganization and despair, thoughts and behaviour directed towards the lost person, appeals for help, and reorganisation (Bretherton 1991b:20). These are all acknowledged grief reactions (Worden, 1991:21-29).

People suffer anxiety and grief when an attachment is broken; the stronger the attachment, the greater the anxiety and grief (Raphael, 1984:179; Gee, 2001:6). Weiss (1982:195) in developing the ideas of Marris (1958) notes that attachment theory in relation to bereavement and grief helps to explain why Freud had difficulty understanding some of his patients' refusal to abandon a lost love object. Weiss notes that

...grief is a reaction to the disintegration of the whole structure of meaning dependant on this relationship rather than to the absence of the person lost.

Weiss, 1982:195

The loss of such an important attachment figure results in a 'collapse of meaning, intense anxiety and hopelessness' (Weiss, 1982:195). Whilst this assessment has been well understood and accepted in relation to the death of a spouse or other close loved one, it has rarely been explained or explored in relation to the experience of separation and divorce.

Weiss (1982:196) concludes that the severed attachment and resultant loss of meaning is in fact more important than the actual loss of the person. The severed attachment shatters the understanding and meaning of life and the

future, which the person had built around the person to whom they had become attached.

Chadwick (1989:30) notes that men suffer emotional reactions to divorce (sometimes acutely) that include denial, anger, and depression, but they generally move towards satisfactory divorce adjustment. He notes that the reactions by men to divorce are similar to those noted by Kubler-Ross in her work on death and dying, ie: the process of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Chadwick (1989:30) in quoting and agreeing with Fisher, (1981) posits that 'adjustments to acute reactions usually takes about one year, but can take three to five years'.

Unfortunately, divorce is little acknowledged or discussed in the bereavement literature. Nevertheless, Gee (2001:7) notes that much of the literature regarding grief in divorce has had its origins from the bereavement literature. Many authors (Bowlby, 1980:8; Worden, 1991:10; Crawford, 2002:1; Seppa, 1995:81) have commented that the effects of grief and loss through divorce are not quickly overcome and assimilated. Bowlby (1980:8) importantly notes that regardless of a loss being experienced by an adult or a child

...there is a tendency to underestimate how intensely distressing and disabling loss usually is and for how long the distress, and often the disablement, commonly lasts.

Bowlby, 1980:8

Raphael (1984:179-80) describes the difference between a weakly attached couple and a strongly attached couple, noting that strongly attached couples will be greatly traumatized by the loss. According to Raphael (1984:179) the felt loss of the departed partner will vary depending upon the strength and closeness (the attachment) of the 'dyad relationship' (see also Gee, 2001:6), concluding that couples who have minimal contact and tend to lead separate lives will still feel the loss, but not as greatly as a couple who have closely and intensely felt values, interests, feelings, and sexuality and whose interactions are frequent and prolonged bringing about increased self-disclosure and closeness.

For most marriages, the separation is characterized by the dumper, (the initiator or leaver) and the dumpee, (the *opposer* or the *one left*) (Fisher, 1992:13; Ahrons, 1999:386; Green, 1998:3; Gee, 2001:7; Newman, 2009:398). The effects of separation and divorce differ markedly whether one is the initiator or the opposer. This is especially true in relation to grief reactions. Initiators have already started grieving; opposers are usually taken by surprise (Uren, 2005:7; Ahrons, 1999:387; Green, 1998:3; Newman, 2009:399). The dumpee's immediate reaction is usually one of disbelief, shock, outrage and despair, having had no time to prepare. The power balance is now unequal; emotions of grief and rejection are now overwhelming (Green, 1998:3).

Bowlby (1979:67) acknowledges that people can be 'crushed by grief and die of a broken heart' and that 'jilted lovers can do things that are foolish or dangerous to themselves or others' (see also Crouch and Hinde, 2007:19). The reasoning behind such actions requires further research and is beyond the scope of this study. However, according to Gee and Houghton (2002:105) it is important to note that men who are separated are six times more likely to suicide than are men in a stable marriage.

Physiologically, many effects of divorce have been reported. Research demonstrates that after separation and divorce the nutritional health of many men declines. In particular, evidence suggests that many men will consume more alcohol, smoke more cigarettes, do less exercise, eat "fast food", eat irregularly and generally sink into nutritional ill health (Eng, et al., 2005:56).

10. Research Methods

McLeod (1994:105) notes that narrative case studies use 'qualitative techniques to elicit and analyse descriptive accounts' that will assist the researcher in 'making sense of the stories people tell about aspects of their experience'. The research was qualitative in nature, conducting an exploration using the primary technique of individual interview within a case study framework. A systematic investigation was undertaken with a small group of respondents to discover and assess key experiences, issues, and challenges that faced non-custodial fathers. The research explored the non-custodial father's experiences of

attachment, loss and grief and of how such experiences, issues and challenges affected their relationships, especially with their children.

Qualitative analysis was seen as most appropriate primary method for this type of research, principally due to the small sample size and detailed intensive nature of the case study interviews. Qualitative methodology principally reflects the role of subjective judgment in generating data. Such methodology may typically involve the attitudes or opinions of human subjects and observational research which involves the judgment of an observer, in this case, being the researcher (Zinn, Eitzen & Wells, 2011⁴⁵:22).

The research has also utilized naturalistic inquiry methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:289-331), which Isaac and Michael (1997:218) note are strongly akin to qualitative methodology. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Isaac and Michael (1997) note that in building trustworthiness⁴⁶ into qualitative and naturalistic research methodology, four main emphases ought to be applied, as follows:

1. **Internal validity:** to eliminate rival explanations for the research findings, as opposed to the explanations advanced by the researcher.
2. **External validity:** to generalize research findings from the study to other appropriate settings.
3. **Reliability:** to see if the findings can be replicated more generally.
4. **Objectivity:** to eliminate objective bias by ensuring that methods are public, observable and allow agreement by multiple observers (Lincoln & Guba 1985:290-294; Isaac & Michael, 1997:221).

Further to the use of qualitative and naturalistic inquiry methodology, the study also took a grounded theory approach as described by Scott and Usher (1999). According to Scott and Usher (1999:41) the grounded theory journey is 'essentially one of discovery - theory develops from the data which are collected and not by the testing of deductively formulated hypotheses'. Scott and Usher, (1999:42) add that 'the emergent theory is "grounded" by returning to the data and validating it against actual segments of the text'. Grounded theory is also

⁴⁵ Note that the date '2011' is the date actually printed on the publisher's page in the text.

⁴⁶ In research, the issue of 'trustworthiness' relates to the credibility and validity of the qualitative research method and application.

seen by Sarantakos (1993: 433 & 434) as the 'direct study of social reality', and induction as 'the process of making conclusions from the specific and the concrete to the general and abstract'.

McLeod (1994:93-96) and Scott and Usher (1999:43) note that inductive grounded theory has three strategies and principles, described as follows:

1. **Accumulation:** the observation and collection of new facts that reinforce existing facts.
2. **Induction:** the described observations and accumulated facts infer some form of law.
3. **Instance confirmation:** further instances of the same facts confirm the inferred law.

This research carried out the task of accumulation by examining literature (existing facts) including contextual information and trends regarding marriage and divorce, the impact of separation and divorce, Australian families and single parent families, legislative background considerations and terminology. Bowlby's theories of attachment, bonding, loss, grief and anger also contributed to the accumulation of facts. The research then conducted purposeful sampling via in-depth interviews, and recorded the information (new facts) as provided by the interview respondents.

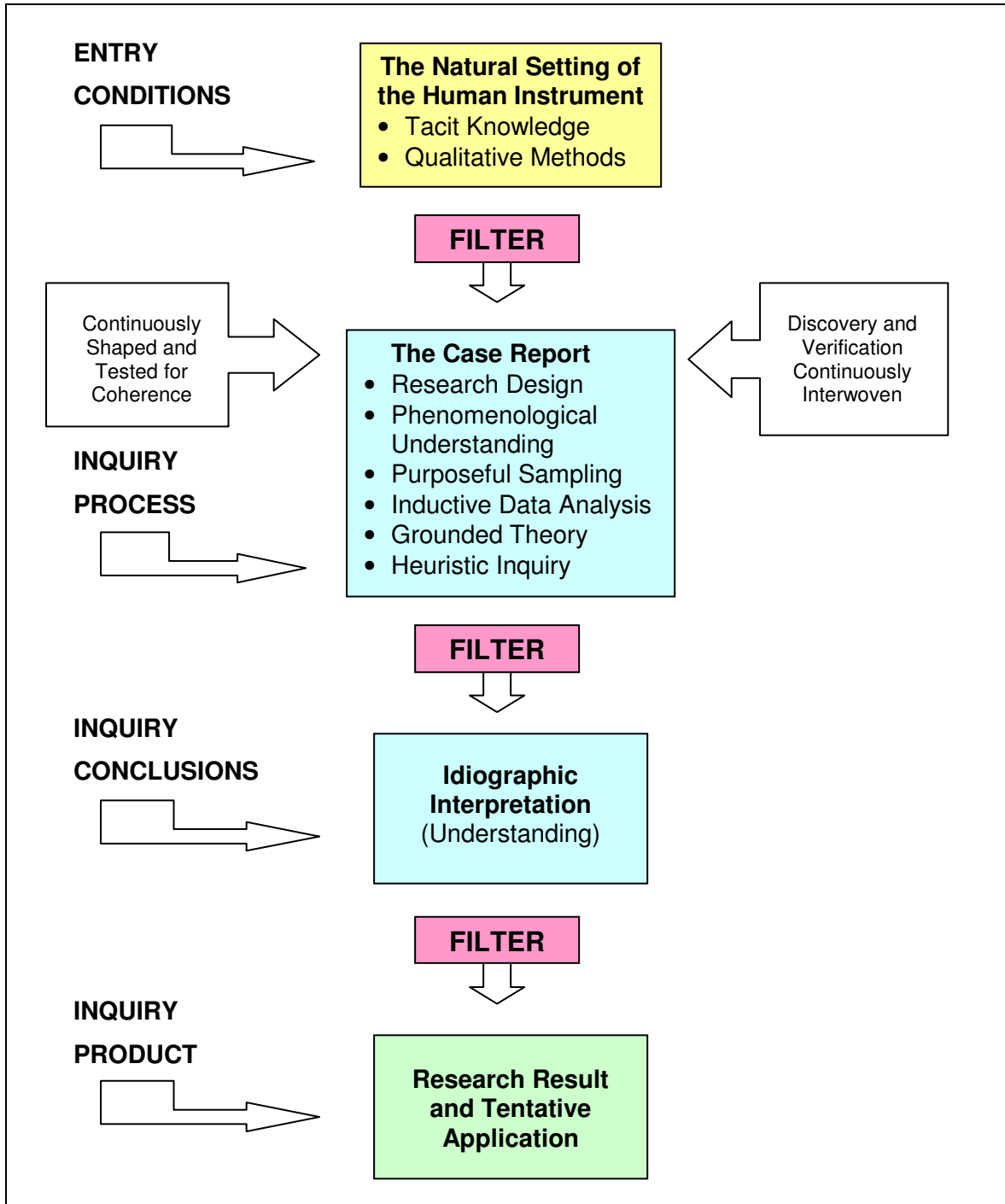
The research also sought to take a Phenomenological approach. Husserl, (in Sarantakos, 1993:47) argues against positivism⁴⁷, stating that Phenomenology (of which Husserl was the principal founder) is about people not being passive recipients of the objective world about them, but being 'active creators of their world and have a consciousness that communicates to them in everyday experiences and knowledge'. Patton (2002:107) suggests that Phenomenology does not reject the existence of the objective world, but argues that it is experienced through ones consciousness.

To summarise, the study uses qualitative analysis and naturalistic inquiry, combined with inductive grounded theory, purposeful sampling and case studies

⁴⁷ Positivism – Comte's view that society and social relations can be understood by scientific analysis rather than metaphysical assumption (Sarantakos, 1993:3-4).

as seen through phenomenological and heuristic filters to produce an interpretation and a result. The summary is shown diagrammatically in Figure 10.1 below.

Figure 10.1 The Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry



Adapted from: JE793 'Approaches to Research in Education' Class Notes. RMIT University. 2000.

10.1 The Technique of Case Study

The research technique or strategy of case study is a comprehensive all-

encompassing empirical approach incorporating logical design, and specific data collection and analysis techniques. It is a study which looks intensively at the background, the current status, and the environmental interactions of a given social unit, or of an individual or group, institution or community (Stake (1994) in Mark, 1996:220; Isaac & Michael, 1997:52; Yin, 2003:14).

Case studies provide useful anecdotes and examples which illustrate more generalised findings, although are difficult to carry out and attract some criticism (Isaac & Michael, 1997:52; Yin, 2003:13). Because of a narrow focus, case studies have limitations regarding how representative they may be. They may have a lack of rigor, may provide little basis for scientific generalisation, and may take too long and produce too much information that is difficult to interpret.

10.2 Ethical and Privacy Considerations

The respondent interviews were structured in accordance with RMIT University's 'Post Graduate Research Rules and Ethics Committee' requirements, and all obligations were fulfilled. The research project's Ethics Application was formally completed and approved by RMIT University's 'Ethics Committee'⁴⁸ and all respondents were provided with a 'Plain Language Statement and Consent Form'⁴⁹. In addition, all confidentiality requirements have been rigorously adhered to.

Regarding bias, as the researcher had experience in the topic, he may have had a personal bias in terms of objectivity of interpretation, and this may have been problematic. However, this was addressed via regular meetings and discussion with the research project supervisor and has not been viewed as an issue.

10.3 The Research Sample and Interview Process

Respondents were asked to answer the interview questions in an interview of 60-90 minute's duration. Each respondent was asked to agree in writing to the

⁴⁸ Note that all copies of the 'Ethics Committee Application' were lost in the 7/2/09 "Black Saturday" Bushfire.

⁴⁹ Note that all copies of the 'Plain Language Statement and Consent Form' were lost in the 7/2/09 "Black Saturday" Bushfire.

tape-recording of the interview. A range of questions were asked as per the Interview Schedule⁵⁰. Each respondent was given a copy of the interview questions prior to the commencement of the interview and asked if they were happy to proceed; all agreed.

The interviews produced an overwhelming amount of data, some of which has been filtered, other data which remains unfiltered (Schwandt & Halpern in Holloway, 1997:43). Debriefing took place with each respondent after the formal part of the interview had concluded. There was no necessity for gatekeepers (Holloway, 1997:77) and the author had free and ready access (Holloway, 1997:20) to all respondents as required. It was not necessary to re-contact any of the respondents to clarify any matter which they had raised as they had all spoken quite openly, clearly and definitively.

10.4 The Data

Once the interviews were concluded, the researcher was able to identify recurring patterns, categories or themes. Both major and minor themes began to emerge and having re-visited and reviewed each of the interviews it became clear that the categories were 'saturated' (Scott & Usher, 1999:42).

The interview questions brought out key responses that led to the development of major and minor themes, which could be further broken down into component parts, and features of each respondent's replies. These were then documented and a number of tables encapsulating the resultant themes were constructed and are found within the findings contained in Chapter Four⁵¹, where the themes are outlined and explained in basic form.

The three strategies of Inductive Grounded Theory were applied to the data with positive outcomes. Whilst the sample of six respondents may appear small, the collection or accumulation of data (Scott and Usher's 1st strategy – see page 15) from the respondents nevertheless inferred and reinforced existing facts (2nd

⁵⁰ All copies of the Interview Schedule, interview notes, transcripts, tables and interview tape recordings were destroyed in the 7/2/09 "Black Saturday" Bushfire.

⁵¹ Note that Chapter Four of the research perished in the 7/2/09 "Black Saturday" Bushfire and no copies have been able to be located or retrieved.

strategy). Further, the process of induction infers some form of law with further instances of the same facts confirming the inferred law (3rd strategy), (Scott and Usher, 1999:43).

Generalisability is only possible within a certain context. Generalisability of findings cannot usually be claimed in qualitative research as it produces 'only a slice of the social situation, rather than the whole' (Holloway, 1997:78). Holloway notes that 'the purpose of qualitative research is to uncover the essence of a phenomenon, not to generalise from a single case or a small number of cases' (Holloway, 1997:79). Indeed, it is the essence of this topic that the researcher sought to discover and understand. Nevertheless, it is the researcher's conclusion that a good deal of generalisability is applicable from the results of this research, and tentative applications, in the correct manner, can be made.

To conclude, the data collection and analysis in this research resulted in the development of a number of themes through the emergence of a number of recurring patterns. The themes were then matched to the work of Bowlby and other authors and conclusions drawn in relation to matters of attachment, loss and grief.

11. Conclusion

The research is important because of the individual and collective impact of family breakdown and its related effect upon the creation and maintenance of a healthy society. It is therefore to be hoped that the research has made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of non-custodial fathers, and especially in the development of new approaches to assist them to better cope with their changed circumstances, and in particular in their role as fathers.

The research should prove useful by providing insights and understanding to individual counselling and welfare professionals working with and counselling non-custodial fathers. Finally, it is anticipated that the research may make a contribution towards government policy by providing an understanding of the experiences of non-custodial fathers.

Reference List:

The original Reference List was 36 pages long with many and varied references from books, Journal articles, websites, newspapers, magazines, and television programs. The following list of references has been re-constructed from sources cited in the body of the retrieved thesis. Note that it has not been possible to locate all references cited in this thesis.

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⁵² Note that the date '2011' is the date actually printed on the publisher's page in the text.

PART TWO

Section Two

Draft Journal Article Entitled:

*A Snapshot of Non-custodial Fathers'
Experiences of Attachment,
Loss and Grief*

By: David Barton

Journal Abstract

For many fathers the result of not being awarded custody of, or having regular access to their children will be depression, debility, withdrawal and detachment. This occurs not only in relation to their children, but often for a period of time to life in general. Could it be that such experiences may be the result of, and directly related to, broken attachments?

Non-custodial fathers' experience of separation and divorce is akin to the death of a loved one. The grief surrounding the severed attachment and loss of relationship with their ex-spouse and children can be enormous. However, grief literature seems to primarily focus upon the concepts and reality of death, dying and bereavement.

Using Bowlby's Attachment Theory as a theoretical basis, six non-custodial fathers who had experiences of separation were asked to complete an in-depth interview of their post-separation experiences, and the results were startling. The respondents were found to have had a range of physical, psychological and emotional experiences akin to the death and dying literature. The results indicate a need for further research and point towards application in both counselling practice and government policy.

A Snapshot of Non-custodial Fathers' Experiences of Attachment, Loss and Grief

*David Barton**

Introduction

Tom⁵³ was depressed; he was not eating or sleeping well; he had lost a lot of weight and had little hope for the future. He exhibited the symptoms of grief resulting from the death of a loved one, but no-one had died, so why was he having such symptoms? Tom's wife had left him to live elsewhere, and taken their children with her.

For many fathers the result of not being awarded custody of, or having regular access to their children will be depression, debility, withdrawal and detachment. This occurs not only in relation to their children, but often for a period of time to life in general. Could it be that such experiences may be the result of and directly related to broken attachments? Six non-custodial fathers who had experiences of separation were asked to complete an in-depth interview of their post-separation experiences, and the results were startling.

Non-custodial fathers' experience of separation and divorce is akin to the death of a loved one. The grief surrounding the severed attachment and loss of relationship with their ex-spouse and children can be enormous. However, grief literature seems to primarily focus upon the concepts and reality of death, dying and bereavement (Gee, 2001:7). Only occasionally in some texts are the effects of grief as related to divorce actually stated (Fisher, 1992:106), and only recently has attachment theory been related to issues of grief arising through divorce (Egan, 2004:3-5; Gee, 2001:7).

Background

Literature shows that the effect of separation brings about the type of grief responses that would usually follow a severe trauma of loss, often associated

* David Barton is a RMIT MA candidate. This paper is a synopsis of a part of his Master's Thesis.
⁵³ 'Tom' is a pseudonym. All names of interview respondents were changed to pseudonyms.

with death. It appears that a father, having formed a strong attachment to both wife and children, experiences enormous grief when the attachment is suddenly broken through separation and divorce, and that such a grief response can be temporarily debilitating (Fisher, 1992:32-37; Green, 1998:4-6; Brott, 1999:13-17; Gee, 2001:7).

When non-custodial fathers are not awarded custody of their children, irregular contact results in less participation and less involvement in their children's lives (Ochiltree 1990:137). Whitehead (1998:154-5) confirms that there is a 'steady emotional and financial disengagement of fathers from their children' and there are 'persistent feelings of estrangement and resentment reported by their children'. McMurray and Blackmore (1993:156) confirm that research demonstrates considerable inner anxiety in post-separation fathers; a condition that is little recognised or acknowledged (see Edgar, 1997:306-7). Such anxiety may have detrimental effects upon non-custodial fathers individually, and may produce flow-on effects to their other relationships.

Whilst the challenges of non-custodial fatherhood are now becoming the focus of more literature and research, with few notable exceptions (see Myers, 1985, Kruk, 1992, and Hannum and Dvorak, 2004) there is limited literature available that makes the connection between the separation and grief experienced by non-custodial fathers and the concepts of attachment and loss. Interview respondents Tom, Malcolm, Ian, George, Simon and Trevor⁵⁴ are all non-custodial fathers who have been deeply affected by such separation and loss.

The Importance of Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory assists in understanding basic systems of human behaviour (Ainsworth, 1991:33) and Bowlby's (1974, 1979, & 1980) theories of attachment and loss provide insights into affectional bonds that Ainsworth defines as 'a relatively long-enduring tie in which the partner is important as a unique individual, interchangeable with none other' (Ainsworth, 1991:38; see also Payne, 2005:76; Sonkin, 2005:1-2). As a result, there is a desire to maintain closeness to the partner. Ainsworth notes that 'inexplicable separation will cause

⁵⁴ Not their real names.

distress' whilst 'permanent loss would cause grief' and that the partner is 'never wholly interchangeable with or replaceable by another' so there is a deeply felt need to 'maintain proximity' (Ainsworth, 1991:38).

Bowlby's conclusions have been widely used as a basis for understanding how children, and to a lesser extent adults, form attachments with significant others in their lives, and of what is likely to happen when those attachments are severed (Bowlby, 1979:vii; Bretherton, 1991a:759-762 & 769; Payne, 2005:76;). The connection between the experiences of non-custodial fathers and Bowlby's theories seem to be very important in understanding the dynamics of the behaviour of many non-custodial fathers after separation.

Bowlby (1979:67-69) further defines the *core* of an *affectional bond* as being the 'attraction that one *individual* has for another *individual*', maintaining that 'the essential feature of bonding is that the two partners tend to remain in proximity to one another'. Bowlby posited that if separation should occur, the individuals will go to great efforts to renew the proximity and attempts from outside sources to break the bond will be met with great resistance (see also: Ainsworth, 1991:33-38; Egeland and Erickson, 1999:3; Sonkin, 2005:1). Worden confirmed that attachment theory gives an understanding of 'the tendency in human beings to make strong affectional bonds with others' and provides insight into the 'strong emotional reaction that occurs when those bonds are threatened or broken' (1991:7).

Whilst Bowlby's work concentrates on the child-mother relationship, Bowlby's work can be applied to the husband-wife or "interspousal" relationship and to the father-child relationship (Payne, 2005:76-77). Bowlby's view of the centrality of attachment can be seen by his view that throughout life a person will move away from loved ones for 'ever-increasing distances and lengths of time' however 'always maintaining contact and sooner or later returning'. Bowlby explains that 'the base from which an adult operates is likely to be either his family of origin or else a new base which he has created for himself' (ie: spouse and children). Bowlby concludes that 'anyone who has no such base is rootless and intensely lonely' (1979:132).

In the event of separation and divorce, in most cases the mother and child attachment remains intact, whereas the father's attachment and proximity is, to a greater or lesser extent, severely disrupted (see Page & Bretherton, 2003). Put simply, mothers still have contact, proximity and attachment, but fathers do not. Bowlby has given some indication and insight as to why so many non-custodial fathers appear to be "rootless and intensely lonely".

In Tom's situation, what he found so hard was that without prior notice, he had simply been deserted by his wife. Fisher has coined the terms *dumper* and *dumpee* to describe two partners who are ending their relationship (1992:13). According to Fisher, 'usually there is one person who is more responsible for deciding to end the love relationship; that person is the "dumper". The more reluctant partner is the "dumpee"'. The dumpee will almost always have a much more painful and difficult experience of the separation and divorce than will the dumper (Fisher, 1992:13 & 300; see also Green, 1998:3).

Dumpers are described by Fisher as feeling guilty for hurting a former loved one, and dumpees find it difficult being rejected (1992:13). Therefore, the adjustment processes are quite different for each. Non-custodial fathers who are dumpers will usually have a different set of separation experiences, and may not experience much of what the dumpees do (see also Green, 1998:3-6). It is important to note that the six interview respondents were dumpees. The dumpee's immediate reaction is usually one of disbelief, shock, outrage and despair, with the dumpee having had no time to prepare; a similar reaction to the sudden death of a loved one.

Grief at Loss of Attachment

The vital role that attachment theory and behaviour plays in marriage, spousal and familial relationships is important in understanding what occurs in relation to attachment behaviour in a situation of loss and grief for a dumpee. Parkes realised in the early 1960's that there was a clear link between Bowlby's work on attachment and in gaining an understanding of grief in adult life (Parkes in Bretherton 1991b:20). Bowlby and Parkes described a number of topics related to mourning (grief) in adults resulting from a loss of the object of attachment.

They are numbness, yearning and protest (hostility), disorganization and despair, thoughts and behaviour directed towards the lost person, appeals for help, and reorganisation (Parkes in Bretherton 1991b:20). These are all acknowledged grief reactions (Worden, 1991:21-29).

Psychological and physiological reactions to grief are complex, varied and correlate to a loss of an attachment figure. A number of authors describe a general symptomatology of bereavement that includes physiological reactions to grief of headaches, indigestion, chest pains, palpitations, dysphoria (anxiety & restlessness), weight loss or gain, sleep disturbance, aching and fatigue (Raphael, 1984:186-189 & 210; Chadwick, 1989:31; Gee, 2001:7-8; Fisher, 1992:110-113; Worden, 1991:22-30). Raphael (1984 216-218) also notes that to this can be added a number of psychosomatic reactions to grief that may include skin complaints, (eg: rashes), viral infections (eg: cold sores), heart problems, and a variety of other 'stress-related' complaints. Depression is a major issue in relation to the reactions of the bereaved, and in its worst form can lead to suicide (Worden, 1991:22-30).

Psychologically, Chadwick (1989:31) notes that divorced men suffer decreased emotional well-being after divorce, reporting depression, sadness, anger, loneliness, anxiety and severe and frequent mood changes. Such men said that their lives were meaningless, lacked coherence and felt "rootless". They struggled with guilt, felt inadequate as parents, moved into bare and sterile apartments, and had little social contact. They mourned the lost marriage, the lost family, the past life, the future, and what might have been (see also Fisher, 1992:112-113; Bowlby, 1979:132). Raphael concludes that grief related to divorce is intense, but 'is inevitably more complicated [than death related grief] because of the pre-existing ambivalence and the perceived desertion' (1984:228), and that the subjects of grief are still alive but no longer available or in proximity.

Jordan (1996 in Gilding, 1997:195) noted that many respondents to his survey reported 'complaints and symptoms which are recognised in clinical practice as the outcomes of severe loss and bereavement'. Symptoms included distress and difficulties in health, everyday living, household chores, social initiatives, and

handling work and finances (Jordan, 1996, in Gilding, 1997:195). Whilst the symptoms Jordan reports are somewhat generalised, they reflect elements of strong grief reactions (Worden, 1991:22-23) and tragically, Blacker reports that 'divorced men have three times the mortality rate of married men and are more prone to stress-related alcoholism and suicide' (1999:294).

Chadwick (1989:30) notes that men suffer emotional reactions to divorce (sometimes acutely) that include denial, anger, and depression, but they generally move towards satisfactory divorce adjustment. Chadwick (1989:30) and Fisher (1992:114-5) further note that the reactions by men to divorce are similar to those noted by Kubler-Ross in her work on death and dying, ie: the process of denial, anger, bargaining, letting go (depression), and acceptance (resolution). Fisher (1981 in Chadwick, 1989:30) posits that 'adjustments to acute reactions usually takes about one year, but can take three to five years' (see also Bretherton, 1991a:765; Fisher, 1992:113-115). Further, Chadwick (1989:31) notes that depression in divorce is a major problem and is highly correlated with divorce, indicating that divorced individuals remain 'significantly more depressed up to four years after the divorce'.

Where children are involved and ongoing contact is required, the attachment can never really be severed nor the grief fully resolved. Where power struggles, custody and financial battles remain, current arguments quickly fuse with an old marital fight. Such 'conflict-habituated' couples remain emotionally attached to each other, although in a negative and destructive way (Ahrns, 1999:392; Payne, 2005:82). Ahrns (1999:395) further notes that where such conflict cannot be resolved, 'children ... often lose a relationship with one parent (usually the father), are caught in painful loyalty conflicts about their parents, and suffer irreparable emotional damage'. Such occurrences may be traced to protracted and complicated grief over the loss of the spouse and children.

However the resolution of grief is achieved, the recovery from severe loss depends upon restoring the continuity of meaning; until then the bereaved are vulnerable to recurring moods of futility and despair. In that sense all those who have suffered severe loss have to find their own terms in which to restate the meaning for their lives.

People suffer anxiety and grief when an attachment is broken; the stronger the attachment, the greater the anxiety and grief (Raphael, 1984:179; Gee, 2001:6). Weiss (1982:195) in developing the ideas of Marris (1958) notes that attachment theory in relation to bereavement and grief helps to explain why Freud had difficulty understanding some of his patients 'refusal to abandon a lost love object'. What is significant, according to Weiss, is that 'grief is a reaction to the disintegration of the whole structure of meaning dependant on this relationship rather than to the absence of the person lost' (1982:195). The loss of such an important attachment figure results in a 'collapse of meaning, intense anxiety and hopelessness' (Weiss, 1982:195). Whilst this assessment has been well understood and accepted in relation to the death of a spouse or other close loved one, it has rarely been explained or explored in relation to the experience of separation and divorce.

Weiss (1982:196) concludes that the severed attachment and resultant loss of meaning is in fact more important than the actual loss of the person. The severed attachment shatters the understanding and meaning of life and the future, which the person had built around the person to whom they had become attached. According to Carter & McGoldrick (1999:375), in dealing with grief, men need to mourn the loss of the intact family, give up fantasies of reunion, release their dreams for the future, restructure their ex-marital and parent-child relationships, restructure their finances, adapt to an independent and self-reliant lifestyle, realign their relationships, remain connected with the ex-spouses extended family and retrieve their hopes, dreams and expectations of the future. This is a huge challenge and may take years to achieve.

Unfortunately, divorce is little acknowledged or discussed in the bereavement literature. Gee (2001:7) notes that much of the literature regarding grief in divorce has its origins in the bereavement literature. Many authors (Bowlby, 1980:8; Worden, 1991:10; Seppa, 1995:81) have commented that the effects of grief and loss through divorce are not quickly overcome and assimilated. Bowlby importantly notes that regardless of a loss being experienced by an adult or a child 'there is a tendency to underestimate how intensely distressing and disabling loss usually is and for how long the distress, and often the disablement, commonly lasts' (1980:8).

The Results of Broken Attachments

Physiologically, many effects of divorce have been reported. Research demonstrates that after separation and divorce the nutritional health of many men declines. In particular, evidence suggests that many men will consume more alcohol, smoke more cigarettes, do less exercise, eat 'fast food', eat irregularly and generally sink into nutritional ill health (Eng, Kawachi, Fitzmaurice and Rimm, 2005:56).

From a perspective of the custody of children, Chadwick (1989:32) reported that non-custodial fathers experience more depression, more anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and increased problems with general adjustment to life. The closer the father was to his children (the more "attached" he was), the more likely such symptoms will be exacerbated. Non-custodial fathers were also found to have increased their drinking habits, felt bewildered, frustrated, impotent, confused, powerless and angrier and more depressed than a father who experienced satisfactory custody arrangements. Chadwick (1989:34) concludes 'considering the stages from the death and dying literature, divorced men do show the emotional reactions of anger and depression to divorce' (see also Gee, 2001:8).

Bereavement and re-establishment will take time in every circumstance. The length of time will vary greatly depending upon the depth of felt relationship (attachment) held by both the dumper and the dumpee. The ensuing grief reaction may vary from relief and be mild, with re-establishment taking little more than a year. Conversely, difficulties may set in with the grieving process becoming protracted and complicated, possibly taking many years to finally become assimilated, and for some, never being resolved at all (Gee, 2001:9; Worden, 1991:71).

Experiences of Interview Respondents

By comparison with the literature, it is clear that five out of six respondents suffered from an acute grief reaction (see Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Green, 1998; Gee, 2001). Further, all six respondents suffered from subsiding grief. Whilst one respondent (Ian) did not have an acute grief reaction, he nevertheless

did suffer a degree of grief regarding the loss of his previous lifestyle, his close proximity to his children, his shared past and lost future (see Myers, 1985; Worden, 1991). Respondents described a loss of self-esteem, a loss of self-confidence, a loss of weight and a sense of loneliness. The most commonly expressed emotions by the respondents were, in order of experience, shock, anger and depression, and this accords with the literature (see Chadwick 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992).

Tom exhibited many of the overt symptoms of the stages of grief and loss. Indeed, the profound level of ongoing grief which Tom displayed, even many years after the event was surprising. Tom says that he 'lost the ability to dream, to have a vision for the future, and that's only just coming back after six years' and that he 'gradually came to terms with it and was accepting it' (the divorce).

Trevor reported that he still 'has vivid memories' of the whole separation period. He says that his primary emotions at the time of the separation were, in order of importance, grieving, depression and anger. He says that he was 'committed to the marriage, but felt betrayed' and that he 'had the rug pulled out from under him'. He said 'I had to voluntarily give up the children as I had no choice'. After enduring some terrible hardships, Trevor has persevered with his relationship with his children, going to a lot of effort and expense to visit and maintain contact. He believes this has now paid off.

Severe physical reactions were experienced by five out of six of the respondents, and were ongoing. This is a usual response as found in the literature (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001). All six respondents experienced anger, a usual initial grief and shock response experienced by dumppees, and five out of six of the respondents experienced depression, again being a typical response. All six respondents experienced disturbed sleep patterns; a finding wholly consistent with the literature, and four of the six respondents lived alone after their separation, again being a typical and common occurrence (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001).

All six respondents experienced depression characterized by poor appetite or overeating; insomnia or hypersomnia; low energy or fatigue; weight loss, low self-esteem; poor concentration or difficulty making decisions and a feeling of hopelessness (see Worden, 1991; Barlow & Durand, 2005). Whilst all respondents experienced various degrees of depression, none seemed to progress to Dysthymic Disorder (Barlow & Durand, 2005:210-211) where they were significantly impaired in their daily functioning, although Tom, Malcolm and Trevor may have come close. Fortunately, none became so depressed that they attempted suicide. None of the six respondents sought professional help to deal with their depression.

Varying degrees of anger about what had occurred were experienced by all six respondents. As Bowlby has noted (1979:69) aggressive behaviour can play a key role in the biological maintenance of affectional bonds in two ways. Firstly, by attacking and frightening away intruders, and secondly, by punishing an errant partner, be it a wife, husband or child. Bowlby suggests that aggressive behaviour is a biological self-defence mechanism which paradoxically explains much of the puzzling and pathological negative reactions attributed to fathers who have been forcibly removed from their attachment figures, being their wife and children. Bowlby also notes that 'any attempt by a third party to separate the bonded pair is strenuously resisted' (1979:69). Could this also provide a partial explanation as to the aggressive behaviour of many non-custodial fathers towards their ex-partner, the Family Court and the Child Support Agency?

Daily life became exceedingly difficult for many months for five of the six respondents following their separations. Simply functioning at a basic level on a day-to-day basis became very difficult for most respondents, especially during the early stages after the separation. They found it difficult to get to sleep at night, often staying up (watching television or trawling the internet) until the early hours of the morning. This of course increased tiredness and meant that many found it difficult to "get going" in the morning. Some felt that they could no longer work and either scaled down or gave up their employment, with five of the six respondents ceasing work soon after their separation; however, none of the respondents reported reducing their work hours or quitting their jobs specifically in order to avoid paying child support. All six experienced lethargy and

depression for some time. Eventually, at differing intervals ranging from a few weeks to a number of months all six respondents commenced employment once more.

In terms of personal care, and hygiene, ie: teeth cleaning, deodorant, clothing, etc, the respondents initially tended to “let themselves go” and were dogged by chronic health difficulties, ie: skin rashes, back pain, headaches, etc. Whilst five out of the six respondents were involved in less exercise, one respondent became obsessed with fitness (push-bike riding), which he described as a ‘coping mechanism’ response to his situation. Whilst none of the respondents would probably recognise or state it, each situation would also appear to symptomatically correlate with the loss of an attachment figure, being the children, and in most cases, the spouse as well (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999 and Gee, 2001).

A negative effect in relation to their diet was experienced by all six respondents. Five of the six respondents consumed an increased amount of take-away food, and also experienced weight loss. These experiences are confirmed as typical by the work of Eng, et al., (2005). For the first few months all six respondents reported that their diet had been negatively affected by the separation with all but one respondent (George) moving towards easy and convenient take-away or fast-food meals. Typically, the meals were McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Red Rooster, hamburgers and pizzas. Some frozen ‘TV’ type dinners of the McCain’s variety and packaged dehydrated Continental type meals were also heavily utilised by the six respondents. The respondent (George) who did not resort to take-away or fast-foods reported that his diet actually improved after the separation; a part of his recovery was to focus upon cooking good and healthy meals, even though he nevertheless lost weight in the early months after the separation. One respondent (Simon) reported that he put on a great deal of weight (which he still retains) due to his extensive eating of take-away food.

Research demonstrates that after separation and divorce the nutritional health of many men declines. In particular, evidence suggests that many men will consume more alcohol, smoke more cigarettes, do less exercise, eat ‘fast-food’,

eat irregularly and generally sink into nutritional ill health (Raphael, 1984; Chadwick, 1989; Worden, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Jordan in Gilding, 1997; Blacker, 1999, Gee, 2001; Eng, et al., 2005). This was also the experience of the respondents.

Analysis

The nature of the connection between Bowlby's theories of attachment, loss and grief and the experiences of non-custodial fathers is complex, yet the theoretical foundation for the existence of a strong "attachment" between a child and its parents as identified by Bowlby and Ainsworth is academically and empirically established beyond reasonable doubt.

Despite the paucity of literature on the topic, many non-custodial fathers are deeply attached to their children and the depth and type of attachment to their children will determine, firstly, their response to the separation, divorce and loss of regular contact with their children, and secondly, the ongoing nature of their relationship with their children, if there is able to be a relationship at all. It has been seen that once such an attachment is broken it can be very difficult to recover and repair (Payne, 2005:83).

A non-custodial fathers' grief reaction and its intensity and duration will be determined by factors related to the non-custodial fathers' own depth of attachment established with his wife and children. Therefore, the distressed and negative response of many non-custodial fathers to separation, divorce and loss of regular contact with their children is psychologically, physiologically and emotionally quite understandable and relatively predictable.

Non-custodial fathers themselves are generally unaware of the above and so do not have the personal resources to know, understand or manage what is happening to them. Government policy makers and many welfare professionals also seem quite oblivious, and fail to take into account the attachment, loss and grief connection. Further, the Family Court and Child Support Agency also seem quite oblivious to the above and hence fail to take it into account either in policy and decision making or in the application of existing policy.

It would be useful if individual separated parents, their children, their counsellors, government policy makers and administrative bureaucrats could become better informed and better educated about attachment theory and its direct relationship to grief and loss. This would undoubtedly bring about better understanding and more compassion for each of the parties affected by separation and divorce and perhaps may bring about the revision of counselling techniques and government policy so as to provide a more targeted response for those suffering the wrenching effects of broken attachments and the ensuing physical and emotional reactions to their grief and loss.

Conclusion

Bowlby's theories of attachment and loss in connection to separation in marriage have been explored and considered. The relatively new concept of adult-to-adult attachment was briefly noted, and grief and loss along with their expected physiological and psychological reactions were explored. It can be seen that adults form attachments to their partners and children (and vice-versa), which over time either strengthen or weaken. When the attachment is broken, especially suddenly or against a person's will, the person who is dumped suffers a grief reaction that, depending upon the strength of the attachment, is sometimes acute and debilitating.

It would appear that some non-custodial fathers in the Australian community at the time of, and following soon after a separation and divorce, are experiencing and suffering from acute and disturbing grief reactions to the separation from not only their children, but from their spouse. It is a reasonable proposition that the grief reaction finds its basis in the loss of primary attachment figures that are of vital significance to the non-custodial father's very sense of being and meaning. Perhaps if such grief reactions and their connection to the level of depth of interpersonal spouse-spouse and father-child attachment were better understood there may be clear implications for counsellors and Government policy makers?

The human spirit is remarkably resilient. For most of those affected by separation and divorce, time heals many of the wounds and a process of adjustment gradually takes place, although things can and never will be the same again. For

many non-custodial fathers the raw pain of the loss of significant attachment figures gradually subsides over time, but there still remains a large physical and emotional hole in their lives that can never be repaired, and that is what real and significant loss is all about - a pain that never goes away.

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