THE SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF DIVORCED SINGLE CUSTODIAL PARENTS

by

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SUMMARY

As the divorce rate consistently rises, the occurrence of single parent families are becoming increasingly prevalent. Despite the marked increase in single custodial parents, research on this population (and more importantly, into the positive aspects such as their subjective well-being) has been neglected. Over the past three decades, psychologists have shifted the emphasis of their research from examining demographic and pathogenic factors to a positive psychology framework focusing on personality and resilience.

The general aim of this study was to explore and describe the subjective well-being, including satisfaction with life and general happiness, of divorced, single custodial parents. In addition, this study aimed to identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated and aimed to explore the relationships between these patterns. Thirty-five participants were included for participation in this study by means of non-probability, purposive sampling. The research measures included a biographical questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Affectometer-2 Scale (AFM-2). The data were analysed by the researcher and an independent statistician in terms of descriptive statistics and cluster analysis, or according to content analysis. This reflects a triangulation data collection and analysis method.

Key findings included the following: The results of the SWLS indicated that the majority of participants reported being slightly dissatisfied with their lives. The results of the AFM-2 indicated that the participants generally had high levels of positive affect, and low levels of negative affect. However, the participants’ overall levels of happiness were still relatively low. A four cluster solution was obtained, with the clusters being significantly different from each other on all input variables. The first cluster experienced high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and high levels of overall happiness. The second cluster experienced predominantly slight dissatisfaction with their lives, high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and high levels of overall happiness. The third cluster reported mostly dissatisfaction with their lives, low levels of positive affect, high levels of negative affect, and very low levels of overall happiness. The fourth cluster experienced predominantly slight satisfaction with
life, slightly high levels of positive affect, neutral levels of negative affect, and low levels of overall happiness. It appeared that clusters containing participants who were satisfied with their jobs, were involved in a personal relationship and who participated in leisure activities, all experienced higher levels of subjective well-being. Overall, this study emphasises the value of and the need for South African research on the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents.

*Key words: divorce, custody, single parents, subjective well-being, satisfaction with life, positive affect, negative affect, happiness.*
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This initial chapter provides a general overview of the current study. Firstly the context of the research is discussed, with a brief literature overview regarding subjective well-being. The need for this research is then outlined. Thereafter, the proposed aims of the study are discussed followed by the delineation of the chapters which follow.

1.2 GENERAL ORIENTATION TO STUDY

The experience of divorce has become a common event for a growing number of parents in contemporary society. The rates of divorce have more than tripled in the past 50 years, and while there has been a modest decline in recent decades, the lifetime probability of a first marriage ending in divorce is still approximately 50% (Goldstein, 1999; Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2000). While it is evident from these statistics that society increasingly accepts divorce, negative stereotypes regarding the process of marital dissolution are prevalent.

Divorce is the most common factor to give rise to single parenthood. As the divorce rate consistently rises, the occurrence of single parent families is becoming increasing prevalent. Single-parent households (as a result of the combined factors of divorce, widowhood and never having married) make up 26% of all American families with children under the age of 18 years, which represents a dramatic increase of 58% since 1970. There are over 12 million single-parent households in the United States of America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Unfortunately limited statistics are available on the prevalence of single-parent families in South Africa, but it is likely that the pattern is similar.

Single-parent families, similar to divorced individuals, experience stigmatisation. Social institutions view single-parent families as “abnormal”, yet at the same time expect them to fulfill the same functions as two-parent families (Guttmann, 1993). However, the popular assumption that all single-parent families are dysfunctional and that the single-parent family will struggle to function effectively is not supported in the available research (Guttmann, 1993; Schwartz & Kaslow,
The following section will provide the context for the current research in terms of the positive psychology framework and the construct of subjective well-being.

1.3 CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

Literature and societal attitudes have consistently focused on the negative aspects of divorced single parents. The researcher of the current study chose to examine this population from a positive psychology point of view. The particular aspect of positive psychology chosen is the construct of subjective well-being. Both of the aforementioned concepts will be discussed in the following sections.

1.3.1 Positive Psychology

Traditionally, health was defined as generally synonymous with the absence of disease (Emmet, 1991). Martin Seligman (1998), the principal developer of the positive psychology movement, viewed health in a different way. The positive psychology movement necessitated that health be seen as more than simply an absence of disease. This movement focuses on enhancing what is good and functional in life, rather than on fixing what is wrong. In this way psychology is seen as more than merely the study of “weakness” and “damage”. It is also seen as the study of ordinary human strengths and virtues (Seligman, 1998). This approach urges psychologists to adopt a more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials.

Over the past three decades psychologists have shifted the emphasis of their research from examining demographic and pathogenic factors to focusing on personality and resilience. These researchers have considered personality and resilience as the primary factors of life quality, both of which are referred to as subjective well-being (DeNeve, 1999). From the above description of positive psychology, it is clear that the concept of subjective well-being, consisting of satisfaction with life and overall happiness, is firmly rooted in this orientation.

1.3.2 Subjective Well-being

The study of happiness has always been a focus for psychologists and philosophers alike. However, while philosophers described happiness as the highest good and ultimate motivation for human action throughout the ages, psychologists have been concerned with human unhappiness for decades (Diener, 1984). Recent
developments in psychology have emphasised the importance of positive psychological research and various researchers (Diener, Lucas, Smith & Suh, 1999; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) have emphasised the importance of researching the significant construct of subjective well-being.

In line with this positive psychology movement, subjective well-being is concerned with how and why people experience their lives in positive ways (Diener, 1984). Researchers have suggested that there are two main components or dimensions of subjective well-being, namely life satisfaction and life happiness (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction refers to a judgmental process in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique set of criteria (Shin & Johnson, 1978). Life satisfaction also involves the individual’s total contextual estimate of life quality in various aspects of life such as family life, working conditions, health and social security (Lewinsohn, Redner & Seeley, 1991). Furthermore, life satisfaction refers to an individual’s contentment with life, the degree to which one feels that his or her aspirations have been met, and above all, the degree to which one feels that he or she has successfully achieved what he or she wanted in life (Veenhoven, 1991).

Research focused on the field of happiness, has shown that happiness is associated with the following predictable aspects: a positive self-concept, an internal locus of control, extroversion, intimate interpersonal relations, religiosity, the ability to enjoy life’s special moments, positive working circumstances as well as recreational activities (Myers & Diener, 1995). More specifically, happiness encompasses the constructs of positive affect and negative affect. Positive affect refers to the tendency to experience mostly positive mood, seek out situations that create good moods and leave situations that are dissatisfying (O’Leary, 1990). At an affective level, research has indicated that individuals with high subjective well-being feel mainly pleasant emotions such as joy, elation, contentment, affection, happiness and ecstasy (Diener, et al., 1999). On the other hand, research shows that individuals with low subjective well-being experience their life circumstances and events as undesirable, and therefore feel unpleasant emotions such as guilt and shame, sadness, anxiety, anger, stress, depression and envy (Diener, et al., 1999; Myers & Diener, 1995).

Overall happiness can be conceptualised as the degree to which one’s positive affect outweighs one’s negative affect. Myers and Diener (1995) described high subjective well-being as frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and
a global sense of satisfaction with life. For the purposes of the current study subjective well-being is conceptualised according to the combination of its constructs, for example high subjective well-being is seen as the presence of satisfaction with life, high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The marked increase in divorced, single parents results in this group being an important focus for research. As mentioned previously, much of the research on divorced, single parents has focused on the negative aspects of this life style leaving a void in research on the more positive aspects of this group’s functioning, such as their levels of subjective well-being. In addition, the field of positive psychology is in great need of research (Seligman, 1998). Limited research has focused on scientifically exploring the psychological well-being of divorced individuals or single parents, and that which does exist is not readily available in South Africa. To date, the researcher could not locate a study that explored the construct of subjective well-being in the combined population of divorced, single parents.

In the current research, an exploratory descriptive design was employed in order to provide information on the subjective well-being of divorced, single parents. The value of this research is evident on both a research and a clinical level. Seligman (1998) pointed out that practitioners and researchers in the field of psychology needed to realise that much of the therapeutic work is done by amplifying strengths rather than by repairing weaknesses. Furthermore, a stronger scientific foundation is required to make recommendations to societies and individuals regarding ways to increase happiness (Diener, 2000). Therefore the current research is valuable on a clinical level as it will provide a better understanding of the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents. From this understanding, valuable information could be supplied in order to help provide clear recommendations for healthcare workers regarding ways to increase life satisfaction and happiness among divorced, single parents. This research would also be a positive step in creating an understanding of the construct of subjective well-being as experienced by a population that has not yet fully been researched.
1.5 PRIMARY AIMS OF STUDY

The present exploratory-descriptive study investigated the subjective well-being of a divorced, single custodial parent population. The main aims of the research were:

1. To explore and describe the subjective well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and happiness) of divorced, single custodial parents.

2. To identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated (i.e., satisfaction with life and the positive affect and negative affect components of happiness), so as to further explore and describe the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents.

1.6 OUTLINE OF STUDY

Chapter 1 introduces the present study. In this chapter the contextual background according to which the study was conducted is explored.

Chapter 2 focuses on divorce and single parenthood. Appropriate definitions are provided as well as an indication of the tasks of parenthood and single parenthood, and the various custody options. This chapter includes an evaluation of both the positive and negative effects of divorce as well as the difficulties and positive elements of single parenthood.

Chapter 3 examines the concept of subjective well-being and includes a theoretical overview of this construct. The main components constituting subjective well-being as well as the possible sources of subjective well-being are presented. In addition the different variables that relate to subjective well-being are discussed. These comprise gender, age, race and culture, education, employment and job morale, income, leisure activities, religion, social relationships, health, personal characteristics, sense of responsibility, and life events.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the research process which includes the primary aims of the study, a discussion on the participants and sampling procedure, the measurement, the procedure for data collection, and the data analysis. The ethical considerations borne in mind by the researcher while conducting the research, are also described.

Chapter 5 presents the results of this research. This chapter also provides a discussion of the results in relation to the literature cited in Chapters 2 and 3.
Chapter 6 provides conclusions based on the results of this research. A discussion on the limitations of the study is included. This chapter concludes with the provision of recommendations for future research studies in the field, based on the results of the current study.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a brief overview of the current study. The concepts of divorce and single parenthood were briefly discussed in order to provide a context for the research. The construct of subjective well-being was introduced in terms of a brief literature overview. The following chapter will focus on divorced, single parents in more detail.
CHAPTER 2
DIVORCE AND SINGLE PARENTHOOD

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The following extract from a case study cited by Simpson (1998, p.1) illustrates the complexity of the emotional and practical changes following divorce:

“What you do from that moment (of separation) are very strange things and you kind of make a decision one week based on something that’s happened. In hindsight … you realise that perhaps you don’t act quite rationally at the time because there are so many pressures and so many things going on … I think you are both trying to survive out of something that’s like a holocaust, it’s an indignity … it does change you but if you’re trying to say to people ‘well look, I’m alright, I’m ok’ so you know but I mean you’re fighting like hell underneath because you are always alongside … couples who have made it and life is hunky dory.”

Divorce has become a common experience for a growing number of parents in contemporary society. The rates of divorce have more than tripled in the past 50 years, and although there has been a modest decline in recent decades, the lifetime probability of a first marriage ending in divorce still approaches 50% (Goldstein, 1999; Teachman, et al., 2000). Research has also shown that there has been an increase in divorce rates for women over 40, making later-life divorce an increasing phenomenon (Uhlenberg, Cooney, & Boyd, 1990). It is evident that society increasingly accepts divorce, yet the attitude toward the process of marital dissolution is rarely positive. Negative stereotypes of divorce proliferate, portraying the process as a “ritualised combat” (Gold, 1992, p.5). This has fueled studies on divorce that have focused predominantly on the negative aspects of this process. However, as this chapter will document, there have also been positive findings regarding these experiences.

Divorce is the most common factor to give rise to single parenthood. Besides the social acceptance of divorce, there are numerous other factors that give rise to single parenthood. These include: economic independence of women and mothers, teenage pregnancies, liberalisation of adoption laws, artificial insemination, and death of a spouse (De Witt & Booysen, 1994). However, for the purposes of this study the focus will be on single parenthood as a result of divorce. As Guttmann
(1993) pointed out, social institutions view single-parent families as “abnormal” yet at the same time expect them to fulfill the same functions as two-parent families. He further asserted, “because many families are treated as ‘nonfamilies’ or are stigmatised as deviant, and a social distance is erected between ‘normal’ and abnormal’ families, a self-fulfilling prophecy is put into effect” (Guttmann, 1993, p.87). However, the popular assumption that all single-parent families are dysfunctional is not supported in the available research. Instead, research suggests that it is the psychosocial characteristics of the family unit, independent of the number of parents, that affect the individuals in the family (Guttmann, 1993). A further assumption may be that the single-parent family will struggle to function effectively, as compared to two-parent families. Here again, research contradicts this assumption by suggesting that once the initial trauma of the divorce has begun to lose its force, the reasonably healthy and capable single parent is able to stabilise the reduced family unit’s functioning and begin to move forward with new goals and plans to reach them (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997).

Due to the nature in which divorce and single parenthood co-exist, this chapter will focus on both these topics in an integrative manner. This chapter includes an evaluation of both the positive and negative effects of divorce as well as the difficulties and positive elements of single parenthood. In the first sections of the chapter the concept of divorce is defined, the process model of divorce is delineated and various custody options are presented. Following this, parenting and single parenthood, as well as the tasks involved, will be discussed. General challenges facing both divorced individuals and single parents will be presented in an integrative manner. Thereafter effects specific to divorced individuals and specific challenges facing single parents will be outlined. Finally, positive findings related to divorced individuals and single parents will be documented.

2.2 DEFINITION OF DIVORCE

Schlesinger (1975, p.53) defined divorce as “the legal dissolution of a marriage, usually following a more or less protracted stage of marital maladjustment.” Although divorce is technically a legal process, it has its roots in social, economic, and psychological conditions that are often profoundly changed as a consequence of divorce (Severson & Bankston, 1995). In his definition of divorce, Simpson (1998, p.27) adds the dimensions of values and attitudes: “Divorce is the
point at which marriage is officially dissolved, but is also the point at which the principles, assumptions, values, attitudes and expectations surrounding marriage, family and parenting are made explicit.” These become explicit because in the process of divorce, these cultural tenets, which are conflicted, become the subject of a rather public and painful renegotiation. Divorce can be seen as more than a point-in-time event but as a process of “uncoupling”, which Vaughan (1986, p.173) suggested is complete when “the participants define themselves and are defined by others as separate and independent of each other – when being partners is no longer a major source of their identity.” This view of divorce is in line with the process model of divorce which will be described in the following section.

2.3 MODEL OF DIVORCE

The previous definition of divorce gives rise to a theoretical model of divorce. The most commonly accepted model of divorce involves a process perspective that addresses stress, risk and resilience. According to this model, stress is viewed as an accumulation of potentially stressful changes and disruptions in the social and physical environments of adults and children, rather than as reactions to a single negative event (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). Thus, the process model holds that marital instability and divorce introduce a complex chain of marital transitions and family reorganisations that change roles and relationships, and affect individual adjustment (Greene, Anderson, Hetherington, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2003). Each transition presents new adaptive challenges, and the response to these challenges is influenced by previous family functioning and experiences. In addition, the roles and relationships developed in the first marriage will shape the individual’s response to divorce and life in a single-parent family. Previous family experiences will also affect the individual’s adaptation to post-divorce changes, such as cohabitation or remarriage (Amato, 2000).

According to the process model of divorce, the success with which the individual copes with these stressors depends on the activation of protective factors (which buffer the individual or promote the individual’s resilience in coping with divorce), and vulnerability factors (which increase the likelihood of adverse consequences). Greene, et al. (2003) explained that protective and vulnerability factors can include personal characteristics of the individual and systems external to the family, such as social support. This focus suggests that individuals cope
differently and may be affected to varying degrees by divorce. The above-mentioned model highlights the diversity of responses of individuals facing the challenges of divorce. Divorce may be experienced by individuals as stressful and difficult but also as an opportunity to build more fulfilling relationships, and as providing the potential for personal development. Indeed, the position taken by the individual may be greatly influenced by that individual’s personality characteristics and social support, both of which contribute to his or her protective and vulnerability factors (Greene, et al., 2003).

2.4 CUSTODIANSHIP

In terms of this discussion, the above heading refers to the attribution of custody of children according to their chronological age, or alternatively their mental age. South African law dictates that a custodial agreement must be arranged for minor children (those under the age of 18 years). This may be extended to children under the age of 21 years if these children are involved in academic studies, and are therefore still dependent on the parents. However, during a professional liaison with a social worker (2004), it was explained that this system is different for children with a mental handicap. In this case, an effort is made to attain the mental age of the child. If the mental age is under 18 years, even while the child may have a chronological age of over 18 years, the court also needs to rule on the custodianship of such a child.

Following a divorce, there are a variety of custody arrangements that could be awarded, namely sole, joint, split, or divided custody. Before discussing these custody arrangements, the derivative of the word custody as well as a definition of this concept will be provided.

It is interesting to note that the word custody is derived from the Latin word *custodia* which means *guarding* (Herman, 1990). The Supreme Court is generally regarded as the upper guardian of all minors and as such, will exercise its powers if this is considered necessary and in the best interest of the child.

A formal definition of custody reads as follows (Hoffman & Pincus, 1989, p.5): “Custody is that portion of the parental power that pertains to the personal life of the child. The importance of one of the parents obtaining custody of a minor child of the marriage lies in the fact that he or she will be entitled to have the child with him or her, to discipline it, to control and regulate its
daily life, such as its shelter, nourishment and training of the mind, to decide all questions relating to its education and religious upbringing, how its health should be cared for, and to determine with whom it may or may not associate."

It is clear from the above broad definition of custody that the right to decide upon all of the above matters rests with the custodial parent. The custodial arrangement will be decided upon by the Supreme Court, hopefully with the support of the parents. This decision will be based on the facts presented and what the court believes will be in the best interest of the child. Thus this decision may not necessarily take into account the needs and desires of the parents. For example, in the matter of Martens v Martens reported in the S.A. Law Reports (Juta, 1991, p.287) the following provides an insight into the role of the South African court in respect of the issues of custody: "The court has to form an independent judgment on the evidence before it and, in the course of doing so, will give only such weight to a foreign custody order as the circumstances might justify." According to the rules of the court, if the custodial arrangement is not contested by a parent or child, the court will grant custody to the parent who files for it. In this case, all parties agree on the most suitable parent for custody, therefore the court would most frequently grant their request. If, however, one of the parents contests the custody petition, then custody is not an automatic process, and the court will investigate further in order to place the child in the setting that is in his or her best interest. The available custody options include sole custody, joint custody, split custody and divided custody, all of which will be discussed below.

2.4.1 Sole Custody

Sole custody refers to a situation where physical (residential) and legal (decision-making) custody of the child is awarded to one parent with visitation rights awarded to the non-custodial parent (Fox & Blanton, 1995). This type of custody is particularly beneficial where parents have demonstrated an inability to co-operate with one another, as the rights of both parents to custody and access are clearly specified, leaving little room for argument (Gardner, 1982).

In most divorce cases today, legal and physical custody of children is awarded solely to the mother (Fox & Blanton, 1995). More specifically, physical custody is most likely to be awarded to mothers when the children are younger.
These researchers explained that this is “reflective of the ‘tender years’ doctrine that has predominated in custody decision-making during most of this century” (Fox & Blanton, 1995, p.261). The tender years doctrine disregarded the father’s influence in favour of the child’s relationship with the mother. This attitude favouring the mother resulted in few men being awarded custody of their children. While more men are currently awarded custody of their children than in the past, it still seems that custody is awarded more frequently to women than to men.

2.4.2 Joint Custody

Joint custody is where legal or physical custody of the child is shared by both parents in such a way that continued access to the child by both parents is assured. In this custody arrangement, both parents have the right to be informed of their child’s progress or problems at school, to attend teacher meetings, and special school events, to have a voice in the selection of school or university the child will attend, to review medical and dental records, and to decide what religious training the child will have and where they will worship (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). In some cases, the parents decide that each will take the major decision-making responsibility in different areas of a child’s functioning, therefore avoiding having to make joint decisions about everything (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997).

There is currently a movement towards awarding a joint custody arrangement, as this seems most frequently to be in the best interest of the child. Empirically there have been numerous studies based on the belief that children show better adjustment when both the custodial and the non-custodial parent are actively involved in childrearing (Simons, Whitbeck, Beaman, & Conger, 1994). At least 40 states in America have declared a general presumption in favour of joint custody (Gillenkirk, 2000). Unfortunately statistics on joint custody arrangements in South Africa are not readily available. It is believed that the joint custody approach, which favours parental co-operation in child-rearing, discourages custody litigation by putting both parents on an equal footing (Leving, cited by Smith, 2003).

2.4.3 Split Custody

Split custody exists where one or more of the children are awarded to one parent with the remaining children being awarded to the other parent (Fox & Blanton, 1995). This form of custody may be viewed as a problematic custody arrangement. It
is inevitable that there will be interference with how the family members interact with each other. Separating siblings does not allow them to respond as a system, which would seem to exacerbate the existing conflict. In such custody arrangements, the family often becomes unable to adapt to the changes brought on by the divorce and custody arrangement (Kaplan, Ade-Ridder, & Hennon, 1991).

2.4.4 Divided Custody

A divided custody arrangement allows each parent to have physical custody with full control over the child for part of the year (Fox & Blanton, 1995). Thus the child may live with one parent for the first half of the year, and with the other parent for the remaining half of the year.

Ultimately each custody case should be presented on its merits and decided upon according to that which is in the best interest of the child. The previous sections of this chapter focused specifically on the process of divorce and the resultant custody options. As is evident, the process of divorce commonly results in the formation of a single parent family. In the following section, single parenthood will be discussed.

2.5 DEFINITION AND PREVALENCE OF SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Various definitions of a single-parent family have been suggested over the years. Armstrong-Dillard (1980, p.44) defined the single-parent family as “a parent who is living with a child, but not with another adult”, while Schlesinger (1980, p.25) defined this type of family as “a family headed by either a woman or a man, with dependent children.” A further definition offered by Krell (1972) indicates that the single-parent family is one in which either the father or the mother has primary responsibility for bringing up the children, and where there is only occasional or no contact with the spouse.

Much research focusing on the prevalence of single parent families has been done in countries other than South Africa. Single-parent households make up 26% of all American families with children under the age of 18 years. This represents a dramatic increase of 58% since 1970. There are over 12 million single-parent households, approximately 10 million of which are maintained by mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Indeed, single mothers head 25% of all households (up from 5% in 1960) and over half of all African American families (Cherlin, 1998). In
Canada, 10% of all families were single-parent families in 1979 (Popenoe, Elshtain, & Blankenhorn, 1996). More recent statistics report that in 1998 there were more that one million single parents in Canada (McClean, 1998). In Australia, 12.3% of all children lived in single-parent families in 1980 (Popenoe, et al., 1996). More recent statistics indicate the number of single parents living in Australia in 2001 to be 762 600, which is an increase of 38% from 1991 (AusStats, retrieved: 25/09/2004). Although no national statistics are available on the incidence of single-parent families in South Africa, a study conducted in 1985 by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) at a number of schools in and around Pretoria, South Africa, revealed that up to 45% of the population on which the study was conducted were children who were being raised in single-parent families at the time (Gerdes, 1988). Anderson (cited by Walsh, 2003) holds that given the prevalence of the single-parent family form, gaining an understanding of the challenges of single parents is crucial. Before these challenges are discussed further on in this chapter, it is important to highlight the tasks of parenting and what these tasks constitute for single parents.

2.6 TASKS OF PARENTING AND SINGLE PARENTS

The importance of parenting cannot be overestimated. Horowitz (1995, p.46) outlined that the goals of parenting are “to nurture, protect and promote the successful journey of children from birth to adequate adult/lifetime functioning or simply to reach age 21.” Parenting involves sharing the responsibilities of tasks. Ehrensaft (1990, p.57) commented as follows, “basic to the partnership of shared responsibility is an agreement to equitably divide the job responsibilities of childrearing.”

The roles of the mother and father in childrearing have traditionally been absolute in their differences. The role of the mother centred on devotion to the child’s needs and taking care of the family. The father’s role was predominantly to provide material resources for the family (Horowitz, 1995). The parents of today are balancing multiple roles, meaning that many fathers are becoming involved in more caretaking activities, and many mothers are becoming more involved in providing material resources for their families.

While parenting involves the sharing of task responsibilities, this is questionable with regard to single parents. This is because the person who takes on the main responsibility for parenting is required to complete the necessary activities
or tasks alone, or with limited assistance from others (Horowitz, 1995). The factors that bring about single parenthood, including divorce, death of a spouse, and unwed parenting, imply that the single parent must now make all the major decisions with no partner to provide assistance or to give a second opinion. Single parents are faced with the problem of fulfilling both the role of the caregiver and the role of the material resource provider, as well as having sufficient time, energy and expertise to complete the tasks of parenting (Horowitz, 1995). Before discussing the specific challenges that single parents face, it will be valuable to investigate the general challenges that confront both divorced individuals and single parents.

2.7 CHALLENGES FACING BOTH DIVORCED INDIVIDUALS AND SINGLE PARENTS

There are a number of common difficulties that are faced by divorced individuals and single parents. These include the societal view of divorced individuals and single parents, their physical and mental health, their employment and change in financial status, the impact of their situation on their relationships, as well as their patterns of dating and remarriage. All of these will be discussed below.

2.7.1 Societal View of Divorced Individuals and Single Parents

One of the more subtle challenges facing divorced individuals and single parents is the negative way in which they are viewed by society. Gold (1992) pointed out that the common beliefs regarding divorcing individuals are that they experience extreme conflict, want revenge, cannot co-operate on issues regarding their children, and wish the other partner dead. This author further stated that this stereotype only applies to approximately 20% to 25% of divorcing individuals. Unfortunately society’s tendency to view this group as the norm is self-defeating as it deters the need for change within divorcing individuals; they are more likely to be complacent in their rage and resistant to healing as this is the expected response. Research focusing on the negative aspects of divorce fuels the view of marital dissolution being combative. This, in turn, increases the probability that divorced individuals, striving to divorce with some restraint and dignity despite their anger, will view themselves as abnormal in their attempt to divorce with civility (Gold, 1992).

The impact of the societal view is also evident in relation to single parents. Much of the research involving the single-parent family has focused on “what’s
wrong with single parent families” (Olson & Haynes, 1993, p.260). The net effect of focusing on the negative aspects of this family form is the perpetuation of negative societal stereotypes. There is substantial evidence indicating that these negative stereotypes affect single parents in various aspects of their lives, for example, self-esteem, attitude toward their family and social identity (Olson & Haynes, 1993).

Researchers have attempted to change these damaging stereotypes of divorced individuals and single parents by focusing on their strengths. Gold (1992) provided a guide to civilised divorce in contrast to the view of divorce as “ritualised combat” (p.5). In addition, Everett and Volgy Everett (1994) focused on the healthy divorce, which constitutes a constructive rather than destructive transition out of marriage, as opposed to other authors that focus on “surviving” divorce. Olson and Haynes (1993, p.260) chose to “focus on what’s right” about the way that single parents are raising their children, and Jung (1996) explored an ecological, family-centred approach in working with single parent families so as to assist practitioners in freeing families oppressed by the two-parent family model. Anderson (cited by Walsh, 2003) emphasised that in contrast to the stereotypical view of single-parent households as deficient, most single parents provide the structure, values, and nurturance that their children need, despite the challenges and criticisms that they encounter.

2.7.2 Physical and Mental Health

Just as negative societal attitudes can impact upon the manner in which individuals understand and experience divorce and single parenthood, the process of divorce and the transition to a single parent family could have implications for an individual’s mental and physical health. Ambrose et al. (1983) reported that there is a large body of evidence which suggests that the stresses of divorce demand a high price in terms of physical illness. It is supposed that the shock of the marital separation may make the individual’s immune system less resistant to assaults by the assorted illness-causing elements in the environment (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). Holmes and Rahe (1967) designed a Social Readjustment Rating Scale in which life events are rated according to the amount of change that they require. The greater the life-change scores, the greater the likelihood of health problems. On this scale, divorce is rated second highest after the death of a spouse. Divorced men may be particularly likely to engage in unhealthy behaviour. Several studies involving
Divorced men have reported increased drinking and risk-taking behaviours as well as higher rates of suicide (Guttmann, 1993).

Divorce may also lead to mental health problems for both genders. Gotlib and McCabe (1990) found that people from disrupted marriages have a higher rate of psychopathology. In particular, considerable depression has been found among divorced adults, especially among those who remain more attached to their previous spouse (Kitson, 1992). Interestingly, the relationship between psychopathology and divorce may be bi-directional. Gotlib and McCabe (1990) concluded that research suggests that while divorce increases the risk for psychological problems, so do preexisting psychological problems increase the risk for divorce. These authors argued that evidence that psychopathology causes divorce is strongest for severe emotional disorders such as schizophrenia and alcoholism, while less severe problems such as depression and anxiety appear to be partly a consequence of divorce. The conclusion that psychological problems follow divorce is consistent with the common clinical view that divorce precipitates a period of grieving among adults (Kitson, 1992).

Managing on their own, coping with the loss of a relationship, and enduring financial hardship are common tasks that leave single parents more psychologically vulnerable (Acock & Demo, 1994; Simons & Johnson, 1996). Compared to their married counterparts, they work longer hours, face more stressful life changes, are more frequently depressed, and have more economic problems and less emotional support in performing their parental role. These challenges have all been found to impact on single parents’ physical health. Research by Anderson (cited by Walsh, 2003) found that single parents are more physically vulnerable. A large Scandinavian study of mostly urban single mothers demonstrated a 70% higher risk of premature death. This vulnerability remained at a 24% higher rate even when the findings were adjusted for socio-economic status, number of children, previous severe medical and psychiatric history, and housing (Weitoft, Haglund, & Rosen, 2000).

Anderson (cited by Walsh, 2003) warned that while considerable data show that single parents in comparison to their married counterparts are more likely to be depressed, many of these studies do not address certain fundamental issues. These include the relative impact of poverty (Edin & Lein, 1997), whether there is a history of living in a dysfunctional or abusive nuclear family (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale, & McRae, 1998), the stage of adjustment to divorce (Ahrons & Miller, 1993), and the
relative impact of having become a single-parent household by choice, divorce, or unwed/teen parenthood. This implies that while the studies on single parents demonstrate multiple negative findings, there may be other variables that impact on these findings. Anderson (cited by Walsh, 2003) further pointed out that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the well-being of single-parent families without considering that many households are single in name only, as the parent may reside with extended family or may have an intimate partner who provides some type of support.

2.7.3 Employment and Financial Changes

Economic changes are common after a divorce. Women often experience a dramatic decline in economic status as a result of divorce. About 40% of divorcing women lose more than half of their family income, whereas fewer than 17% of men experience this large a drop in income (Holden & Smock, 1991). When viewing divorced women as a group, it seems that on average women’s income drops about 30% following a divorce. Women’s decisions to remarry often involve economic considerations: the surest route to economic well-being for many women is remarriage (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Kitson & Morgan, 1990). For men this situation is different. Although absolute income levels for men after divorce may decline, their needs decline even further, creating an overall improvement in economic well-being (Morgan, 1991). Thus men generally also experience a change in economic status but in the opposite direction. Another reason for their improved economic situation, is that after the marriage ends divorced men generally share less of their income with their children compared to when they were still married (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991).

From the above it is evident that there are economic consequences after divorce for both men and women. It follows that these consequences will be evident, or even more intensely experienced when these divorced individuals become single parents. Single mothers, more so than single fathers, tend to experience difficulty in having to provide material or financial resources for their families. The income of the single parent households headed by women tends to decrease due to their reduced earning power, job discrimination resulting in under- or unemployment, and the refusal of spouses to make court-ordered spousal and child support payments (Jung, 1996).
The experience of divorce creates new role responsibilities within the family resulting in an expansion of the single mother’s role from daily management of the home and children to including being the major financial provider for the family, and handling the emotional and social changes which accompany divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Klungness (cited by Renkl, 2001) pointed out that financial crises often accompany the unexpected responsibility of single parenthood, especially for the single mother. Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) asserted that families headed by a single mother seem to experience more difficulties than those headed by a single father, sometimes because the mother has fewer marketable skills or other resources with which to financially assist herself and her family. New financial constraints can add tremendous stress to women who have stayed at home or worked only part time when they had a partner.

Difficulties are also faced by custodial parents in providing quality childcare while having to work to earn an income to support the single-parent family. Single mothers are almost always working mothers, and they often have no ‘backup’ childcare assistance when there are unexpected changes in the childcare arrangement (Renkl, 2001). The financial difficulties discussed above impede the parent from supplying the family’s basic needs, ultimately hinders personal growth, and limits independence. Furthermore, McKenry and Price (1994) pointed out that the economic plight of single mothers is not short-lived, but often extends for at least five years.

In order to provide financially for their families, there are several ways in which divorced women and single mothers change their labour force behaviour (Morgan, 1991). The first change is made by women who were previously homemakers and seek work after a divorce. A second option, for those already employed, is to increase their hours of work in the current job or to change jobs. Thirdly, women may upgrade their occupations by training further, changing jobs, or more vigorously pursuing career advancement in the current job. All three of these changes could improve income for divorced women and single mothers (Morgan, 1991). In addition to the financial changes discussed above, divorced individuals and single parents experience changes in their support systems.
2.7.4 Impact on Relationships

Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) claimed that divorce has substantial ripple effects on relationships with many others who are significant to the parting pair. The couple’s split may create estrangement from the extended family. Many friends avoid both parties after a divorce, some remain friendly with one party while ignoring the other, and a few remain to provide support to one or both of the newly divorced individuals. Kitson (1992) found that social isolation from family and friends is related to adults’ maladjustment to divorce. Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) confirmed that estrangement from their extended family and friends affects divorced parents’ social support systems, with the result that they frequently feel lonely and isolated. Cherlin (1981) held that single parents often struggle to function effectively as they have too little time and too few resources to manage the primary responsibility of supporting themselves and their children. From a practical perspective, single parents are often too tired to socialise due to their task overload, or they feel alienated attending gatherings alone. The stress caused by the absence of the non-custodial parent and the subsequent loss of support and resources supplied by this person can be severely experienced. Jung (1996) emphasised that the level of distress experienced by the single parent depends on various factors, including the involvement of the non-custodial parent in the life of the children, the parents’ level of involvement before becoming single, and the gender and ages of the children when the parents separate.

The societal view of divorced individuals and single parents, directly or indirectly conveyed by family and friends, may increase the distress discussed above. Although public disapproval of divorce has decreased, divorced individuals and single parents still confront stigma. A study conducted by Gerstel (1990) involving 102 separated and divorced men and women found that, although most did not think their friends or family disapproved of their divorce, they nonetheless experienced social and emotional fallout. They reported often feeling uncomfortable around friends or felt rejected and ignored. Interestingly, the change in friendship networks may be experienced differently by men and women. Women’s friendship networks tend to change after divorce, with somewhat less contact with married friends; this tends to occur because of mutual feelings that they themselves have less in common with these friends than they did previously (Guttmann, 1993). The single female is more likely to feel like a “fifth wheel” with married couples than is the
single male, who may be sought as a prospective date for their other single female friends (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997).

The quality and quantity of social activity available to single parents, particularly single mothers, could also be impacted upon by income constraints (Morgan, 1991). Research by Gerstel (1988) into the social networks of divorced women suggested that those with children and with limited incomes were less able to involve themselves in activities that provided potential new friends. This lack of establishment or maintenance of supportive friendships prevents the single parent from receiving the social support he or she so desperately requires. Single parents need to reorganise and increase their involvement with support systems, which may assist them in adjusting to their new social status.

2.7.5 Dating and Remarriage

Developing new social relationships following divorce may ultimately lead to remarriage. Research has shown that the majority of people whose marriages end in early to mid-life remarry, with this likelihood dependent on gender, age, and the manner in which the previous marriage ended (Morgan, 1991). Men are more likely to remarry than women across the age spectrum, and younger people are more likely than older people to remarry. People seek to remarry for a number of reasons, among them an interest in the companionship of a partner, social pressures promoting the “paired” nature of social life, simply falling in love, to provide a second parent for the optimal raising of children, and economic pressures (Morgan, 1991). Interestingly, remarriage seems to moderate, if not totally eliminate, much of the unhappiness associated with divorce (Weingarten & Bryant, 1987). The odds of divorce are higher for second or subsequent marriages, suggesting that those who have once divorced are also more likely to agree to resolve an unhappy second marriage through legal dissolution (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984).

The formation of a supportive, mutually caring, intimate relationship is the strongest contributor to a divorced adult’s well-being and happiness (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). However, forming new romantic attachments through dating also poses problems for many single parents. Some find it difficult to date as they feel vulnerable and hurt following the break-up of the marriage. Others feel constrained by the demands of childrearing (Greif, 1995). Conflict between children and the new partner was identified as being negatively related to the success of the new adult
relationship for middle-class, white custodial mothers (Coysh, Johnston, Tschann, Wallerstein, & Kline, 1989). In a study by Darling, Davidson and Parish (1989), a significant number of mothers had not dated since they had become single, i.e., ranging from three to six years previously. For many divorced fathers, socialising does not begin until a few months after the break-up (Greif, 1985), and does not become serious until three years post-separation (Greif, 1990).

While the above sections have focused on the combined changes and difficulties faced by divorced individuals and single parents, there are specific challenges that are faced by divorced individuals and separate challenges that are unique to single parents. These specific challenges will be discussed in the following sections.

2.8 CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO DIVORCE

Individual reactions to the stresses of divorce range across a continuum; however, for the majority, divorce is a trauma which takes years to come to terms with (Ambrose, Harper & Pemberton, 1983). The first few years following a divorce are especially tumultuous, and research suggests that it takes a year or more for most divorced persons to regain equilibrium and stability in their lives (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990; Hetherington, 1987).

Duvall and Miller (1985, pp.324-343) made a strong statement concerning post-divorce effects and adjustment, namely that:

“Getting over a divorce is like learning to walk on one leg after the other has been cut off. Divorce is the amputation of a marriage. No matter how necessary it is, it hurts, and there is a period of recovery before the formerly married can go it alone again without difficulty.“

As the process model of divorce discussed in section 2.3 suggests, individuals may be affected by divorce in different ways and thus the effects of divorce on individuals may vary. Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) concurred that divorce has differential effects on adults and children, which vary according to age, personality factors, family relationships and alliances, religion, ethnicity, cultural heritage and attitudes, physical and mental health, socio-economic status and resources, among others. However, certain effects can be identified that are experienced in the wake of a divorce.
2.8.1 Elements of Bereavement

The experience of divorce often contains the major elements of a bereavement: a total upheaval of the pattern of life, an inability to accept the reality of what has happened, a searching for the lost partner, anger and outbursts of rage, despair, and an overwhelming sense of loss (Ambrose et al., 1983). The divorced individual is forced to cope with his or her new social position, having to adjust, not only to the change in life style, but also to new family roles, and particularly to his or her new role in society (Gatley, 1987). While there are similarities between bereavement and divorce, the following issues constitute some notable differences: in divorce, the lost spouse is usually still accessible, the grief is caused by rejection in love which is more devastating than simple loss, and depression can cause as well as result from breakup (Rice & Rice, 1986). In addition, while feelings of anger and hostility against the lost person are not generally socially acceptable in bereavement, in divorce these feelings are not only felt but are openly expressed. For a small but significant group, often those opposed to the divorce, the anger and hostility reach a point akin to hatred and these individuals engage much of their energy in vindictive and abusive thoughts and actions (Ambrose et al., 1983).

2.8.2 Personality Characteristics and New Identity

The way in which individuals differ in their reaction to the loss discussed above is influenced by the qualities of the marriage and the circumstances of its breakup. In addition to these issues, reactions to divorce are influenced by the individual’s personality. Marriage is an important source of self-esteem. It bestows social status and reinforces belief in self-worth and meaning (Ambrose et al., 1983). Maltas (1991) pointed out that marriage can be thought of as a contract to affirm each spouse’s sense of self and self-worth; the spouse must be able to affirm that one is loveable and worthy in the face of threats to self-esteem. Due to the loss of these benefits of marriage, divorced individuals may face challenges regarding self-doubt. Some report a sense of being off-balance or adrift, no longer certain of who they are or what they want (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). More severely, divorce is often felt as a personal failure. In relation to this perceived failure, many experience a sense of despair and hopelessness, a loss of friendships and unpredictable mood swings. A factor that can add to the divorced individual’s sense of failure is the unstable nature of divorce. Simpson (1998) explained that in an era when order,
predictability and simplicity are conditions to which many aspire, the complexity of post-divorce relationships is in itself often associated with feelings of failure to achieve a satisfactory image of family life.

It is clear that in the wake of a divorce personal changes take place, with divorced individuals commonly questioning who they are now that they are no longer part of a marital couple. Other personal changes include the development of a “new” identity after the divorce, which may involve changes in personal appearance, vocational attitudes, as well as social and sexual readjustments (Gatley, 1987). Simpson (1998) pointed out that radical personal change brought about by divorce must be synchronised with other developments such as the maturation of children, the arrival of new partners, the birth of new children, unemployment, relocation and increases or decreases in income. Just as there are challenges specific to divorced individuals, so too are there difficulties that are particularly applicable to single parents.

2.9. CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO SINGLE PARENTS

Schlesinger (1975, p.9) summarised the dilemma faced by single parents:

“Seldom is there anyone from whom single parents can expect moral and emotional support, advice, encouragement, praise, or even fault-finding. Isolation from normal community life to some degree is the fate of parents without partners … they don’t seem to fit any of the normal social patterns. They are the self-styled ‘fifth wheels’ of society.”

The multiple new challenges and changes that occur in the life of single parents often appear overwhelming; many single parents experience great stress as a result of this. Particularly challenging to single parents is the management of work and childcare duties and the functioning of the co-parental relationship with one’s ex-spouse.

2.9.1 Management of Work and Childcare

The management of work and childcare is one of the main challenges facing the single parent. Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) indicated that in the single-parent family living independently, the parent, who is typically employed, may feel overwhelmed by the combination of work- and parenting-related responsibilities and tasks, leading to a major time-management problem.
This challenge may be specifically difficult for men, who traditionally place a greater emphasis on work success. Greif (1995) explained that a large number of men in today’s society place a great emphasis on success at work and feel that they are evaluated according to their level of success in the workplace. Being unable to attain this success due to single-parent responsibilities may have a negative impact on men’s self-esteem and financial stability. Having the responsibility for the care of the children means that single fathers have to devote more time to them which could possibly have a negative effect on work obligations. Childcare requires a great deal of extra time and energy, particularly when the children are younger (Ambrose et al., 1983). It also poses unique challenges to single fathers depending on the ages of the children. However, caring for children between the ages of five and eleven years is considered the most stressful for single fathers because of the temptation to leave the children on their own when they are not yet ready (Greif, 1995).

2.9.2 Co-parental Relationship

Another area that could help or hinder a single parent’s general well-being and performance of parental responsibilities, is the co-parental relationship with his or her ex-spouse. When this relationship is functioning well, the transition to the single parent family is made easier. Emery (1994) however, pointed out that in the majority of divorce cases the decision to end the marriage is not a mutual one, suggesting that conflict may be apparent in most divorce cases. In concurrence, Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) indicated that a major task for divorcing couples is the reduction of conflict. Greif (1995, p.222) commented that the co-parental relationship “often mirrors the contentiousness and ambivalence of the break-up”. Distrust is often high within the co-parental relationship. In only about one quarter of divorced households are the divorced parents able to engage, with minimal conflict, in a cooperative, supportive role with regard to each other’s involvement with the child or children. Instead, most ex-spouses develop a pattern of disengaged or parallel parenting, characterised by little collaboration or communication. Fortunately, in these situations there has only been a few instances of active undermining of the other parent (Ahrons, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Other sources list the active undermining of one parent by the other parent as a far more frequent occurrence (Swerdlow-Freed, retrieved: 08/12/2004). An issue that should be mentioned at this point is that of Parent Alienation Syndrome (PAS).
Gardner (1989) described PAS as the systematic denigration of one parent by the other with the aim of alienating the child against the other parent. The purpose of the alienation is usually to gain or retain custody without the involvement of the other parent. Research indicates that children in divorce situations develop closer alignments with one parent than the other (Swerdlow-Freed, retrieved: 08/12/2004). The “favoured” parent then uses this alignment to negatively influence the child’s opinion of the other parent. This results in the child’s alienation from the other parent, which is then used by the “favoured” parent to gain or retain custody of the child. Ninety percent of the time, the father is the victim, but in 10% of cases the roles are reversed (Gardner, 1990). The occurrence of PAS is increasing with the growth of custody disputes.

While the increasing occurrence of PAS suggests a growth in conflict between divorced or divorcing individuals, there are also indications that the level of conflict between ex-spouses may diminish over time. Research indicates that within two years after divorce, conflict subsides somewhat and the level of co-operation between former spouses increases (Gold, 1992). In spite of the challenges faced by divorced individuals and single parents, there have been positive findings regarding these two groups.

2.10 POSITIVE FINDINGS REGARDING DIVORCE

The following quote by Nietzsche (Gold, 1992, p.71) can be applied fittingly to divorced individuals:

“That which does not kill me makes me strong.”

A divorce is not always a purely negative experience. Divorce offers opportunities for personal growth and maturation. With the acceptance of the separation, many come to see the divorce as having been beneficial and report feeling that they have an improved quality of life (Ambrose et al., 1983). Some individuals may develop new interests, move to a new location, and exhibit strengths that were latent during the marriage. These individuals are likely to demonstrate resilience and an affirmative outlook on life (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). In keeping with this, some individuals report improvements in autonomy, overall happiness, social involvement and career development (Acock & Demo, 1994; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Rands (1988) found that both males and females reported themselves to be significantly more satisfied with life after separation. This improvement came earlier for males (on the
average within 7.5 months after separation) than for females (on the average within 28.5 months). In addition, a study by Spanier and Thompson (1989) involving divorced men and women, found that an equal number of respondents felt relief after divorce as felt distress.

Relative gain or loss in functioning seems to be related to the history of the marital relationship. Individuals who were previously unhappy in their marriage are more likely to report gains in psychological functioning after the divorce, as opposed to individuals who previously viewed their marriage as happy (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Research studies have found improved adjustment in men after divorce, although improved adjustment seems to favour women. This may be because women are more adversely affected by the presence of a distressed marriage, while men are more adversely affected by being unmarried (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). For example, married men typically report better health, wealth, happiness and social integration than those who remain single (Nock, 1998). However, women at two years post-divorce generally report being less depressed and more healthy than those who remain in unhappy marriages (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). In addition to this, many women report on the fulfilment, independence, confidence and new competencies that they have developed in the two years since divorcing (Acock & Demo, 1994; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). From a therapeutic perspective, the experience of divorce could provide men or women with the potential for growth and change (Kaslow & Hyatt, 1982). Ultimately, the post-divorce period can indeed be one of exploration if the individual has the time, energy and money (Kaslow, 1983).

In support of the above findings that divorce is not necessarily the end-state of one’s life, Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) discussed the psychic divorce in terms of the psychic healing that takes place after a divorce and the tasks that occur during this time. These authors held that it takes two to five years for the psychic healing and re-equilibration to be completed for reasonably healthy individuals who have undergone a divorce. During this time the following takes place: the co-parenting and visitation arrangements should be worked out, stabilised and no longer disruptive; both partners would have settled into their living quarters; necessary relocations would have happened, and the hostility should have abated. Divorced individuals may have begun to date again or reach a decision not to date based on a preference for being single and unaccountable to a partner. During this period the individuals’ conversations will have become less focused on the divorce as the critical life event
that determines their thinking, and will be talking and thinking instead about the present and the future. In this way optimism will have replaced pessimism and individuals will be feeling more confident, capable and proud of their ability to move forward (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). However, those who had severe pathology before the divorce, or who have become deeply distressed during the process and fail to resolve the rage and depression, will not have been able to achieve psychic closure during this period. From this discussion of the psychic divorce it is clear that Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) view divorce as a process taking most individuals approximately five years to restabilise their lives. Thus these authors would also support the process model of divorce discussed in section 2.3.

2.11 POSITIVE FINDINGS REGARDING SINGLE PARENTHOOD

According to a study by Arditti and Madden-Derdich (1995) involving custodial mothers, focusing on the benefits or positive aspects of divorce appears to be an important means of coping with many of the problems inherent in single parenting. While much research has been focused on the difficulties of single parenthood, as with divorced individuals, there have also been positive findings. In a survey of 1200 single parents from 47 different states in America, 62% of these parents believed they were seen as abnormal families by school personnel, leaving a large percentage that felt they were not viewed as abnormal families (Olson & Haynes, 1993). In his study involving single parents, Barry (cited by Olson & Haynes, 1993) found that while no one single factor was responsible for successful parenting, single parents generally derived a sense of satisfaction and achievement in their role as parent. He found that the period of adjustment to the role of single parenthood ranged from one to two years, and that both the parents and the children coped well with a variety of custody arrangements. In addition, the study reflected that money was not seen as a critical factor to success in the new role, provided that basic survival needs were met (Olson & Haynes, 1993).

Studies focused specifically on single fathers have reported positive findings. A study by Greif and DeMaris (1990) on single fathers’ level of comfort found that only 28% of the sample were “mixed” or uncomfortable in the role of single father. This means that a large percentage were comfortable in the role of single father. Facchino and Aron (1990) came to similar conclusions, with older single fathers and single fathers with higher education levels having an easier adjustment. Nieto (1990)
found reasonable high degrees of self-worth in his study involving single fathers. This researcher also found that only one-fifth of the sample felt that others regarded them negatively as a single parent and about one-quarter believed that a single father-headed family was a pathological family structure. Stewart, Schwebel, and Fine (1986) found that custodial fathers had similar levels of adjustment to fathers who were married. Donati (1995) found that a positive adjustment to single fatherhood is more likely when individuals are integrated into social networks. The benefits of a support network include less distress, more responsiveness and attentiveness to children, and an increased interest in the children’s development (Ihinger-Tallman, 1995).

Studies focused specifically on single mothers have also generated some positive findings. Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1982) found that by two years after divorce, divorced mothers had learned to adapt to problem situations and were demanding more mature behaviour from their children. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) also found that women at two years post-divorce reported feeling less depressed and more healthy and competent at parenting. Studies concerning long term adjustment to divorce found that at ten-year interviews with custodial mothers, 60% of single women had adapted positively to the challenges of this “second chance” following the divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). In concurrence, Nelson (1994) found in his six-year follow-up study, that single mothers did not differ significantly in emotional well-being from married women. He attributed this in part to the development of growth-activated coping skills to deal with economic changes and life strains resulting from the separation. Furthermore, he indicated that some of these skills were acquired through additional education, while others drew on inner resources to promote autonomy and self-confidence in handling the new life style (Nelson, 1994).

In summary, divorced individuals and single custodial parents report a variety of challenges experienced throughout the divorce process, during the transition into a single parent family, and once the transition has been made. However, a number of studies, as mentioned previously, have reported positive findings for divorced individuals and single parents. These findings reflect that some individuals report improvements in autonomy, overall happiness, social involvement and career development following divorce (Acock & Demo, 1994; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), and that both males and females reported themselves significantly more satisfied
with life after separation (Rands, 1988). Regarding single parents, research has found that single parents generally derived a sense of satisfaction and achievement in their role as parent, and that both the parents and children coped well with a variety of custodial arrangements (Barry, cited by Olson & Haynes, 1993). Additional research on the subjective well-being of a combined population of divorced individuals who are single custodial parents will be valuable in adding to or contrasting with the findings of these studies.

2.12 CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 focused on two main concepts, namely divorce and single parenthood. Most research has focused specifically on the negative aspects of these concepts. Therefore the aim of this chapter was to provide a more holistic picture by including, among other topics, a discussion on both the challenges as well as the positive aspects of divorce and single parenthood. This is in keeping with the general orientation of positive psychology and subjective well-being that will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3
SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of happiness has always been a focus for psychologists and philosophers alike. However, while philosophers described happiness as the highest good and ultimate motivation for human action throughout the ages, psychologists have been concerned with human unhappiness for decades (Diener, 1984). That said, achieving happiness is considered one of the main goals of Western societies. It is widely believed that people could be happier than they are at present, thus individuals continue to strive for greater happiness (Veenhoven, 1994).

The psychological importance of happiness has been recognised for most aspects of humanity’s social and private life. This recognition has led to this topic receiving considerable interest from many fields of psychology; these include clinical psychology, cross cultural psychology, social psychology, industrial psychology and personality psychology. Studies from these various fields focusing on the concept of happiness are referred to collectively as positive psychology (Strack, Argyle & Swartz, 1991). Over the past three decades psychologists have shifted the emphasis of their research from examining demographic and pathogenic factors to focusing on personality and resilience. These researchers have considered personality and resilience as the primary factors of life quality, referred to as subjective well-being (DeNeve, 1999).

Subjective well-being has been defined in ethical, theological, political, economic, and psychological terms (Veenhoven, 1991). This concept has been referred to utilising different terms, such as happiness, objective and subjective well-being, quality of life, and life satisfaction. It is therefore understandable that conceptualisations and definitions of subjective well-being vary. In addition these definitions are often not explicit in the literature (Diener, 1984). However, from surveying major works in the field, a current composite definition can be established.

This chapter will focus on the concept of subjective well-being and will include a theoretical overview of this construct. Subjective well-being consists of two main dimensions, namely life satisfaction and happiness, both of which will be described. Researchers have focused on the possible sources of subjective well-being, and this
too will be elaborated on in this chapter. In addition the different variables that relate to subjective well-being will be discussed.

3.2 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND DIMENSIONS OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

This section includes a general theoretical overview and conceptualisation of the concept of subjective well-being. This is provided within the context of the underlying philosophy of positive psychology.

3.2.1 Historical Overview of Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being, as a construct, was created and further developed within the underlying philosophy of positive psychology. It is therefore fitting that, in an attempt to obtain a comprehensive description of subjective well-being, a brief review of the philosophy of positive psychology is required.

The positive psychology movement was founded in part by Martin Seligman (1998). Previously health was defined as generally synonymous with the absence of disease (Emmet, 1991). The positive psychology movement necessitated that health be seen as more than simply an absence of disease. This movement focuses on enhancing what is good and functional in life, rather than on fixing what is wrong. In this way psychology is seen as more than merely the study of “weakness” and “damage”. Psychology is also seen as the study of ordinary human strengths and virtues (Seligman, 1998).

Positive psychology functions at the subjective, individual and group levels. On the subjective level, positive psychology is concerned with positive subjective experience. This consists of the following: past levels of well-being and satisfaction; joy, sensual pleasures and happiness at present; and constructive cognitions about future-optimism, hope and faith (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

On the individual level, positive psychology is focused on positive individual traits such as the following: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skills, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future-mindedness, talent and wisdom (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Several personality characteristics have been identified as the roots of positive life, including the capacity to love and be loved, altruism, spirituality, creativity, courage, happiness and wisdom (Kogan, 2001).
At the level of the group, positive psychology is concerned with civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship, responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Thus positive psychology, via the subjective, individual and group levels, is focused on positive subjective experience, positive individual traits and various civic virtues.

According to Seligman (1998), the field of positive psychology is in need of massive research. On highlighting the value of positive psychology, he stated that practitioners and researchers in the field of psychology needed to realise that much of the therapeutic work is done by amplifying strengths rather than by repairing weaknesses.

3.2.2 Characteristics and Dimensions of Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being is concerned with how and why people experience their lives in positive ways (Diener, 1984). Myers and Diener (1995) described high subjective well-being as frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and a global sense of satisfaction with life. Thus high subjective well-being is described as mainly positive thoughts and feelings about one’s life.

The area of subjective well-being has three characteristics. The first characteristic is that it is subjective, meaning that it lies within the experience of the individual (Campbell, 1976). In this way subjective well-being gives individuals the ultimate authority and respects individuals’ own views of their lives (Diener, Suh & Oishi, 1997). Secondly, subjective well-being is more than the absence of negative factors; it also includes positive factors. The focus is not only on the etiology of depression and anxiety, but also on the factors that differentiate individuals who are slightly happy, from those who are moderately happy and extremely happy (Diener, et al., 1997). The third characteristic of subjective well-being is that these measures usually include a global assessment of all facets of a person’s life (Diener, 1984).

In addition to these three characteristics, it is also important to note that subjective well-being places emphasis on long term mood states, rather than on passing or momentary moods. Diener, et al., (1997) are of the opinion that even though an individual’s mood may fluctuate over time, subjective well-being focuses more on relatively enduring feelings of well-being rather than on fleeting emotions.
Researchers have suggested that there are two main components or dimensions of subjective well-being, namely life satisfaction, which is a cognitive interpretation of the individual’s quality of life, and life happiness, which consists of both positive and negative affect (Diener, 1994). It is important to note that positive and negative affect can occur simultaneously; however, these components will remain separable and therefore they must be studied individually to gain a complete picture of subjective well-being (Diener, Lucas & Suh, 1996). The above components of subjective well-being are structured in such a way that they form a global factor of interrelated variables (Diener, et al., 1997).

3.2.2.1 Life Satisfaction

A variety of definitions for life satisfaction exist, some of which are summarised in this section. Satisfaction with life is a cognitive component of subjective well-being. Ryff and Keyes (1995) cited life satisfaction as the key indicator of well-being. Life satisfaction refers to a judgmental process in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique set of criteria (Shin & Johnson, 1978). Individuals are likely to differ in their rating of the importance of various components of “the good life” and are also likely to have different criteria for a good life. Thus life satisfaction is the appraisal of one’s own life according to unique criteria.

Veenhoven (1991) recognised the global nature of life satisfaction in his definition: “life satisfaction is conceived as the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably” (p.10). Life satisfaction also refers to an individual’s total contextual estimate of life quality in various aspects of life such as family life, working conditions, health and social security (Lewinsohn, et al., 1991). Veenhoven (1991) further stated that life satisfaction points to an individual’s contentment with life, the degree to which one feels that his or her aspirations have been met, and above all, the degree to which one feels that he or she has successfully achieved what he or she wanted in life.

Life satisfaction is a highly personal experience and it relies heavily on an individual’s past experiences and current expectations (Campbell, 1981). Life satisfaction therefore implies the use of judgment as individuals compare what they have with what they expect or think they deserve. If the discrepancy between these is small, the result is satisfaction. However, if the discrepancy is large, the result is
dissatisfaction with life. Some authors equate life satisfaction with happiness. However, Campbell (1981) asserted that while a sense of satisfaction carries a strong element of pleasure, life satisfaction differs from happiness. A way in which these two concepts can be distinguished is with regards to their levels of spontaneity: satisfaction does not possess the same spontaneous “lift of the spirits” quality as happiness does (Campbell, 1981, p.16).

3.2.2.2 Life Happiness

The term ‘happiness’ is often used synonymously with the term ‘well-being’. Researchers accept that happiness consists of three related concepts, namely, positive affect, the absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life in totality. According to Myers and Diener (1995), research focused on the field of happiness has indicated that happiness is associated with the following predictable aspects: a positive self-concept, an internal locus of control, extroversion, intimate interpersonal relations, religiosity, the ability to enjoy life’s special moments, and positive working circumstances as well as recreational activities.

Happiness can be seen to comprise subjective well-being when considering that happiness can be defined as the harmonious satisfaction of one’s desires and goals (Chekola, 1975). If one is concerned with a person’s assessment of this, then it clearly falls within the realm of subjective well-being and is an idea related to satisfaction (Diener, 1984). More specifically, happiness can be related to positive affect and negative affect. Bradburn (1969) proposed that happiness is really a global judgement people make by comparing their negative affect with their positive affect. The degree to which one’s positive affect outweighs one’s negative affect can therefore be seen as a measure of happiness.

At an affective level, individuals with high subjective well-being feel mainly pleasant emotions, predominantly due to their positive appraisal of ongoing events. More specifically, positive affect refers to the tendency to experience mostly positive mood, seek out situations that create good moods and leave situations that are dissatisfying (O’Leary, 1990). Variables associated with positive affect include experiences of joy, elation, contentment, affection, happiness and ecstasy (Diener, Lucas, Smith, & Suh, 1999). Fredrickson (2001) stated that positive affect broadens people’s enduring personal resources and this could also promote their survival in the face of adversity. Research has found a type of bi-directional relationship
between positive affect and cognitive control; people feel better when they have a sense of control over events in their lives (Langer & Rodin, 1976). In addition, when stimulus events are regarded positively, people tend to assume that they themselves had influence or control over the occurrence of those events (Bradley, 1978).

Individuals with low subjective well-being experience their life circumstances and events as undesirable, and therefore feel unpleasant emotions (Myers & Diener, 1995). Negative affect is associated with feelings such as guilt and shame, sadness, anxiety, anger, stress, depression and envy (Diener, et al., 1999). Fredrickson (2001) pointed out that experiences of negative affect are inevitable and at times useful, but in most cases negative affect may cause problems to both individuals and society.

There is debate as to whether it is the frequency or the intensity of positive affect that produces high subjective well-being. A common sense view is that happiness is greatest when one has maximum amounts of both frequent positive affect and intense positive affect and only minimal amounts of non-intense, negative affect. On the other hand, many researchers suggest that either frequent (but mild) or intense (but infrequent) experiences of positive affect are necessary and sufficient to produce a happy life. Diener, Sandvik and Pavot (1991) held that frequent positive affect is both necessary and sufficient to produce the state referred to as happiness, whereas intense positive experience is not. These researchers stated, however, that although intense positive emotions are an interesting phenomenon in their own right, it is doubtful that they are closely related to the longer-term state referred to as happiness or subjective well-being.

The question as to whether positive and negative affect are related and if so, to what extent, has also been the focus of much research (Diener, 1984; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Positive affect and negative affect are considered to be independent of one another. However, the relationship between positive and negative affect is somewhat complicated. The frequency of positive and negative affect tends to correlate negatively – the more frequently a person feels one type, the less frequently that person feels the other (Diener, 1984). However, the intensity of positive and negative affect tends to correlate positively – individuals who tend to experience their good moods intensely also tend to experience their bad moods as intensely (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). For some individuals high highs are alternated with low lows. This is, however, not applicable to all individuals as some are
characteristically happy, or melancholy or unemotional (Diener, Sandvik & Larsen, 1985). Ultimately the positive relationship between positive affect and negative affect in terms of intensity across individuals is seen to cancel their inverse relationship in terms of frequency. Therefore the resultant conclusion is that positive and negative affect are independent.

Over the years, authors and philosophers have hypothesised about the many causes of happiness. Early writers such as the Stoics often emphasised psychological causes of happiness. In contrast, the Ascetics believed that attitudes and activities that reflect detachment from the world led to subjective well-being (Diener, 1984). Social scientists have also been fascinated for decades by the sources of subjective well-being.

3.3 Sources of Subjective Well-being

Psychological theories of subjective well-being can be classified according to two dimensions, namely: telic versus autotelic theory, and bottom-up versus top-down approaches.

3.3.1 Telic Theory

Telic or endpoint theories of subjective well-being maintain that happiness is gained when some state, such as a goal or need, is reached (Diener, 1984; Myers & Diener, 1995). The satisfaction of needs causes happiness, and conversely the persistence of unfulfilled needs causes unhappiness (Diener, 1984; Wilson, 1960).

Need theories and goal theories are alternative telic theories. The telic position is differentiated by whether the end state refers to a few universal needs (Maslow, 1970), or to the more numerous personally chosen goals (Michalos, 1980). Need theory holds that there are certain unborn or learned needs – within or outside of one’s awareness – that an individual seeks to fulfil, and it is the fulfilment of these needs that will result in happiness. In contrast, goal theories are based on specific desires of which the individual is aware. Goal theories suggest that the individual is consciously seeking certain goals, and happiness results when these goals are reached (Diener, 1984; Michalos, 1980).

Goals and needs are related in that underlying needs may lead to specific goals. An individual may also have certain values that lead to specific goals.
According to Diener (1984), there is a general agreement that the fulfilment of needs, goals and desires is somehow related to happiness.

### 3.3.2 Autotelic Theory

Whereas telic theories place the locus of happiness in end states, autotelic or activity theories maintain that happiness is a by-product of human activity (Diener, 1984). In this way activity theorists propose that happiness arises from behaviour rather than from achieving goals. Aristotle proposed one of the earliest and most important autotelic theories. He maintained that happiness is derived from activity that is performed well. According to this theory, there are certain human abilities, and happiness arises when these are utilised in an exceptional manner. In contrast, activity theory in modern gerontology refers to activity in more global terms, such as hobbies, social interaction and exercise (Diener, 1984).

Interestingly, some studies in line with activity theory have shown that self-awareness may decrease happiness (Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982). This is possibly because concentrating on gaining happiness may be self-defeating. According to this approach, it is more beneficial to concentrate on activities and goals; in this way happiness will come as an unintended by-product.

The theory of flow provides an important formulation of the relationship between activity and subjective well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This theory focuses on the level of difficulty of the activity in which the individual engages. Activities are seen as pleasurable when the challenge is matched to the individual’s skill level. If the activity is too easy, the individual may feel bored; if the activity is too difficult, the individual may feel anxious. The most pleasurable flow experience will thus result when an individual is involved in an activity that demands intense concentration and in which the individual’s skills and the challenge of the task are roughly equal (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Ultimately, individuals' lives will be happier to the extent that they participate in interesting and involving activities.

The distinction between two approaches, namely bottom-up and top-down theories, is a popular focus of research in modern psychology. These approaches will be discussed in the following section.
3.3.3 The Bottom-up Approach

Bottom-up theories suggest that happiness is derived from a summation of pleasurable and unpleasurable moments and experiences (Brief, Butcher, George, & Link, 1993). In other words, a happy individual is happy precisely because he or she experiences many happy moments. This theoretical approach maintains that life satisfaction is a combination of satisfaction in a number of particular domains, such as family life, marriage, financial situation and housing (Brief, et al., 1993; Campbell, Converse, & Rogers, 1976).

3.3.4 The Top-down Approach

Top-down theories maintain that individuals are predisposed to experience and react to events and circumstances in positive or negative ways (Brief, et al., 1993). In this way global dimensions of personality are seen to determine levels of subjective well-being. This approach thus assumes that there is a global tendency to experience things in a positive way, and that this tendency influences the interactions an individual has with the world. Individuals who are happy are happy because they enjoy life’s pleasures and not necessarily because they experience more of them in an objective sense. Top-down approaches hold that there is a general tendency to experience things in a positive way such that despite circumstances, some individuals seem to be happy people, whereas some individuals seem to be unhappy people (Brief, et al., 1993). Philosophers have often placed the locus of happiness in individuals’ attitudes, thus suggesting a top-down approach (Diener, 1984).

A variety of studies have supported the effectiveness of either the bottom-up approach or the top-down approach in helping to understand the influences on subjective well-being (Schroeder & Costa, 1984; Maddi, Bartone, & Puccetti, 1987). However, Diener and Larsen (in press) have concluded on the basis of their appraisal of the literature on the subjective experience of emotional well-being, that evidence supports both top-down and bottom-up approaches to explaining the influences on subjective well-being.

In the above section the sources of subjective well-being have been discussed according to both the telic and autotelic theories and the bottom-up and top-down approaches. There are various factors or variables that are considered to
influence the subjective well-being of the individual. These related variables will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.4 Subjective Well-being and Related Variables

Although individuals experience different needs and wants, there are certain factors that generally impact upon individuals’ experience of subjective well-being. These variables will now be discussed.

#### 3.4.1 Gender

Research has shown that on the overall level of subjective well-being women do not differ from men (Lu, 2000). When difference was observed, women usually reported higher levels of subjective well-being. However, when other demographic variables are controlled for, these differences disappear (Shmotkin, 1990; White, 1992). While men and women do not seem to differ significantly on their levels of subjective well-being, significant differences have been found on specific facets of the subjective well-being construct. Regarding the quantitative aspect of subjective well-being, women have generally been found to be more satisfied than men with their social relations and living environment. It has also been shown that women demonstrate greater variance in the distribution of happiness scores than do men (Lu, Shih, Lin, & Ju, 1997).

Based on their research, Diener, Sandvik, and Larsen (1985) concurred that there were no major differences between the subjective well-being of men and women, but pointed out that clear differences were found in the emotional intensity of the two groups. It has been found that on average, women experience both positive and negative emotions more frequently and intensely when compared to men. Differences in the experience of intensity of emotion do not, however, result in significant differences in overall subjective well-being for men and women. A possible explanation is that, in the general population, women’s more intense positive emotions seem to balance their higher negative emotions, resulting in levels of global subjective well-being similar to those of men (Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991). Researchers have proposed that men are culturally expected to be less emotional than women (Diener, et al., 1985). Differences in subjective well-being found by South African researchers Wissing and Van Eeden (1997) were attributed
to cultural, social and role patterns constructed for men and women in the South African society.

Argyle (1987) suggested another difference between the subjective well-being of men and women: these two groups differ in their perceived sources of happiness and satisfaction. According to this researcher, women claimed that their source of greatest happiness was found in harmonious interpersonal relationships, especially those involving family members. On the other hand, men claimed to derive greater happiness from material pursuits and career success (Argyle, 1987).

### 3.4.2 Age

Literature regarding the relationship between subjective well-being and age yields confusing and contradictory results (Horley & Lavery, 1995). Andrews and Withey (1976) found that age plays no significant role in the subjective well-being of individuals. This result was confirmed by Diener (1984). However, other studies have shown that younger people are happier or reported higher levels of subjective well-being than older people (Bradburn & Caplovits, in Diener, 1984). It has been suggested that an individual's hedonic level (i.e., the affective component of the pleasantness experienced in feelings, emotions, and mood) decreases with age, while contentment increases with age (Veenhoven, 1984).

There may be differences between age groups with regards to the individual components of subjective well-being. Some studies have found that younger people reported stronger levels of both positive and negative affect, while older people reported greater levels of general satisfaction with life (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). Campbell, et al. (1976) found that older people reported greater satisfaction in every domain of life except health. These researchers also found that older people experienced less intensity of positive and negative affect. In other words emotional intensity declines with age so that both positive and negative affect inevitably decline over the lifespan (Diener, Sandvik, & Larsen, 1985).

While younger people seem to experience high levels of joy, older people tend to judge their lives in more positive ways. Horley and Lavery (1995) confirmed this by demonstrating in their study that life satisfaction increases, or at least does not decrease with age. According to this study, the critical age of 40 years appears to be a significant turning point with respect to subjective well-being, whereafter well-being levels begin to rise until at least 70 years of age. The researchers concluded
that these increases in subjective well-being are more likely due to personal situations or life history than age per se. The individual’s health and the availability of social and physical resources, among other factors, are more likely to be important determinants of well-being than age (Horley & Lavery, 1995).

Diener and Suh (1997) also examined the relationship between subjective well-being and age and found that of the three components of subjective well-being measured (i.e., life satisfaction, pleasant affect and the absence of negative affect) only positive affect decreased with age. A slight increase in life satisfaction was evident from the twenties to the eighties, and there was little change in negative affect across the age groups (Diener & Suh, 1997).

The lack of significant decreases in life satisfaction across the lifespan (as documented above) suggests an impressive ability of people to adapt to their life conditions. Researchers have proposed that these findings provide evidence that individuals readjust their goals as they age (Campbell, et al., 1976; Rapkin & Fischer, 1992). Two modes of coping can be used in this regard. Adversities in life can be overcome by assimilative coping, involving actively changing life circumstances to personal preferences, or accommodative coping, involving adjusting personal goals and preferences (Brandtstadter & Renner, 1990). Both modes of coping are positively related to satisfaction with life, but a gradual shift takes place from the assimilative to the accommodative mode of coping with increasing age.

3.4.3 Race and Culture

Fewer studies are available on the impact of race and culture on subjective well-being. Generally cross-ethnic studies have revealed that race or ethnic group provides little indication of an individual’s well-being. A study conducted in the USA has demonstrated that black and white individuals score similarly on tests of self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989). Even people in disadvantaged groups on average reported positive well-being (Diener & Diener, 1996). People in disadvantaged groups maintain their self-esteem by valuing the things in which they excel, by making comparisons within their group, and by attributing problems to external sources such as prejudice against them (Crocker & Major, 1989). Therefore, on average, people in disadvantaged groups report positive well-being. Indeed, measurement reports as well as self-report measures indicate that in general, most
people’s affect is primarily pleasant irrespective of their race or culture. Research suggests that there is generally a positive level of subjective well-being throughout the world, with the possible exception of the very poorest societies (Diener & Diener, 1996).

3.4.4 Education Level

Studies have demonstrated a small but significant relationship between subjective well-being and level of education (Campbell, et al., 1976; Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, & Diener, 1993). People with higher education tend to be more likely to report positive affective experiences in their past, such as feeling excited, pleased or proud. This, however, does not necessarily imply that they are less likely to report negative experiences, such as being bored, lonely, depressed or restless. In terms of life satisfaction, higher education seems to be related to greater reported satisfaction. Taking this further, it seems that education is more highly related to subjective well-being for individuals with lower incomes and individuals living in poorer countries (Diener, et al., 1993; Veenhoven, 1994). This may be due to the co-variation of education with income and occupational status (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

Education may have other indirect effects on subjective well-being. Diener and Lucas (2000) claimed that education may contribute to subjective well-being by allowing people to make progress towards their goals or to adapt to changes in the world around them. These researchers believe that education may also raise aspirations. Subsequently, it has been found that highly educated people are more distressed than less educated individuals when these groups are unemployed (Clark & Oswald, 1994). This may be because highly educated people may find being unemployed more unacceptable due to their higher expectations when compared to less educated people. It therefore seems likely that education may interfere with subjective well-being if it leads to aspirations that cannot be achieved.

3.4.5 Employment and Job Morale

Similar to the variables of gender, age, race and culture, and education, employment has also been linked to subjective well-being. Employment contributes to subjective well-being as it provides an optimal level of stimulation that individuals find challenging and pleasurable; it provides positive social relationships; and a
sense of identity and meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Diener, et al., 1999). Employment provides a personal identity for many people, as it helps define the individual. It also helps to add a sense of community, as it offers a network of supportive relationships. This feeling of belonging helps people to construct their social identity. Indeed, employment tends to add to the sense that one’s life matters (Myers & Diener, 1995).

Research by Diener (1984) also confirmed the relationship between employment and subjective well-being by demonstrating a relationship between job satisfaction and the life satisfaction component of subjective well-being. In addition to this, a study by Judge and Watanabe (1993) indicated a reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction when measured at the same point in time. Similarly, Argyle and Martin (1991) specified work as a major component of overall satisfaction with life. It appears that this relationship may reflect a top-down process, as people who are satisfied with their lives tend to find greater satisfaction in their work (Stones & Kozma, 1986).

Perhaps more important than an individual’s work satisfaction, is whether or not the individual is employed. Unemployed individuals have been found to display higher distress, lower life satisfaction, and a higher suicide rate than employed individuals (Oswald, 1997). Similarly, Campbell, et al., (1976) had previously found that unemployed people reported lower levels of subjective well-being. Indeed, unemployment seems to have a devastating effect on subjective well-being for many people. These effects influence more than the individual’s financial situation. Unemployment puts people at risk of developing health complaints, and the risk is greater in regions where unemployment is widespread (Campbell, et al., 1976). Evidence from a number of countries indicates that, even after allowing for other factors, unemployed individuals and their families are at a substantially elevated risk of premature death. A study by Beleva (1997) confirmed that the health effects of unemployment are linked to both its psychological consequences as well as financial problems, specifically debt. Due to financial constraints, unemployment may restrict entertainment opportunities in an individual’s life, thereby negatively affecting the individual’s sense of satisfaction with life (Beleva, 1997).
3.4.6 Income

A review of the research findings regarding the relationship between subjective well-being and income has indicated a generally positive relationship between these two variables. Diener (1984) made an assumption based on the relationship between income and subjective well-being that people in wealthier countries show higher levels of subjective well-being than those living in poorer countries. Researchers in the area of subjective well-being generally believe that there is a positive relationship between income and subjective well-being (Ahuvia & Friedman, 1998; Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener, et al., 1993). In brief, research studies have demonstrated that wealthier people are consistently found to be happier than poorer people, but these differences are small. In addition, it is possible that income is a stronger predictor variable of subjective well-being for poorer people. Cummins (2000) found that the maintenance of subjective well-being of poorer people is especially influenced by the element of personal income. This researcher predicted significantly different levels of subjective well-being for people who are rich, people with average incomes, and people who are poor (Cummins, 2000).

Diener, Wolsic, and Fujita (1995) confirmed that high income correlated strongly with subjective well-being across surveys. This positive correlation was even evident after basic need fulfilment was controlled. However, these researchers added the idea that a saturation point is evident, whereafter increased income does not significantly increase subjective well-being. More specifically, once people could afford necessities, increasing levels of affluence mattered surprisingly little: the correlation between income and happiness was modest, and increases or decreases in income had no long-term influence on subjective well-being.

Satisfaction with income is perhaps a more valuable predictor of subjective well-being than income itself. Larsen (1978) found that there was a positive relationship between satisfaction with income and happiness. According to research conducted by Strumpel (1976), most adults indicated a need for materialism, believing that increased income would make them happier. Few maintained that money could buy happiness, but many agreed with the idea that a little more money would make them a little happier. While people may believe that an increase in money would make them happier, Campbell (1981) found that there was only a slight tendency for those who in fact made a great deal of money to be more satisfied with
what they made. Studies have shown that even as real income in a country increases, people do not necessarily report more subjective well-being or happiness (Ahuvia & Freedman, 1998; Campbell, 1981). It is therefore probable that it is the amount of satisfaction regarding income rather than the amount of income itself that determines subjective well-being.

While the above discussion has pointed to a positive relationship between income and subjective well-being, Diener, et al., (1999) found that an increase in income is not inevitably associated with an increase in well-being. Individuals adapt to a particular level of wealth when income remains stable over an extended period of time. If changes in income occur, subjective well-being may temporarily increase or decrease (Diener, 2000). However, wealth may contribute to subjective well-being by providing the means to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, clean water and healthcare. It is thus understandable that poverty should affect subjective well-being if this affects basic needs. Diener, et al., (1999) reiterated that it is only in situations of extreme levels of poverty that low income may have an adverse impact on subjective well-being. Once basic needs are met, however, the process of adaptation may take over.

### 3.4.7 Leisure Activities

Leisure activities are an important part of an individual’s total subjective well-being. More specifically, leisure activities can be related to life satisfaction. Indeed, research has indicated that leisure satisfaction is the domain that best predicts global well-being (Balatsky & Diener, 1993). Argyle and Martin (1991) stated that leisure activities provide intrinsic satisfaction (satisfaction derived from the activity itself) similar to intrinsic job satisfaction. This intrinsic satisfaction can be created by the following: sport, which creates happiness by the increased secretion of endorphins; hobbies, which often include group activities; voluntary charity work, which creates satisfaction as the individual is of service to others; and home work, such as garden work, needlework, and woodwork (Argyle & Martin, 1991). These activities therefore create a positive source for expansion of the individual’s subjective well-being.

### 3.4.8 Religion

The relationship between religion and subjective well-being is substantial. The benefits of religion tend to be cognitive in nature: religion can provide an
interpretative framework by which people make sense of their experiences. The spiritual component of subjective well-being is reflected in the experience of hope, the experience of life as meaningful, and by having a purpose in life. Ellison (1991) found in his study that those individuals who indicated strong religious faith reported higher levels of satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and fewer negative psychosocial consequences of traumatic life events. Religious people also tend to be less vulnerable to depression (Brown, 1993). This can be seen as an effect of religion being used as a way of coping with life’s challenges: prayer is relied upon for coping with difficult circumstances, which may serve as a stress-deterrent effect (McCullough, 1995). Religion may also increase feelings of efficacy, control and security (Ellison, 1991).

It is also possible that the role of religion is beneficial regarding subjective well-being due to its social aspect. Religion offers a collective identity and reliable social networks consisting of individuals who share similar attitudes and values (Taylor & Chatters, 1988). In addition, the benefits of church membership are especially great for those individuals who have lost other forms of social support (e.g., retirees, widows, widowers and divorcees). The variable of religion therefore also relates to the variable of social support.

3.4.9 Social Relationships

Although close relationships often create stress, the benefits of close relationships with family and friends usually outweighs the strains. Indeed, Lane (1994) found that the number of friends an individual has can be seen as a predictor of satisfaction with life. Other research suggests that it is the quality of friendships more than the number of friends that influences an individual’s life satisfaction (Myers, 2000). Ziqiang and Liping (2001) found that interpersonal support in general (including that from spouses, parents, friends, neighbours, and colleagues) and support utilisation were significantly predictors of happiness and positive and negative affect. Similarly Wan, Jaccard and Ramey (1996) found that parents’ informal supports are negative related to depression, and positively related to life satisfaction among mothers and fathers. It is therefore clear that, whether the main predictor variable is quality of friendships, or number of friendships, social relationships influence the experience of subjective well-being.
A supportive intimate relationship is among life’s greatest joys and for the majority of people the most significant alternative to aloneness is marriage. The positive relationship between marriage and subjective well-being has been consistently confirmed in many studies (e.g., Diener, Gohm, Suh, & Oishi, 1998). Surveys have shown that married individuals report greater happiness than those individuals who were never married, or who are divorced, separated or widowed. Supporting the finding that married individuals report greater happiness, it is evident that divorce can have a negative affect on subjective well-being for both males and females, although the risk seems greater for females. Divorce leads to a dramatic decline in well-being for nearly one-quarter of women who experience it between the ages of 26 and 35 years. This is almost six times the risk for men (Arendall, 1995). In support of the link between marital status and subjective well-being of women, or more specifically mothers, a study by Demo and Acock (1996) revealed that mothers in their first marriage enjoyed the highest subjective well-being, while divorced and continuously single mothers had the lowest subjective well-being. It must, however, be noted that increases in subjective well-being after divorce have also been found (see Chapter 2).

Regarding the relationship between marital status and subjective well-being, it has been found that the way in which first-married, divorced, and remarried individuals structure their subjective evaluations differs significantly not only from one another but also, except for first-married respondents, from the general population pattern as well (Weingarten & Bryant, 1987). Divorce seems to be associated with an increased emphasis on future morale in defining present happiness. These authors further clarified that while marital status appears to alter the meaning of both positive and negative experience, it nevertheless seems to have a negligible impact on self-confidence on perceived competence in handling stress.

The effects of marriage, itself, may be experienced differently by men and women (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998). Marriage seems to hold greater benefits for men than for women in terms of positive emotions (Diener, Sapyta, and Su, 1998). However, married men and women do not seem to differ in terms of life satisfaction. Just as the two genders experience the effects of marriage differently, so too do they experience the effects of social support on subjective well-being differently before and after separation. A study of males and females after separation from their spouses found that the proportion of friends versus relatives seemed to be related to
subjective well-being. Females with a high proportion of friends during marriage expressed greater self-esteem, life satisfaction and happiness; after separation, the ratio did not seem to matter (Rands, 1988). Males with a high proportion of friends after separation reported greater well-being, while during marriage the ratio did not seem to matter. Although the impact of social support on subjective well-being differs between males and females before and after separation, it is clear that the presence of social support impacts positively on subjective well-being for both groups.

3.4.10 Health

According to Diener (1984), a number of studies indicated a strong relationship between self-rated health and subjective well-being. Similarly, Zautra and Hempel (1983) had previously found that there was a strong relationship between subjective health (the way in which individuals experienced their health) and their subjective happiness. Part of the influence of health on subjective well-being is not simply the direct effect of how individuals feel physically, but also what their health allows them to do. Thus, when one experiences a severely disabling condition, or multiple or chronic problems, this restriction in what one is able to do due to poor physical health, may negatively influence one’s subjective well-being (Diener, et al., 1999). However, substantial adaptation is possible with less severe conditions of disease.

3.4.11 Personal Characteristics

Researchers over the last three decades have moved their focus from demographic factors to focusing on personality as the main determinant of subjective well-being. Personality is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of subjective well-being (Diener, et al., 1999). This impact of personality has been explained according to the theory of temperamental disposition, and according to personality traits associated with subjective well-being.

Studies related to temperamental disposition have indicated that some people have a genetic predisposition to be happy or unhappy (DeNeve, 1999). Behavioural genetic studies of heritability provide the strongest evidence for temperamental disposition to experience certain levels of subjective well-being. A study by Lykken and Tellegen (1996) involving twins reared together and twins reared apart, revealed that 80% of long term subjective well-being is inherited, and that 40 to 55% of current
subjective well-being can be explained by genes. From these results it is evident that both happiness at a specific period in life, and average happiness over the long term, are influenced by heritability.

Researchers using a top-down approach have identified certain traits that influence subjective well-being (Diener, 1984). According to this viewpoint, all people have the global tendency to experience life consistently in a positive or negative way, and that global tendency is determined by personality traits. Although subjective well-being changes when present events deviate from their normal pattern, personality traits would eventually return the individual to his or her previous stable level of subjective well-being (Headley & Wearing, 1989). The inner traits that have most consistently been linked to subjective well-being are self-esteem, a sense of personal control, optimism and extroversion.

3.4.11.1 Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a trait that is strongly related to subjective well-being (Diener, et al., 1999). In terms of self-esteem, it has been found that happy people like themselves (Campbell, 1981). Studies have shown that happy people often exhibited a self-serving bias by believing that they were more ethical, more intelligent, less prejudiced, better able to get along with others, and healthier than the average person (Myers, 1993). It is interesting to note that self-esteem seems to drop during periods of unhappiness, suggesting that the relationship between mood and self-esteem is bi-directional (Diener, 1984).

3.4.11.2 Personal Control

A study conducted by Campbell (1981) led to the conclusion that people who are happy usually experience a sense of personal control. This study found that people who felt empowered rather than helpless, usually performed better, coped better with stress, and lived happier lives than those who felt less empowered. Rands’ (1988) study on males and females after separation from their spouses confirmed the impact of a sense of control on subjective well-being. It was found that being the initiator of the separation had positive effects on respondents’ well-being at separation, especially for males. Men whose wives made the decision to separate reported the least happiness, lowest self-esteem and most loneliness; men who chose to separate rated mostly positively on all of these variables. Female non-
initiators and initiators were intermediate to these two groups, with initiators reporting slightly more life satisfaction than non-initiators (Rands, 1988). From these results one can conclude that the influence of a sense of control on subjective well-being is apparent.

3.4.11.3 Optimism

In addition to self-esteem and a sense of control, optimism has been linked to subjective well-being (Diener, et al., 1999). Happy people seem to be those who characteristically explain their life events in optimistic, adaptive ways (DeNeve, 1999). Scheier and Carver (1985) believe that optimism represents a generalised tendency to expect favourable outcomes in one’s life, and a tendency to work towards one’s goals. This type of behaviour leads to more successful achievement of goals by optimists as compared to pessimists. Optimists are usually more successful, healthier, and happier (Seligman, 1991).

3.4.11.4 Extroversion

Extroversion is the fourth inner trait that has been closely linked to subjective well-being. Diener (1984) emphasised that it is the sociability aspect of extroversion that correlates with positive mood or positive affect. A study by Cheng and Furnham (2003) involving adolescents found that extroversion is significantly correlated with high positive affect and happiness and low negative affect and depression. Extroversion is seen to be related to another personality trait, namely neuroticism, due to their combined influence on subjective well-being. Cheng and Furnham (2003) found that neuroticism correlated significantly with high negative affect and depression and low positive affect and happiness. An explanation according to Costa and McCrae (1980) is that the direct outcome of extroversion is positive affect, while the outcome of neuroticism is negative affect. These two components are subjectively “balanced” by the individual to arrive at a net sense of subjective well-being, evident in morale, life satisfaction, hopefulness or happiness (Costa & McCrae, 1980).

3.4.12 Sense of Responsibility

Another factor that is linked to subjective well-being is a sense of responsibility. In a study by Langer and Rodin (1976) involving older nursing home
residents, one group of residents was encouraged to assume more responsibility over their daily lives, while another group had elements of their responsibility removed. These researchers found that residents in the responsibility-induced group were happier, more active, more alert and had a higher level of general well-being. Most of the comparison group who had their responsibility removed, had become more debilitated whereas nearly all the responsibility-induced group reflected some overall mental and physical improvement. These findings indicate that people who feel responsible for something or someone experience higher levels of subjective well-being.

A sense of responsibility has also been linked to the subjective well-being of parents. A study by Silverman (1999) found that whether or not a mother’s expectations about motherhood were fulfilled had a greater impact on satisfaction with life than either income or health. Qualitative findings of the study indicated that the expectations of mothers were based on notions of responsibility, self-fulfilment, family of origin experiences, and the wish to fulfil a traditional female role. Importantly, this study revealed that most women cited their children as their greatest joy and accomplishment. Satisfaction with parenthood may also combine with the factor of responsibility to impact on subjective well-being. Research on role identities demonstrates that parenthood is at the top of most parents’ identity salience hierarchies, ranking ahead of marriage and job as a source of identity (Rogers & White, 1998). This implies that satisfaction in this most salient role of parenthood is positively related to subjective well-being as a whole. From these two studies it can be postulated that having responsibility for one’s children and being satisfied with the role of parent has a positive impact on parents’ subjective well-being.

3.4.13 Life Events

A number of research studies have been based on the supposition that the most likely causes of change in subjective well-being are major life events and experiences. However, there are contradictory findings regarding the impact of life events on subjective well-being. A large number of researchers have proposed models in which life events are treated as exogenous shocks and appear to have substantial effects on subjective well-being (Headey, Glowacki, Holmstrom, & Wearing, 1985; Headey & Wearing, 1989). In addition to life-changing events, it is possible that daily hassles, while not as dramatic as major life crises, can also play a
role in well-being (Kleinke, 1998). Daily hassles are minor aggravating events that combine to cause stress; studies have shown a correlation between the number of daily hassles people experience and their symptoms of health problems as well as psychological and physiological stress (Kohn, LaFreniere, & Gurevich, 1991).

Earlier studies referred to above, focused mainly on adverse events and daily hassles and their seemingly damaging effects on physical and mental health as well as subjective well-being. However, many studies have indicated that favourable events can enhance subjective well-being or possibly buffer the impact of adverse events (Cohen, Burt, & Bjorck, 1987). A study conducted by Eronen and Nurmi (1999) revealed that individuals who had experienced many positive and fewer negative life events, showed higher well-being and adaptive strategies. This was in comparison with those who had faced many negative and limited positive events, and who reported low well-being and self-protective strategies.

Contrary to these studies, some researchers indicated that both a major favourable event and a major adverse event apparently had little effect on subjective well-being (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978). Longitudinal findings have demonstrated that life events or changes do not have a great influence on subjective well-being over long periods of time, such as 10 years (Costa, McCrae, & Zonderman, 1987; Suh, Diener, & Fujita, 1996). In corroboration of these findings, a study by Lucas, Clark, Georgellis and Diener (2003) focusing on the effect of marital transitions on life satisfaction revealed that on average individuals reacted to events and then adapted back toward baseline levels.

In support of these studies which minimise the effect of life events on subjective well-being, Headey and Wearing (1989) proposed the dynamic equilibrium model. This model stipulates that each person has a “normal” or equilibrium, pattern of life events and a normal, or equilibrium, level of subjective well-being. This model asserts that deviations from normal patterns of life events only temporarily modify individuals’ subjective well-being, and that subjective well-being reverts to a level predetermined by individuals’ personalities as soon as the pattern of life events regains its equilibrium (Headey & Wearing, 1989).

In summary, it seems clear that many variables influence subjective well-being. The extent to which these variables predict subjective well-being has not been concretely determined, and is currently a focus of much research. It is interesting to note that much of the research reviewed in this chapter is international in nature,
indicating a strong need for South African research on this topic. It is therefore valuable that this present study investigates the subjective well-being of a South African sample.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 has focused on subjective well-being from a broad overview of the concept’s theoretical and historical background, to a more specific discussion of the dimensions that constitute this concept. This chapter also included possible sources of subjective well-being and research studies pertaining to the various variables related to subjective well-being. In addition, an effort was made where possible to cite research studies that focused on the subjective well-being of divorced individuals and single parents, thus providing useful information to relate to the participants used in this research study. The following chapter will focus on the methodology utilised in the present study.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Included in this chapter is an overview of the research design and methodology utilised in the present study. The primary aims of the study will be outlined, after which the participants and sampling procedure will be discussed. A brief description of the measures used in this research will then be provided in order to add to the understanding of the data collection and methodology. The procedure and data analyses used will be explained. Finally, the ethical considerations borne in mind by the researcher while conducting the research will be described.

4.2 PRIMARY AIMS OF RESEARCH

The main aims of the research were:

1. To explore and describe the subjective well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and happiness) of divorced, single custodial parents.

2. To identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated (i.e., satisfaction with life and the positive affect and negative affect components of happiness), so as to further explore and describe the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents.

As this was an exploratory-descriptive study, no hypotheses were stated. Instead, aims were utilised to guide the methodological aspects of the study. The research design will be discussed in the following section.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Thyer (1993) views a research design as a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to be conducted. In general terms this blueprint takes the form of triangulation research, as both quantitative data (e.g., descriptive statistics) as well as qualitative data (via open-ended questions) are collected (De Vos, 1998). More specifically, in terms of the first aim of the current study, this detailed plan involves the use of a non-experimental, exploratory descriptive design. Non-experimental research methods involve the researcher only observing or measuring the variable or variables of interest, and therefore these methods are non-manipulative (Cozby, 1997). The goal of exploratory research is to formulate more precise questions that
future research can answer (Neuman, 1997). There are three main forms of exploratory research, namely exploring a new topic, describing a social phenomenon and explaining why something occurs. Descriptive research is therefore useful in presenting a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship (Neuman, 1997). The topic of the subjective well-being of single, divorced, custodial parents is a relatively new topic as previous research generally focused on the negative rather than positive experiences of this group. In addition, research pertaining to this group within the South African context is not readily available.

The importance and valuable nature of non-experimental, exploratory descriptive research has been outlined above; however it is also important to recognise some of the shortfalls thereof. The disadvantages of this type of research design include the following: there is no method for controlling extraneous variables, no cause-and-effect conclusions can be drawn, and the researcher is unable to progressively investigate one aspect of the independent variable after another in order to identify the real cause more closely (Burns & Grové, 1993).

In addition to being a non-experimental, exploratory descriptive design, this study also incorporated a correlational research method in order to attain the second aim, i.e., to explore and describe the underlying patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being measured. The correlational method allows for the inter-relationships among variables to be explored and described (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). This, in turn, leads to a richer understanding of the subject being studied.

Two data collection methods are readily used in descriptive studies, namely survey studies and observation studies (Mitchell & Jolley, 1996). For both of the research designs discussed above the descriptive method was survey research. This type of descriptive method involves the use of interviews or self-report measures to question attitudes, behaviours and demographics (Cozby, 1997). The basic data collected from self-report measures are the participants’ own reports about their thoughts, feelings and actions. According to Taylor, Peplau and Sears (1997), an advantage of self-report questionnaires is that they allow the researcher to measure subjective states such as perceptions, attitudes or emotions. However, the self-report approach assumes that information obtained provides an accurate description of the individual, whereas in effect the responses will only be accurate to the extent that the participants are willing and able to reveal themselves. The principle
disadvantage of the self-report technique is the participants’ susceptibility to faking (Taylor, et al., 1997).

The type of survey procedure utilised for data collection in the present study, namely questionnaires, is typically used in survey research. Questionnaires can be investigator-administered or self-administered (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998). In this study both forms of administration were used according to the convenience of the participants. Advantages of using the investigator- or group-administrated method are that much time and cost is saved as a group of participants are handled simultaneously and are consequently also exposed simultaneously to the same stimulus (Fouché, 1998). For the current research study, it was also necessary to make use of the self-administration techniques and subsequently have the participants mail the questionnaires back to the researcher. There are certain advantages of using mailed questionnaires: the participant has a high degree of freedom in completing the questionnaires, and information can be obtained from a large group of participants within a brief period of time, thus saving valuable research time. This type of data collection is also valuable because the possible contaminatory influence of a fieldworker is eliminated (Fouché, 1998). The main disadvantages of mailed questionnaires are however, that the non-response rate may be high, especially with regard to unclear or open questions. This may result in missing data. On choosing this type of research, the above disadvantages were taken into consideration; however, the researcher felt that the advantages and appropriateness of the design for the current research outweighed the potential drawbacks.

4.4. PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

Sampling involves taking any portion of a population or universe as a representation of that population or universe (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). There are two kinds of sampling available to researchers, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is where each person in the population has an equal chance of being selected, and the selection thereof is based on some form of objective, random procedure (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). Unlike probability sampling, non-probability sampling does not implement randomisation when selecting participants. Instead this method involves selecting only those participants
who are available and willing to take part in the research, and is therefore based on convenience (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998).

For the purpose of this study a non-probability sampling technique was used. More specifically, this study incorporated both purposive as well as snowball sampling in order to maximise the size of the sample obtained. A purposive sample is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in the way that a sample is composed of elements which contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population (Singleton, Straits, Straits, & McAllister, 1998). A disadvantage of purposive sampling is that the judgement of the researcher is too prominent. Snowball sampling involves approaching a single case who is involved in the phenomenon to be studied to gain information on other, similar people. In turn this person is again requested to identify further people who may make up the sample. The researcher continues in this way until he or she has identified a sufficient number of cases to make up the research (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). This type of research is valuable when the research involves a phenomenon that is relatively unknown, or when a sample is difficult to access, as in the case of the current sample under study.

Because both these sampling procedures involve non-probability sampling, the sample may not be representative of the population. The use of non-probability sampling implies that less effort is taken to ensure that the sample is an accurate representation of the population. Anyone who is not present at a particular location, for whatever reason, may be excluded from the study (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998). Therefore one of the main disadvantages of non-probability sampling is that the results obtained cannot be generalised with confidence to the larger population.

Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to assist in purposively sampling the participants for the proposed study. The inclusion criteria consisted of the following:

- A roughly equal number of male and female participants.
- The participants were to be between 25 and 45 years of age.
- They were to have been divorced for between two and 10 years.
- The participants were to have sole custody of their child or children.
- They were to be in full-time employment.
- An ability to read and understand English at a Grade 7 level should be present.
The biographical variables were explored via a comprehensive biographical questionnaire (see Appendix D), which served in part to ensure that participants met the above criteria. Further details concerning the biographical questionnaire will be presented in section 4.5.1.

Forty-five single, divorced, custodial parents volunteered to take part in the research. Due to some questionnaires being incomplete and some not being returned to the researcher, the final number of participants included in the sample was 35. When obtaining a sample for research purposes, the size of the sample needs to be appropriate for the statistical analysis that will be utilised. According to Grinnell and Williams (1990), a minimum of 30 participants is sufficient to perform basic statistical procedures. Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1995) specified that for multivariate analysis, a minimum of 10 participants is required per variable being studied. Thus 30 single custodial parents were sufficient for the current study, making the final participant number of 35 satisfactory. As mentioned previously, non-probability sampling was used in this current research. A disadvantage of non-probability sampling is that the sample is unlikely to be representative of the population. Therefore, the generalisation of the results of this study would not be desirable or applicable (Cozby, 1993). For this reason, recommendations regarding the subjective well-being of single, divorced, custodial parents may only be applicable to the sample used in this study. A more detailed description of the sample will be provided in Chapter 5 which presents the results and discussion of the study. A description of the measures used in the study will now be presented.

4.5. RESEARCH MEASURES

Data for this study was collected by means of standardised paper-and-pencil measures, which reflected the satisfaction with life, positive affect, negative affect and general happiness of divorced, single custodial parents. The measures used include a biographical questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and the Affectometer-2 questionnaire (AFM-2).

The questionnaires used were appropriate for the survey research design. As is characteristic of a survey, the questionnaires included instructions regarding the method that should be used to complete each questionnaire. These contained a range of items that were either closed-ended or open-ended. The questionnaires also included rating scales which are an example of forced-choice questions. Many
surveys incorporate this type of questioning due to its proven efficacy and reliability (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998). This type of question is easy to use, score and code the responses for analysis, thus proving this method’s efficacy. In general, this method is also reliable because all participants respond in terms of the same options (e.g., ‘always’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, ‘never’), which makes this type of data uniform (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998). In addition to the advantages of using a form of research with proven efficacy and reliability, the validity of survey research obtained via questionnaires can also be easily established (Salkind, 1997). Other advantages include saving time and money, obtaining accurate results, lack of interviewer bias, and greater privacy for the participants (Salkind, 1997).

There are also some disadvantages that relate to the use of these questionnaires in the form of survey research. The questionnaires used are necessarily rigid in order to create comparability between questionnaires; due to this, considerable valuable information may not be accessed. In addition, the researcher is only able to collect information on feelings which the participant is aware of and is willing to describe. Other disadvantages include an increase in the likelihood of misunderstood items and incomplete responses, as well as unpredictability of response rates (Dane, 1990). Surveys cannot control whether participants employ response bias or response sets when answering questions. When questionnaires are investigator-administered, the participants may perceive that anonymity is reduced and therefore may be less honest in their responses (Mitchell & Jolley, 1996). As participation in this current study was voluntary, it was hoped that the participants would be motivated to answer honestly and carefully. The general advantages and disadvantages with regard to the use of the questionnaires for the current research have been outlined above. The following sections will include further details on the questionnaires utilised, namely the biographical questionnaire, the SWLS, and the AFM-2.

4.5.1. Biographical Questionnaire

A comprehensive biographical questionnaire (see Appendix D) was constructed by the researcher in order to gather demographic and background information from the participants. The questions included were based on a literature review and the information necessary for the contextualisation and meaningful interpretation of the research findings. While the biographical questionnaire is not the
focus of the study, it is valuable to describe the sample in terms of the variables discussed in the literature chapters.

The biographical questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section required information regarding the demographics of the participants, the custody arrangement of the dependent children, the highest level of education completed, the job description and the participants’ level of job satisfaction. Many of these items were included in order to verify that the participants met the inclusion criteria for the study. Ambrose et al. (1983) suggested that childcare demands change with children’s ages, and therefore the age of an individual’s children may impact on the individual’s subjective well-being. The item referring to the ages of the participants’ children was therefore included to contribute to an understanding of the participants’ subjective well-being. In addition, research has shown that higher education levels and job satisfaction appear to be related to greater reported life satisfaction (Campbell, 1981; Diener, 1984), thus the biographical questionnaire enquired about the participants’ highest level of education completed and their level of job satisfaction.

The second section of the biographical questionnaire inquired about the general health of the participants. This was deemed valuable as a number of studies have indicated a strong relationship between self-rated health and subjective well-being (Diener, 1984).

The third section required the participants to provide information regarding the presence of social support in their lives. They were required to indicate whether there was someone who contributed to their sense of well-being and whether they themselves were responsible for taking care of someone else. This section also required that the participants indicate whether they participated in hobbies and sport, and whether they were committed to and active in religion. These questions were included as research has found a positive relationship between subjective well-being and the presence of social networks, a sense of responsibility and participation in leisure activities and religion (Rands, 1988; Langer & Rodin, 1976; Argyle & Martin, 1991; Ellison, 1991).

The fourth section enquired about who initiated the divorce proceedings, the quality of the current relationship with the ex-spouse, and the presence of stressors in the participants’ lives. Research has found that being the initiator of the separation had positive effects on individuals’ well-being at separation (Rands, 1988). In
addition, the transition to a single parent family is made easier when the co-parental relationship is functioning well (Greif, 1995). The open-ended questions in this section were used to obtain additional information such as the most challenging and most rewarding aspects of the participants' current life styles. The open-ended questions were included to allow a more comprehensive understanding of the participants.

It is important to note that as the researcher compiled the biographical questionnaire, and this questionnaire was not piloted to investigate the applicability of the questions to a South African sample, no information regarding reliability or validity has been determined. This means that statistically significant inferences regarding the subjective well-being of the sample as it relates to these biographical variables cannot be made. The researcher is therefore limited to referring to biographical trends within the research. The following section will provide more information on the Satisfaction with Life Scale.

4.5.2. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed to assess an individual’s global judgement of life satisfaction. This involves assessing an individual’s conscious evaluative judgement of his or her life by using the person’s own criteria (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The SWLS is a five-item scale for which normative data for diverse populations are available. Respondents are required to give a graded response to the five items on a seven-point Lickert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Scores can be interpreted in terms of absolute as well as relative life satisfaction. Scores from 5 to 9 indicate extreme dissatisfaction with life, while scores between 10 and 14 represent dissatisfaction with life, and scores from 15 to 19 indicate slight dissatisfaction with life. A score of 20 represents the neutral point on the scale, the point at which the participant is about equally satisfied and dissatisfied. Scores between 21 and 25 signify slight satisfaction with life, and scores from 26 to 30 represent satisfaction with life. Scores between 31 and 35 indicate extreme satisfaction with life. The mean score on the SWLS was found to be 23.5, with a standard deviation of 6.43 (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The brief format of the SWLS allows it to be incorporated into an assessment battery with minimal cost and time expenditure (Pavot & Diener, 1993).
The SWLS has shown strong internal reliability and moderate temporal stability, reflecting that it is a valid and reliable measure. Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffen (1985) reported a coefficient alpha of 0.87 for the scale and a two-month test-retest stability coefficient of 0.82. According to Pavot and Diener (1993), a number of other investigators have reported both internal and temporal reliability data for the SWLS. The positive correlation patterns found between the SWLS and extroversion, marital status, health and self-esteem as well as the negative correlation pattern between the SWLS and neuroticism, provide construct validity for the scale (Pavot & Diener, 1993). A number of independent sources of evidence also suggest the discriminate validity of the SWLS (Pavot & Diener, 1993). This measure has been used widely internationally (Suh, et al., 1996; Diener & Suh, 1997), while several South African studies have also used this scale (Wissing & Van Eeden, 1997; Vorster, 2002).

Various studies involving different samples have been done at the University of Port Elizabeth using the SWLS. In a study involving the retired elderly, Vorster (2002) found that 70% of the sample indicated life satisfaction levels ranging from satisfied to extremely satisfied. The mean of the SWLS was found to be 28.03, with a standard deviation of 5.07. Another local study conducted by Odendaal (1999) on the satisfaction with life of heart patients in rehabilitation found the mean to be 25, with a standard deviation of seven. Pavot and Diener (1993) found mean score on the SWLS to be 23.5 with a standard deviation of 6.43. Most other normative data using the SWLS find the mean to be between 23 and 28, or the range of slightly satisfied to satisfied (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Odendaal (1999) found the mean of his sample involving heart patients in rehabilitation to be 25 with a standard deviation of seven. Local research conducted by Vorster (2002) on the satisfaction with life of the retired elderly in a residence for the aged, found a mean of 28.03 and a standard deviation of 5.07. A local study conducted by the current researcher (Henry, 2002), involving divorced, single fathers found a mean of 20 with a standard deviation of 6.82. While the above-mentioned studies focused on different samples, certain comparisons can be made. The mean score of Odendaal’s study (1999) confirms the mean found by Pavot and Diener (1993), whereas the mean found by Vorster (2002) indicates that the elderly sample had even higher levels of satisfaction with life. The mean found by the current researcher (Henry, 2002) was lower than the previously mentioned studies, which the researcher tentatively linked to the sample having
undergone the potentially stressful experience of divorce and the transition into a single parent family which could have impacted on the satisfaction with life of the sample.

The SWLS does not measure all aspects of subjective well-being. It is designed to focus on the cognitive rather than the affective aspect of subjective well-being. Pavot and Diener (1993) therefore cautioned that instruments with an affective focus should also be included in studies intended to obtain data in the broader construct of subjective well-being. In the following section, the measure used to assess this affective component of subjective well-being, namely the Affectometer-2 Scale, will be discussed.

### 4.5.3. Affectometer-2 Scale (AFM-2)

The Affectometer-2 Scale (AFM-2) was designed to measure general happiness or sense of well-being by determining the balance of positive and negative feelings in recent experience (Kammann & Flett, 1983). It indicates quality of life as experienced on an affective or emotional level, with an overall level of well-being conceptualised as the extent to which positive feelings predominate over negative feelings (Kammann & Flett, 1983). The instructions of the AFM-2 request respondents to report their feelings “over the past few weeks”. This time frame suggests a compromise between measuring the sense of well-being in its most global form and the choice of a time period acceptable for reasonably accurate recall. Furthermore, the 40-item Affectometer-2 Scale requires that respondents provide a graded response reflecting how often a feeling was present ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘all the time’. The scores are indicated on a five-point Lickert scale. The mean time to complete the questionnaire is two to five minutes. Therefore, this measure, like the SWLS, is a time and cost efficient addition to an assessment battery.

The AFM-2 subscales measure Positive Affect (PA), Negative Affect (NA), and Positive-Negative Affect Balance (PA-NA) (Wissing & Van Eeden, 1997). The AFM-2 items were empirically selected from a candidate pool of 435 adjectives and sentences. These items can be grouped into the following 10 categories: confluence, optimism, self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, social interest, freedom, energy, cheerfulness, and thought clarity. For each of these 10 characteristics of happiness, four items are identified, each having been derived from the following groupings:
• Positive sentences (e.g., “My future looks good”, “I smile and laugh a lot”)
• Negative sentences (e.g., “My life seems stuck in a rut”, “Nothing seems very much fun anymore”)
• Positive adjectives (e.g., “Useful”, “Confident”)
• Negative adjectives (e.g., “Depressed”, “Helpless”).

The total number of 40 items, reflecting the above four groupings, are divided into two subscales with 20 items in each subscale (10 positive and 10 negative items per subscale). Possible scores on the Affectometer-2 Scale range from 0 to 80. A score of 40 represents the neutral point on the scale with higher scores indicating a positive subjective well-being (happiness), and lower scores indicating lowered levels of subjective well-being (unhappiness) (Kammann & Flett, 1983).

Kammann and Flett (1983) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.95 for the Affectometer-2 Scale. Researchers, internationally and locally, have supported the validity of the scale. In South African research, Wissing and Van Eeden (1994) reported the following Cronbach alpha coefficients for their study: 0.86 for Positive Affect, 0.90 for Negative Affect, and 0.92 for Positive-Negative Affect Balance. The correlation coefficient (r) between the two subscales was reported to be 0.87 (Kammann & Flett, 1983).

Various studies have been done at the University of Port Elizabeth using the Affectometer-2 Scale. In a study involving stroke survivors, Van der Walt (2002) reported high levels of positive affect, with a mean score of 56.12 out of a possible score of 80, and a standard deviation of 13.16. Low levels of negative affect were found: the mean score on the Negative Affect Scale was 26.21 out of a possible 80, with a standard deviation of 16.94. The mean score of the Positive-Negative Affect Balance (global happiness) was 29.91, which indicated slightly below neutral (neutral being a score of 40) positive affect (Van der Walt, 2002). In another South African study, Wissing and Van Eeden (1997) investigated the nature of psychological well-being and the manifestation of psychological well-being in different age, gender and cultural groups. Wissing and Van Eeden (1997) reported that the mean score on the Positive Affect Scale was 55.60, the mean score on the Negative Affect Scale was 26.10, and the mean for overall happiness (Positive-Negative Affect Balance) was 29.50. The results of the two studies were clearly similar.
In conclusion, it is important to note that both the SWLS and AFM-2 have been used extensively and successfully in international research on the topic of subjective well-being (Myers & Diener, 1995) as well as in South African research on this topic (Wissing & Van Eeden, 1997; Vorster, 2002). The research procedure will be discussed in the following section.

4.6. PROCEDURE

A press release was published in two local newspapers to advertise the study and thereby attract participants. The researcher was invited to, and subsequently took part in, an interview at a local radio station to advertise the study. The researcher also attended a workshop for single parents, during which the opportunity became available to briefly describe the study and invite interested individuals to provide their contact information. Another method used to attract participants was the placing of notices on the notice boards or in the newsletters of local churches. Single parent support groups were approached in order to identify potential participants. All potential research participants were screened in order to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria for the study. They were then informed of the nature, procedure and outcomes of the research, as well as their rights. Participants were also informed that all information would be treated confidentially and that participation was voluntary. At a later stage it became apparent that the necessary sample size would not be reached by advertising in the above manner and using purposive sampling alone, and it was decided that snowball sampling would also be utilised. The participants who responded to the advertisements or volunteered from the support groups were also requested to provide contact details of other single parents whom they thought would be interested in participating in the study. The researcher then contacted these individuals and requested them to take part in the study. If they met the inclusion criteria, the same information regarding the study and their participation therein was provided.

The questionnaires were group and self-administered at the convenience of the participants. In the group administration format, the researcher met with a number of participants at an agreed upon venue and time. Each participant received an information letter in which the title and nature of the research, the procedure which the participants would follow, the ethical steps adhered to and the form of feedback that they would receive was specified. Each participant also received a
consent form, a biographical questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and the Affectometer-2 (AFM-2) Scale. The researcher requested the participants to complete the consent form and biographical questionnaire, and administered the two measures (SWLS, and AFM-2). The researcher was available to answer any questions posed by the participants. Guidance was only provided (on request) with regard to grammatical or language difficulties, and therefore no advice on items or cues were purposefully provided to the participants. Once the questionnaires had been completed the researcher gathered the questionnaires and kept them in a confidential place.

Unfortunately all the participants could not attend the group administration session of the measures. For those that could not attend this meeting, the self-administration technique was used. The researcher explained the procedure to be followed via telephone and obtained the participants’ postal addresses. An envelope containing an information letter, a consent form, a biographical questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the Affectometer-2 Scale was mailed to each remaining participant. On completion of the questionnaires, each participant placed the measures into a stamped envelope that was provided and for which the postage had been paid, and mailed the envelope back to the researcher. A return date was specified for each participant, giving him or her approximately three weeks to complete the questionnaire. If the return date lapsed, the researcher followed up telephonically to encourage the participant to complete and return the questionnaires. The return rate for the questionnaires was high. This was possibly because the researcher provided an accurately addressed envelope for the return of the questionnaires, thereby making the process simpler for the participants, and improving the likelihood of the envelopes arriving at their destination via the postal service. Therefore this procedure minimised the major disadvantage of mailed questionnaires, namely that the non-response rate may be high.

Once all the questionnaires were collated, they were scored and double-checked by the researcher as well as an independent coder. The data was analysed with the help of a statistician. Confidentiality of the information obtained from the participants was maintained. Following the data analysis, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section, a brief report was provided to those participants who indicated their interest in receiving general feedback regarding the results. In
addition, a workshop based on the results of the research and aimed at enhancing well-being was offered in order to benefit the participants.

4.7. DATA ANALYSIS

The methodology used in the current study combines the use of quantitative and qualitative data and is therefore referred to as triangulation research (De Vos, 1998). The triangulation model used in this study is the dominant-less-dominant model, which involves the researcher presenting the study within a single dominant paradigm with one small component drawn from an alternate paradigm (Cresswell, 1994). In this case, the quantitative paradigm was more dominant with a small section of the current research being qualitative in nature. Therefore most of the focus of the research was on data gathered from the paper-and-pencil measures (i.e., the SWLS and AFM-2). A small qualitative component exists is the form of the open-ended questions in the biographical questionnaire.

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques both have individual advantages and disadvantages. De Vos, Schurink and Strydom (1998) list advantages of quantitative research; these are that, in the social sciences this approach is more highly formalised and more explicitly controlled, and it has a range that is more exactly defined and is the closest to the physical sciences in terms of the methods used. A limitation of using purely quantitative data is that it is restrictive in the way that participants are forced to choose from the options provided. On the other hand, the primary advantage of qualitative research is that this type of data can yield valuable insights into the lives and experiences of participants, as it provides a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study (Brannon & Feist, 1997). A concurrent disadvantage is that the freedom which qualitative data provides, results in the responses being more difficult and time-consuming to collect, analyse and categorise (Huysamen, 1994). By utilising both quantitative and qualitative data in the form of triangulation, the researcher aims to provide a more comprehensive, as well as scientific picture of the participants’ subjective well-being, which will in turn enhance the credibility of the findings.

The data was analysed in terms of the two primary aims of the study. The researcher utilised the services of an independent statistician for the analysis of the data generated from this study. The Statistica (1998) software package was used to perform the data analysis. With regards to the first aim, descriptive statistics were
used to analyse the quantitative data in order to describe the satisfaction with life, positive affect, negative affect and general happiness of the participants (Aim 1). These statistics included the computation of the mean, the standard deviation and the range of the scores of each scale for each measure. The mean is a measure of central tendency, which implies that it consists of numerical values that refer to the centre of the distribution (Cozby, 1993). The mean is the most stable and versatile of the measures of central tendency and is the most widely used for statistical inference (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). The standard deviation is a measure of variability, which is used to measure the average deviation of the scores from the mean. The standard deviation is one of the most useful and widely employed of the measures of dispersion (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). The range is also a measure of variability, and is used to indicate the distance between the maximum and minimum scores or, in other words, the spread of the scores (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999). The range is a useful statistic in describing small samples (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). Furthermore, frequency counts were calculated for each measure and for each item on the biographical questionnaire to provide additional information in order to more extensively describe the sample. The data from the biographical questionnaire as well as the data collected from the standardised measures were analysed using descriptive statistics. This was done with the objective of describing the distribution, variety and trends in responses for the sample as a whole, and for selected biographical variables.

In order to meet the second aim, cluster analysis was performed to identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being that were being measured (Aim 2). Cluster analysis is the statistical procedure of classifying objects into groups or clusters using measures of those objects (Hintze, 1988). Ultimately successful cluster analysis produces groups or clusters that exhibit high internal or within-cluster homogeneity and high external or between-cluster heterogeneity (Hair, et al., 1995; Knoff, 1986). Subscale scores from the SWLS and the AFM-2 Scale, namely that of satisfaction with life, positive affect, and negative affect were used as input variables for all cluster analyses.

Both hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) and k-means cluster analysis procedures were used in this study. The term k-means denotes the process of assigning every unit of data to the cluster with the nearest mean in order to minimise variability within clusters and maximise variability between clusters (Everett, 1974).
The HCAs were conducted as a preliminary step in determining the number of clusters to fit the data in the subsequent $k$-means analysis. For the HCA, Ward’s (1963) method was used to form clusters. Ward’s method was chosen because it tends to produce relatively dense clusters. $K$-means cluster analysis was used to identify more detailed clusters. During this process a four-cluster solution was obtained.

To determine whether significant differences existed between the four clusters in terms of the three aspects of subjective well-being (SWL, PA and NA) used for grouping, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed (MANOVA). Generally, where the principle concern is how groups differ on measures as a whole, a MANOVA is the appropriate statistical procedure to use (Hair et al., 1995). An important consideration for running a MANOVA is the number of cases or participants in each cell or cluster. There are differences in opinion among statisticians regarding the number of participants that are required per cell (or cluster) in order to run a MANOVA. Hair et al., (1995) recommend that the minimum cell size for this statistical procedure is 20 cases. However, these authors also assert that at the minimum the sample in each cell must be greater than the number of dependent variables included. Similarly Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) claim that when using a MANOVA it is necessary to have more cases than dependent variables in each cell. According to this minimum requirement, for the purposes of the current study, the smallest cell should contain more than three cases. The clusters will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

After completing the MANOVA, post hoc comparisons, using the Scheffé test, were used to determine on which dependent variables significant differences occurred between the clusters. Finally, to elicit trends within the cluster profile, information from the biographical questionnaire was cross-tabulated with the clusters. This was also used to provide external validation and a more detailed description of the clusters.

The qualitative information obtained from the open-ended questions within the biographical questionnaire was analysed by means of content analysis. This involves the search for, and indication of, recurring themes. More specifically, the open-ended questions were content analysed on a thematic basis and these themes were presented as categories. The categories were then indicated in order of their importance to the participants, in the form of frequency tables. A frequency
distribution table takes a disorganised set of scores and places them in order from highest to lowest, grouping together all individual scores that are the same (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999). In this way certain commonality or trends can be distinguished among the participants' reports. A discussion of the similarities between participants in terms of stress, worry and positive aspects of single parenthood was used to provide a more comprehensive picture of the sample. The ethical considerations taken into account for the duration of the study will be discussed in the following section.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Unique ethical problems come into play when human beings are the objects of study in the social sciences (Strydom, 1998). Ethical considerations must be adhered to when undertaking research. Huysamen (1994) stated that when research procedures are performed, research participants should be treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. The current researcher took ethical considerations into account in all stages of this study. It is important to note that a research proposal was submitted and accepted by the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Port Elizabeth. The researcher was particularly mindful of ethical obligations when obtaining participants, during the analysis of data, and in reporting back to the participants.

During the process of obtaining participants, their informed consent was obtained after the researcher had explained the nature and purpose of the study, the qualifications of the researcher, the participants’ right to confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Each participant signed a comprehensive consent form to indicate his voluntary participation in the study (see Appendix C). During the measurement phase, care was taken not to expose participants to any degree of discomfort, such as anxiety, stress or guilt. The researcher also took the participants’ needs into account by mailing the questionnaires to them if the participants could not make the group administration meeting.

During the analysis of data, the participants’ right to confidentiality was taken into account. The participants were identified according to a number, therefore their names did not appear either in the database or in any publication of the results of the study. However, anonymity could not be provided as all of the participants requested
feedback, making it necessary for the researcher to be aware of the participants’ names and contact details.

In reporting back to participants, it was borne in mind that researchers should express their indebtedness to the research participants by maintaining good relations with them, and by making the results of the study available to them (Strydom, 1998). In fulfilling this obligation, the researcher provided the participants with a brief report of the main findings of the study. Furthermore psycho-educational support was provided to the participants interested in further enhancing their well-being. This was achieved in the form of a workshop that was offered for the benefit of the participants. In this way, the researcher indicated her gratitude to the participants for their willing contribution to the research.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the methodology used in the current study. The research design and methodology was chosen according to its suitability in fulfilling the aims of the study. For this purpose a non-experimental, exploratory descriptive research design as well as a correlational method was used. The data was gathered via a biographical questionnaire as well as two objective measures for subjective well-being (SWLS, AFM-2). Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the process of the research. The data was analysed by means of descriptive statistics and cluster analysis in order to provide a comprehensive description of the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents. The results of the data analysis are presented and discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

There were two main aims in the current study. The first aim was to explore and describe the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents. The second aim was to identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated (i.e., satisfaction with life, positive affect and negative affect), so as to further explore and describe the subjective well-being of these divorced, single custodial parents.

This chapter presents a discussion of the results of the study. The first section provides a description of the demographic details of the participants as gathered by the biographical questionnaire. While this information is not directly used to determine the subjective well-being of the sample, it nevertheless helps to provide a more detailed understanding of the background of the participants. The results of the two measures (i.e., SWLS and AFM-2) will then be individually presented and discussed. Thereafter, the cluster profiles that emerged from the sample, as well as the biographical trends related to these clusters, will be discussed. As a final point of interest, the qualitative information from the open-ended questions will be presented. This will provide a more personal understanding of the positive and negative aspects of the participants’ lives. It is important to note that all figures represented in the following tables have been rounded off to two decimal places, and total percentages have been rounded off to 100.00 where necessary.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

Prior to the completion of the measures, participants provided a variety of information regarding background demographics. This information related to general details such as gender and age, and thereafter progressed to more personal information such as whether or not they participated in religion and the quality of their relationship with their ex-spouse. No statistically significant correlational inferences could be made regarding the demographic variables and the two measures due to the small cell sizes obtained in this study. However, certain trends that emerged from the biographical information related to the clusters will be discussed in section 5.4. In addition, the biographical details are not used to directly
determine subjective well-being. This section provides a context from which the results of the SWLS and AFM-2 can be understood.

5.2.1 Gender

Of the 35 participants included in the sample, 27 were female (77.14%) and eight were male (22.86%). Literature cited in Chapter 2 indicated that in most divorce cases today, legal and physical custody of children is awarded solely to the mother (Fox & Blanton, 1995). As one of the inclusion criteria required the participants to have custody of their child or children, the greater number of women in the sample could be reflective of the greater number of women in society that have custody of their children.

As was discussed in Chapter 3, women and men do not differ significantly on overall levels of subjective well-being (Lu, 2000). While overall happiness seems to be similar for men and women, clear differences were found in the emotional intensity of the two groups. On average, women tend to experience both positive and negative emotions more frequently and intensely when compared to men (Fujita, et al., 1991). Interestingly, men and women also seem to differ in their perceived sources of happiness and satisfaction. Research reflects that women claim that their source of greatest happiness is found in harmonious interpersonal relationships, especially those involving family members, while men claim to derive greater happiness from material pursuits and career success (Argyle, 1987). As the gender distribution of the current sample was not equal, no assumptions regarding gender and subjective well-being may be made. Gender, will however, be mentioned briefly in regards to the cluster profile of the sample (section 5.4).

5.2.2 Age

One of the inclusion criteria for this study was that the participants should be between 25 and 45 years of age. Research suggests that the peak ‘risk’ age bracket for divorce is 25 to 29 years of age (Ambrose et al., 1983). For this reason 25 years was specified as the minimum age. The maximum age of 45 years was specified to minimise possible effects of secondary factors, such as mid-life, impacting on the findings.

The sample age ranged from 31 to 48 years of age, with an average age of 38.26 years. The majority of the participants (45.71%) fell within the 35-39 years
category, while 28.57% of the participants fell into the 40-44 years age grouping. Approximately 17% were aged between 30 and 34 years and the remaining three participants (8.57%) fell in the 45-49 years category. Although 45 years was specified as a cut-off point regarding age, these three participants were included because of the difficulty in obtaining participants who met the stipulated inclusion criteria.

Literature cited in Chapter 3 states that some studies have found that age plays no significant role in the subjective well-being of individuals (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener, 1984). However, other studies have found differences between age groups with regards to the individual components of subjective well-being. Some studies have found that younger people reported stronger levels of both positive and negative affect, while older people reported greater levels of general satisfaction with life (Diener, 1984; Diener, et al., 1999). While younger people seem to experience high levels of joy, older people tend to judge their lives in more positive ways. It has also been found that life satisfaction increases, or at least does not decrease with age. The critical age of 40 years was demonstrated as a significant turning point with respect to subjective well-being, whereafter well-being levels begin to rise until at least 70 years of age (Horley & Lavery, 1995).

Unfortunately, no assumptions can be made about changes in subjective well-being over the lifespan as this study does not have a longitudinal basis where comparisons are made between past and present levels of SWB. However, age will be discussed further in terms of the cluster profile of the sample in section 5.4.

### 5.2.3 Home Language

The majority of the participants in the sample (77.14%) were English-speaking as indicated in the inclusion criteria, which necessitated that participants should be able to speak and understand English due to the questionnaires only being available in English. The second largest language group to feature among participants was Afrikaans: 14.29% of the sample were Afrikaans-speaking. A smaller percentage of participants (8.57%) reported speaking Xhosa as a home language.

### 5.2.4 Period of Time Divorced

The sample ranged from having been divorced for two to 10 years, with the mean number being 5.17, and the standard deviation being 2.54 years. The time
intervals were decided upon based on the most reasonable manner of presentation, taking into account research and statistical reflections. Almost half of the group of participants had been divorced for between two and four years (48.57%). The remaining participants were relatively equally divided between the remaining three categories of length of time divorced, namely from five to six years (20.00%), seven to eight years (14.29%), and finally nine to 10 years (17.14%).

Literature cited in Chapter 2 suggests that the level of conflict between ex-spouses may diminish as time post-divorce increases. Research indicates that within two years after divorce, conflict subsides somewhat and the level of co-operation between former spouses increases (Gold, 1992). All participants in the sample had been divorced for at least two years. Other authors hold that it takes two to five years following divorce for the psychic healing and re-equilibration to be completed for reasonably healthy individuals (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). In this way divorce is viewed as a process taking most individuals approximately five years to re-stabilise their lives. According to this assumption, based on the period of time divorced, approximately half of the participants (51.43%) should be at a point where they have re-stabilised their lives, a factor which should therefore impact positively on their subjective well-being. Trends within the clusters in terms of period of time divorced and subjective well-being will be referred to in a later discussion (see section 5.4.).

5.2.5 Number of Times Divorced

Of the 35 participants, 31 (88.57%) had been divorced once, and the remaining four participants (11.43%) reported having been divorced twice. Research cited in Chapter 2 regarding re-marriage showed that the majority of people whose marriages end in early to mid-life remarry, with this likelihood dependent on gender, age, and the manner in which the previous marriage ended (Morgan, 1991). Interestingly, of the four participants in the current study that reported having been divorced twice, two were men and two were women. Research indicates that men are more likely to remarry than women across the age spectrum, and younger people are more likely than older people to remarry (Morgan, 1991). Regarding second or subsequent marriages, the odds of divorce are higher, suggesting that those who have once divorced are also more likely to agree to resolve an unhappy second marriage through legal dissolution (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). The participants of the current sample who had re-married after their first divorce, had
subsequently terminated their second marriages in the same manner. Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of the research, no further information was gathered regarding previous marriages. In addition, due to the small number of participants that had been divorced more than once, this biographical information was not cross-tabulated with subjective well-being in terms the clusters obtained, and therefore will not be focused on in more detail.

5.2.6 Present Marital Status

The criterion specified for marital status was that the participants should be divorced. While all the participants in the current sample had been divorced, they did not all share the same present marital status. The majority of the sample fell into the single category (88.57%). Of the sample, 8.57% were co-habiting, and the remaining participant (constituting 2.86% of the sample) was in the engaged category.

These results indicate that a total of 11.43% of the sample had a new partner. The experience of an intimate relationship can impact on an individual's subjective well-being. According to research cited in Chapter 2, the formation of a supportive, mutually caring, intimate relationship is the strongest contributor to a divorced adult's well-being and happiness (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). It can be suggested that these participants also received more social support than those participants who were single. The benefits of a support network include less distress, more responsiveness and attentiveness to children, and increased interest in children's development (Ihinger-Tallman, 1995).

5.2.7 Children

In the following sections the sample distribution will be presented with reference to the number of children of the participants, the number of children living with the participants and the ages of the children living with the participants.

5.2.7.1 Number of Children of Sample

An inclusion criterion specified that the participants should be parents. The majority of the participants (57.14%) had two children. Of the remaining participants, most had one child (31.43%), while some participants (8.57%) had three children, and the remaining participant (2.86%) had seven children.
The experience of being a parent can be related positively to subjective well-being. Research has shown the role of parenthood to be at the top of most parents’ identity salience hierarchies, ranking ahead of marriage and job as a source of identity (Rogers & White, 1998). This implies that satisfaction in this most salient role of parenthood is positively related to subjective well-being as a whole.

5.2.7.2 Number of Children Living with Sample

The number of children living with the participants ranged from one to nine. Some participants who were co-habiting also had their partners’ children living with them, which therefore increased the number of children in the household. The majority of the sample (54.29%) had two children living with them. Approximately one third of the sample (34.29%) had one child living with them. A small percentage of the sample (5.71%) had three children in the household. Of the remaining two participants, one (2.86%) had seven children and one (2.86%) had nine children living with him or her.

Literature cited in Chapter 2 indicated that the management of work and childcare is one of the main challenges facing the single parent. Research has shown that in the single-parent family living independently, the parent who is typically employed, may feel overwhelmed with the combination of work- and parenting-related responsibilities and tasks, leading to a major time-management problem (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). It is therefore possible that the degree to which single parents can master this challenge may have an impact on their happiness and subjective well-being.

5.2.7.3 Ages of Children Living with Sample

The ages of the youngest child of the participants ranged from one year to 17 years with a mean age of 10 years and a standard deviation of 3.80. Of the participants, 62.86% had more than one child. The second youngest child of these participants ranged from five years to 20 years with a mean age of 13.91 years and a standard deviation of 3.87. Of those participants who had three or more children (8.57% of the sample), the age of their third youngest child ranged from 10 to 20 years, with the mean being 16 years and the standard deviation being 5.29. One participant (2.86% of the sample) had more than three children; he had a total of
seven children. His remaining four children, from youngest to oldest, were aged 14, 16, 20 and 22 years respectively.

Literature referred to in Chapter 2 indicated that childcare requires a great deal of extra time and energy, particularly when the children are younger (Ambrose et al., 1983). It also poses unique challenges to single fathers depending on the ages of the children. However, caring for children between the ages of five and eleven years is considered the most stressful for single fathers because of the temptation to leave the children on their own when they are not yet ready (Greif, 1995). It is therefore possible that due to the specific needs of children at different ages, the ages of the participants’ children may have an impact on the participants’ subjective well-being. The following section will describe the custodial arrangements of the sample.

**5.2.8 Custodial Arrangement**

One of the inclusion criteria specified that participants should have sole custody of their child or children. However, to ensure an accurate reflection of the possible custodial arrangements, the participants were given the following options: sole custody, joint custody, divided custody, split custody and non-custody. Of the sample, 97.14% reported having a sole custody arrangement, while the remaining 2.86% of the sample reported having a split custody arrangement.

Literature referred to in Chapter 2 indicated that parents with sole custody of their children are required to complete the necessary activities or tasks alone or with limited assistance from others (Horowitz, 1995). The single parent must make all the major decisions with no partner to provide assistance or to give a second opinion. Single parents are faced with the problem of fulfilling the role of the caregiver and the role of the material resource provider, as well as having sufficient time, energy and expertise to complete the tasks of parenting (Horowitz, 1995). This struggle may be reflected in the participants’ level of subjective well-being.

Regarding the awarding of the sole custody agreement, in most divorce cases today, legal and physical custody of children is awarded solely to the mother (Fox & Blanton, 1995). Interestingly, 77.14% of the current sample was female. More specifically, of the 34 participants that reported sole custody arrangements, 26 participants were female, and eight were male. While more men are currently
awarded custody of their children than in the past, it still seems that custody is awarded more frequently to women than to men.

Literature cited in Chapter 2 indicated that the sole custody agreement is particularly beneficial where parents have demonstrated an inability to cooperate with one another, as the rights of both parents to custody and access are clearly specified, leaving little room for argument (Gardner, 1982). The quality of the participants’ relationships with their ex-spouses is discussed in section 5.2.13.2.

5.2.9 Level of Education

The participants were given the following options in order to indicate their highest level of education reached: None, Grade 5-7, Grade 8-11, Apprenticeship, Grade 12, Studied further (e.g., technical college), University. The majority of the sample (34.29%) had studied at a tertiary level at a technical college. The second most frequently reported level of education was both Grade 12 and University level, with 22.86% of the sample falling into both categories. Approximately 14% of the sample reached an education level of Grade 12. Of the remaining two participants in the sample, one reported an education level falling in the Grade 5-7 category, and the other had completed an apprenticeship.

Research cited in Chapter 3 has demonstrated a small but significant relationship between level of education and subjective well-being (Campbell, et al., 1976; Diener, et al., 1993). People with higher education tend to be more likely to report positive affective experiences in their past, such as feeling excited, pleased or proud. In terms of life satisfaction, higher education seems to be related to greater reported satisfaction. In addition, education may be related to one’s adjustment to single parenthood. A study by Facchino and Aron (1990) found that single fathers with higher education levels had an easier adjustment to the role of single father. The following section will focus on job satisfaction.

5.2.10 Job Satisfaction

The sample reported their job satisfaction on a scale from very unhappy to very happy. The category that was most frequently reported by the sample was the category of very happy (42.86%). An equal percentage of participants (20%) fell into the neither happy nor unhappy category, and the slightly happy category. A total of
11.43% reported being slightly unhappy with their jobs, while the remaining 5.71% of the sample reported being very unhappy with their jobs.

As reported in Chapter 3, employment has been found to contribute to subjective well-being for the following reasons: employment provides an optimal level of stimulation that individuals find challenging and pleasurable; it provides positive social relationships and a sense of identity and meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Diener, et al., 1999). Research has demonstrated a reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and the life satisfaction component of subjective well-being (Argyle & Martin, 1991; Diener, 1984; Judge & Watanabe, 1993). The following section will focus on the reported health of the participants.

5.2.11 Reported Health

Participants were required to rate their general health according to the following categories: poor, average, and good. The majority of the sample (77.14%) indicated that their health was good, while the remaining 22.86% indicated that their health was average.

Literature cited in Chapter 2 reported that the stresses of divorce may demand a high price in terms of physical illness (Ambrose, et al, 1983). It is supposed that the shock of the marital separation may make the individual’s immune system less resistant to assaults by the assorted illness-causing elements in the environment (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). Managing on their own, coping with the loss of a relationship, and enduring financial hardship are common tasks that leave single parents more psychologically and physically vulnerable to illness (Acock & Demo, 1994; Anderson, 2003; Simons & Johnson, 1996).

The participants of this study, however, overwhelmingly reported that they consider their general health to be good. This may have positive implications for their levels of subjective well-being. Indeed, a number of studies cited in Chapter 3 have indicated a strong relationship between self-rated health and subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Zautra & Hempel, 1983). The following section will focus on the social support experienced by the sample.

5.2.12 Social Support

Questions on the biographical questionnaire focused on the social support experienced by the participants. The participants were required to indicate whether
there was someone who contributed to their sense of well-being, if there was someone for whom they felt responsible, whether they participated frequently in leisure activities such as hobbies or sports, and their religious activity.

5.2.12.1. Contributor to Well-being

Slightly more than half of the participants (54.29%) reported that they did not have someone who contributed to their sense of well-being, while the remainder of the sample (45.71%) indicated that they did have someone who contributed to their well-being. It is possible that when answering this question the participants interpreted ‘personal relationship’ as relating only to an intimate partner. If this was indeed their interpretation, it would be understandable that participants reported not having a contributor to their well-being, since the majority of them were single.

In Chapter 3 it was stated that although close relationships often create stress, the benefits of close relationships with family and friends usually outweighs the strains. Interpersonal support in general (including that from spouses, parents, friends, neighbours, and colleagues) and support utilisation have been found to be significant predictors of happiness and positive and negative affect (Ziqiang & Liping, 2001). Similarly, the presence of informal support for parents has been negatively related to depression, and positively related to life satisfaction among mothers and fathers (Wan, et al., 1996). It is therefore possible that social relationships, as reportedly experienced by 45.71% of participants, influence the experience of subjective well-being.

5.2.12.2. Responsibility

Participants were required to indicate whether there was someone for whom they were responsible in terms of caregiving. The majority for the participants (85.71%) reported that there was someone in their lives for whom they were responsible for taking care, while 14.29% indicated that there was no one for whom they felt responsible. This may have been influenced by the number of participants who were cohabiting (8.57%), or engaged (2.86%). These participants may have felt that they were not responsible for their children, as their partners assisted with parental responsibilities, or because the children of some of the participants were no longer minors.
As discussed in Chapter 3, a sense of responsibility has been linked to subjective well-being. Research has revealed that increases in a sense of responsibility leads to increases in happiness, activity, alertness and general well-being; people who feel responsible for something or someone experience higher levels of subjective well-being (Langer & Rodin, 1976). Qualitative findings of a study by Silverman (1999) indicated that the expectations of mothers were based on notions of responsibility, self-fulfilment, family of origin experiences, and the wish to fulfil a traditional female role. Thus having responsibility for one’s children may have a positive impact on parents’ subjective well-being.

5.2.12.3. Leisure Activities

The participants reported on their participation in a hobby or sport. Compared to 48.57% of the participants who did not participate frequently in a hobby or sport, a slight majority of the participants (51.43%) did in fact engage in these leisure activities.

Research in Chapter 3 has indicated that leisure satisfaction is the domain that best predicts global well-being (Balatsky & Diener, 1993). In addition, leisure activities have been found to provide intrinsic satisfaction (satisfaction derived from the activity itself) similar to intrinsic job satisfaction (Argyle & Martin, 1991).

5.2.12.4 Religion

The participants were required to indicate whether or not they were committed to and active in religion. The majority of the sample (62.86%) indicated that they were committed to and active in religion, while the remaining 37.14% indicated that they were not involved in religion.

In Chapter 3, the literature indicated that religion provides psychological and social benefits to the individual. It has been found that those individuals who indicate strong religious faith report higher levels of satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and fewer negative psychosocial consequences of traumatic life events (Ellison, 1991). It is also possible that the role of religion is beneficial regarding subjective well-being due to its social aspect. The benefits of church membership are especially great for those individuals who have lost other forms of social support (e.g., retirees, widows, widowers and divorcees). This factor is important, as all of the participants in the present study are divorcees.
5.2.13 Stressors

In this section, participants indicated by whom the divorce proceedings were initiated, and rated the quality of the relationship with the ex-spouse.

5.2.13.1 Initiator of Divorce Proceedings

Participants indicated who initiated the divorce proceedings according to the following options: self, ex-spouse, and mutual decision. The majority of the participants (60%) initiated the divorce themselves. For a smaller percentage (34.29%) the divorce was initiated by the ex-spouse. For the remaining 5.71%, the decision to initiate divorce proceedings was mutual in nature.

As reflected in Chapter 3, research has found a type of bi-directional relationship between positive affect and cognitive control; people feel better when they have a sense of control over events in their lives (Langer & Rodin, 1976). Similarly, research has indicated that people who feel empowered rather than helpless, usually perform better, cope better with stress, and live happier lives than those who feel less empowered (Campbell, 1981). Related to this, research on males and females after separation from their spouses has found that being the initiator of the separation had positive effects on respondents’ well-being at separation (Rands, 1988). Thus initiating divorce proceedings, as completed by the majority of the participants in the current study, is seen to be reflective of feeling a sense of control, which is likely to impact positively on subjective well-being.

5.2.13.2. Quality of Relationship with Ex-spouse

Participants rated their relationship with their ex-spouse according to the following categories: poor, average and good. The majority of the sample (45.71%) reported a poor relationship with their ex-spouse, 40% reported the quality of the relationship as average, and only 14.29% of the sample indicated that their relationship with their ex-spouse was good.

In Chapter 2 it was stated that an area that could help or hinder a single parent’s performance of parental responsibilities is the co-parental relationship with his or her ex-spouse. When this relationship is functioning well, the transition to the single parent family is made easier. However, in the majority of divorce cases the decision to end the marriage is not a mutual one, suggesting that conflict may be apparent in most divorce cases (Emery, 1994) and distrust is often high within the
co-parental relationship. In only about one quarter of divorced households are the divorced parents able to engage, with minimal conflict, in a co-operative, supportive role with regard to each other’s involvement with the child or children (Ahrons, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). As the majority of the sample reported a poor relationship with their ex-spouse, it is possible that this conflictual relationship could have impact on their levels of subjective well-being.

In the above sections the sample has been described comprehensively according to biographical details. In the following section, the results of the measures will be presented and the sample’s subjective well-being will be discussed in more detail.

5.3 RESULTS OF MEASURES

It is in this section that the findings of the study will be presented in terms of the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Affectometer-2. Therefore this section will address the first aim of the study namely, to explore and describe the subjective well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and happiness) of the sample.

5.3.1 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS measures global life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Life satisfaction refers to a judgmental process, in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique set of criteria (Shin & Johnson, 1978). The person determines the criteria against which his or her life is judged. Individuals are likely to differ in their rating of the importance of various components of “the good life” and are also likely to have different criteria for a good life. Thus life satisfaction is the appraisal of one’s life according to unique criteria. It also refers to an individual’s total contextual estimate of life quality in various aspects of life such as family life, working conditions, health and social security (Strack, et al., 1991). Some authors equate life satisfaction with happiness. However, a difference can be seen in that satisfaction does not possess the same spontaneous “lift of the spirits” quality as happiness does (Campbell, 1981, p.16). Scores on the SWLS range from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 35, with 20 being the neutral point. Scores below 20 indicate decreasing satisfaction with life, while scores above 20 indicate increasing satisfaction with life. The means and standard deviations of the SWLS of this study are presented in Table 1.
Pavot and Diener (1993) found the mean score on the SWLS to be 23.5, with a standard deviation of 6.43. As represented in Table 1, the mean of the current study was found to be 18.49, with a standard deviation of 6.42. Most other normative data using the SWLS find the mean to be between 23 and 28, or the range of slightly satisfied to satisfied (Pavot & Diener, 1993). A comparison between studies using the SWLS on different samples can be made. Odendaal (1999) found the mean of a sample involving heart patients in rehabilitation to be 25 with a standard deviation of seven. Local research conducted by Vorster (2002) on the satisfaction with life of the retired elderly in a residence for the aged, found a mean of 28.03 and a standard deviation of 5.07. While the above studies focused on different samples, the mean SWLS scores of the studies are nevertheless similar. In contrast to the above-mentioned studies, the mean score of the current study was lower, while the standard deviation was similar to those of the other studies. This indicates that the sample as a whole had less life satisfaction than a number of other samples that have been studied.

Interestingly, the mean found by the current study is comparable to that found by a local study on the adjustment and satisfaction with life of divorced, single fathers conducted by the current researcher (Henry, 2002). The researcher tentatively suggested that the lower mean score of 20 on the SWLS found in the study may be because the sample had experienced divorce and the transition into a single parent family, both of which may be highly stressful; this could have impacted on the satisfaction with life of the sample (2002). It is possible that the scores of the participants of the current sample, also having experienced a divorce and the transition into a single parent family, were lower for similar reasons. It is also possible that the demands of daily hassles (Kleinke, 1998), as opposed to or in combination with these life-changing stressors, could have impacted on the sample’s lower reported satisfaction with life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with life</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When focusing more specifically on the satisfaction with life of the current sample, the sample’s scores can be represented as levels of dissatisfaction or satisfaction with life. Table 2 indicates the participants’ satisfaction with life in terms of these levels.

**TABLE 2**

Sample’s level of Satisfaction with Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Satisfaction with Life</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme dissatisfaction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight dissatisfaction</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight satisfaction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident from Table 2, the distribution of life satisfaction for the sample was diverse, with the result that statements regarding the general level of satisfaction with life of the sample are difficult to make. The most frequently indicated category of life satisfaction reported by the participants was slight dissatisfaction (31.43%). Following this category in frequency of report was satisfaction (22.86%). Other categories that were also reported frequently were dissatisfaction (20.00%) and slight satisfaction with life (14.29%) respectively. One participant reported experiencing an equal amount of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and therefore fell in the neutral category. When comparing levels of dissatisfaction to levels of satisfaction with life reported by the participants (excluding the neutral category), more participants reported varying degrees of dissatisfaction with life (a total of 57.14%) compared to satisfaction with life (a total of 40.01%). The results of the Affectometer-2 Scale will be presented and discussed in the following section.
5.3.2. Affectometer-2 Scale (AFM-2)

The AFM-2 was designed to measure general happiness or sense of well-being by determining the balance of positive and negative feelings in recent experience (Kammann & Flett, 1983). It indicates quality of life as experienced on an affective or emotional level, with an overall level of well-being conceptualised as the extent to which positive feelings predominate over negative feelings (Kammann & Flett, 1983). The AFM-2 scales measure Positive Affect (PA), Negative Affect (NA), and Positive-Negative Affect Balance (PA-NA) (Wissing & Van Eeden, 1997). Possible scores on the Affectometer-2 Scale range from 0 to 80. A score of 40 represents the neutral point on the scale with higher PA-NA scores indicating a positive subjective well-being (happiness), and lower PA-NA scores indicating lowered levels of subjective well-being (unhappiness) (Kammann & Flett, 1983). Within the PA and NA scales, a score of above 40 indicates higher levels of positive affect and negative affect, while lower scores indicate lower levels of these variables. Table 3 represents the variables measuring the participants' happiness, providing a global presentation of scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect (PA)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52.54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect (NA)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive-Negative Affect Balance</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20.31</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>29.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants reported a wide range of levels of positive and negative affect. Regarding the Positive Affect Scale, a mean score of 42.54 was obtained out of a total score of 80. The lowest score obtained by participants on the Positive Affect Scale was 24 and the highest score was 78. Results on the Negative Affect Scale indicate that participants obtained scores ranging from one to 65 out of a possible score of 80, with a mean of 20.31. From the mean scores it can be reported that the sample experienced relatively high levels of positive affect and relatively low
levels of negative affect. Participants’ levels of overall happiness, obtained from the Positive-Negative Affect Balance Scale, ranged from a minimum of -32 to a maximum of 77, which indicates that some participants experienced very low levels of global happiness, while others experienced very high levels of happiness. The mean score of 20.31 indicates that on average, the sample reported low levels of happiness.

Various studies have been done at the University of Port Elizabeth using the Affectometer-2 Scale. In a study involving stroke survivors, Van der Walt (2002) reported high levels of positive affect, with a mean score of 56.12 out of a possible score of 80, and a standard deviation of 13.16. Low levels of negative affect were found; the mean score on the Negative Affect Scale was 26.21 out of a possible 80, with a standard deviation of 16.94. The mean score of the Positive-Negative Affect Balance (global happiness) was 29.91, which indicated slightly below neutral (neutral being a score of 40) positive affect (Van der Walt, 2002). In another South African study, Wissing and Van Eeden (1997) investigated the nature of psychological well-being and the manifestation of psychological well-being in different age, gender and cultural groups. Wissing and Van Eeden (1997) reported that the mean score on the Positive Affect Scale was 55.60, the mean score on the Negative Affect Scale was 26.10, and the mean for overall happiness (Positive-Negative Affect Balance) was 29.50. The results of the two studies were clearly similar. Compared with these studies, the current sample had slightly lower mean levels of positive affect, slightly higher mean levels of negative affect and subsequently lower levels of global happiness. Reasons for this are not clear; however, information on the cluster profiles of the sample presented in section 5.4 may yield some insight.

When focusing in more detail on the overall happiness of the current sample, levels of Positive Affect and Negative Affect, as separate components of overall happiness, can be presented. Table 4 below represents the distribution of Positive Affect and Negative Affect levels across the sample. For the purposes of convenience and conciseness of discussion, the variables of Positive Affect and Negative Affect are represented on the same table. However, in this table Positive Affect scores are not compared to Negative Affect scores, thus frequencies and percentages are calculated individually for Positive Affect and Negative Affect.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect (high level: between 41 and 80)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect (neutral: 40)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect (low level: below 39)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect (low level: between 0 and 39)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>65.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect (neutral: 40)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect (high level: between 41 and 80)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4 it can be concluded that, in terms of positive affect, the majority of the sample (71.43%) reported experiencing high levels of positive affect. Fewer participants (28.57%) reported low levels of positive affect. With regards to negative affect, most participants (65.71%) experienced low levels of negative affect, while the remaining 34.29% reported experiencing high levels of negative affect. Zero participants’ scores fell in the neutral category, meaning that no participant in the current sample experienced an equal ratio of positive and negative affect.

The AFM-2 is useful in measuring the general happiness of the individual, but does not identify or elaborate on the main causes of this happiness. However, research has indicated certain causes of happiness. As discussed in Chapter 3, research has indicated that happiness is associated with the following predictable aspects: a positive self-concept, an internal locus of control, extroversion, intimate interpersonal relations, religiosity, the ability to enjoy life’s special moments, and positive working circumstances as well as recreational activities (Myers & Diener, 1995). Some of these aspects have been investigated in the biographical questionnaire, via open and closed-ended questions, and presented earlier in this chapter. Section 5.4 will present possible connections between the sample’s biographical variables and subjective well-being.
5.4 CLUSTER PROFILES

Cluster analysis is a multivariate classification technique that forms groups of subjects based on their similarity across several measures, in such a way that cases within each group are more similar to each other than to members of other groups (Knoff, 1986). By identifying clusters, a more convenient summary of the data may be created, which in turn, may contribute to a better understanding of the findings (Everitt & Dunn, 1991). In keeping with this, the current section will focus on the cluster profiles that emerged from the sample. It is therefore in this section that the second aim of the study will be addressed, namely to identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated (i.e., satisfaction with life and the positive affect and negative affect components of happiness), so as to further explore and describe the subjective well-being of the sample.

For the purpose of exploring and describing the sample under study, a cluster solution of four clusters provided the most logical cut-off point. During the process of considering four clusters as the most logical cut-off point, an attempt was made to provide internal validation in support of four clusters, or in other words, to determine whether the clusters differed significantly from one another across all input variables. In order to determine this, a MANOVA procedure was computed. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the number of cases or participants in each cell or cluster is an important consideration for running a MANOVA. The four cluster solution yielded clusters of between four and 10 cases per cluster. Cluster 2 had the most participants (n=12), followed by Cluster 1 (n=10) and Cluster 3 (n=9), with cluster 4 having the least number of participants (n=4). While these cell sizes are relatively small for statistical analysis, Hair et. al (1995) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) have indicated that the minimum number of cases in each cell must be greater than the number of dependent variables included. There are three dependent variables in the current study, therefore the existing number of four cases meets the minimum requirements for running a MANOVA. While the limitation of small cell sizes was noted, the four cluster solution was deemed appropriate due to the meaningful information that could be obtained from this cluster solution. The MANOVA computed for this cluster solution indicated that the four clusters were significantly different (p<0.05) in terms of the three input variables as a whole, namely Satisfaction with Life, Positive Affect and Negative Affect.
Post-hoc Scheffé tests identified significant differences between clusters in terms of each input variable with certain exceptions. Before these exceptions are explained, Figure 1 will be provided in order to plot the means of the four clusters in such a way that clear differences can be noted. Table 5 complements this figure by indicating the specific means for each cluster in tabular form. It is important to note that all variables were converted into percentages for comparison purposes. For interpreting the categories of SWL, PA and NA, these percentages were converted back into raw means.

![Figure 1: Means of the cluster profiles](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWL%</td>
<td>75.43</td>
<td>43.10</td>
<td>39.37</td>
<td>67.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA%</td>
<td>83.38</td>
<td>69.48</td>
<td>43.33</td>
<td>60.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA%</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>40.94</td>
<td>63.19</td>
<td>51.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Figure 1 and Table 5, there are a number of clear differences between the clusters in terms of satisfaction with life, positive affect, and
negative affect. Regarding satisfaction with life, Clusters 1 and 4, as well as Clusters 2 and 3 were not significantly different. This is understandable as Clusters 1 and 4 had similar scores on the SWLS, as did Clusters two and three. Similarly, regarding positive affect, Clusters 2 and 4 had comparable scores on the PA component of the AFM-2 and therefore did not yield significant differences. Finally, Clusters 2 and 4, as well as Clusters 3 and 4 were not significantly different in terms of negative affect.

Overall it can be seen that Cluster 1 has the highest levels of SWL, PA and lowest levels of NA. Conversely Cluster 2 has the highest levels of NA, and the lowest levels of PA and SWL. Descriptive statistics will now be presented in terms of each cluster. Notable biographical details revealing trends within the clusters will also be reported for each cluster. Following this, a comparison will be made between the clusters in terms of certain biographical trends and levels of subjective well-being.

5.4.1 Cluster 1

Cluster 1 contains 10 participants. Table 6 represents the mean, standard deviation and variance for the satisfaction with life, positive affect and negative affect variables as they relate to this cluster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Percentage Converted to Raw Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWL%</td>
<td>75.43</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>47.53</td>
<td>26.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA%</td>
<td>83.38</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>105.23</td>
<td>66.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA%</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>58.42</td>
<td>11.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the above means are converted back from percentages to raw scores, the raw means indicate that the majority of participants in this cluster reported being satisfied with their lives (26.40), reported high levels of positive affect (66.70) and low levels of negative affect (11.50). Overall it can be deduced that the participants in this cluster experienced high levels of subjective well-being. Integrating biographical information with these results reveals that the majority of cases within
the cluster are aged between 35 and 44 years (90.00%). Most cases in this cluster attended technical college (70.00%), rated their level of job satisfaction as very happy (70.00%), and their health as good (90.00%). In addition, most reported having a sense of responsibility for someone (80.00%), engaging in a hobby or sport (80.00%), and being active in religion (70.00%). Of the participants in this cluster, the majority had initiated the divorce proceedings (80.00%).

The trends within this cluster may give support to research cited in Chapters 2 and 3 that have linked subjective well-being with a variety of variables. A research study cited in Chapter 3 has indicated that after the age of 40 years, subjective well-being levels begin to rise until at least 70 years of age (Horley and Lavery, 1995). As most participants in this cluster were aged around the significant point of 40 years, this could have impacted on their high levels of subjective well-being. Previously cited research has indicated positive relationships between subjective well-being and education (Diener & Lucas, 2000), job satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1993), self-rated health (Diener, 1984), sense of responsibility (Silverman, 1999), leisure activities (Balatsky & Diener, 1993), and religion (Ellison, 1991). These positive relationships could help to explain the high levels of subjective well-being found in this cluster. In addition, research has shown that being the initiator of divorce has positive implications for subjective well-being due to the element of locus of control over the situation (Rands, 1988); this could also apply to the participants in Cluster 1. The findings related to Cluster 2 will now be presented.

5.4.2 Cluster 2

Cluster 2 contains 12 participants. Table 7 represents the mean, standard deviation and variance for the satisfaction with life, positive affect and negative affect variables as they relate to this cluster.

TABLE 7
Descriptive statistics for Cluster 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Percentage Converted to Raw Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWL%</td>
<td>43.10</td>
<td>10.86</td>
<td>117.93</td>
<td>15.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA%</td>
<td>69.48</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>62.91</td>
<td>55.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA%</td>
<td>40.94</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>102.88</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After converting these percentages to raw means, it is evident that the majority of participants in this cluster experienced slight dissatisfaction with their lives (15.09), high levels of positive affect (55.58), and low levels of negative affect (32.75). From this distribution of scores it could be assumed that the level of subjective well-being experienced by Cluster 2 is slightly low. Notable biographical trends within this cluster include that the majority of participants were female (91.67%), reported their health as good (83.33%), felt a sense of responsibility for someone (91.67%), and had initiated the divorce proceedings (75.00%).

A number of these biographical variables could be related to the participants’ higher levels of positive affect as research has shown subjective well-being to be positively related to the variables of self-reported health (Diener, 1984), sense of responsibility (Silverman, 1999), and control related to initiating divorce (Rands, 1988). The fact that the majority of participants in this cluster were female (91.67%) may not have had a significant impact on the levels of subjective well-being recorded as research has shown that on the overall level of subjective well-being women do not differ from men (Lu, 2000). It is interesting to note that while the majority of participants reported experiencing a number of variables that are positively related to subjective well-being, the overall well-being reported by the cluster is slightly low. This suggests that there may be other variables present, such as the participants’ experience of concerns and stressors (see sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2), that mediate the positive effects of the above-mentioned variables. The results of Cluster 3 will be presented and discussed below.
5.4.3 Cluster 3

This cluster consisted of nine participants. The descriptive statistics in regard to Cluster 3 are presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8
Descriptive statistics for Cluster 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Percentage Converted to Raw Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWL%</td>
<td>39.37</td>
<td>10.48</td>
<td>109.75</td>
<td>13.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA%</td>
<td>43.33</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>50.78</td>
<td>34.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA%</td>
<td>63.19</td>
<td>9.82</td>
<td>96.53</td>
<td>50.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The means from the previous table, once converted to raw means, indicate that the majority of participants in this cluster experienced dissatisfaction with their lives (13.78), low levels of positive affect (34.66) and high levels of negative affect (50.55). Overall, the cluster’s level of happiness could be described as being very low. Interestingly, of all the clusters, Cluster 3 has the lowest levels of satisfaction with life and positive affect, and the highest level of negative affect. This is in direct contrast to Cluster 1, which has the highest levels of satisfaction with life and positive affect, and the lowest level of negative affect. Notable biographical trends within Cluster 3 include that the majority of participants in this cluster were female (77.78%), experienced job satisfaction ranging from neutral to slightly happy (66.67%), reported their health as good (66.67%), were not involved in a personal relationship (77.78%), felt responsible for someone (77.78%), and did not engage in a hobby or sport (77.78%).

Combining the biographical trends with literature cited in Chapter 3, leads to the assumption that there are factors that this cluster experiences that are positively related to subjective well-being; however, other variables that are positively related to subjective well-being are absent. For example, subjective well-being is positively linked to self-reported health (Diener, 1984) and a sense of responsibility (Langer & Rodin, 1976). On the other hand the participants’ subjective well-being may be negatively impacted upon by their relatively low level of job satisfaction (Judge &
Watanabe, 1993), lack of personal relationship (Ziqiang & Liping, 2001), and lack of engagement in leisure activities (Balatsky & Diener, 1993). It is therefore possible that a combination of biographical factors, some of which are positively linked and others of which are negatively linked to subjective well-being, may impact on this cluster’s experience of very low overall happiness. A final point of interest with regard to Cluster 3 is that, of the clusters, Cluster 3 reported the lowest average job satisfaction and also the lowest overall happiness. The following section will describe the findings related to Cluster 4.

5.4.4 Cluster 4

This cluster consisted of four participants. It should be noted that due to this small number of participants in Cluster 4, caution needs to be applied when making interpretations regarding the results of this cluster. The means, standards deviations, and variance of this cluster will be demonstrated in Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Percentage Converted to Raw Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWL%</td>
<td>67.14</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>68.03</td>
<td>23.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA%</td>
<td>60.31</td>
<td>10.58</td>
<td>111.85</td>
<td>48.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA%</td>
<td>51.56</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>85.81</td>
<td>41.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After converting the means in Table 9 into raw scores, these raw means for Cluster 4 indicate that the participants in this cluster experienced slight satisfaction with life (23.50), slightly high levels of positive affect (48.25) and neutral levels of negative affect (41.25). Overall, the level of subjective well-being experienced by this cluster could be described as low. Notable biographical trends within the cluster include that the majority of the participants were aged between 35 and 39 years (75.00%), were female (100.00%), had been divorced for a period of two to four years (75.00%), had a university level of education (75.00%), were not involved in a personal relationship (75.00%), felt responsible for someone (100.00%), engaged in
a hobby or sport (75.00%), were involved in religion (75.00%), had the divorce proceedings initiated by their ex-spouse (75.00%), and reported their relationship with their ex-spouse as being poor (75.00%).

Similar to Cluster 3, a review of the literature cited in Chapter 3 leads to the assumption that a number of factors both positively and negatively related to subjective well-being could have impacted on the Cluster 4 participants’ reports of low overall happiness. As mentioned previously, subjective well-being is positively related to the factors of experiencing a sense of responsibility (Langer & Rodin, 1976), and engaging in leisure activities (Balatsky & Diener, 1993) and religion (Ellison, 1991). A small but significant positive relationship has also been found between subjective well-being and level of education (Diener, et al., 1993). On the other hand subjective well-being could be negatively influenced by not experiencing a sense of control in terms of initiating divorce proceedings (Rands, 1988), as well as a lack of involvement in a personal relationship (Ziqiang & Liping, 2001). Research cites the age of 40 years as a turning point in subjective well-being, after which overall happiness tends to improve (Horley & Lavery, 1995). It is possible that this cluster, aged on average between 35 and 39 years, may find themselves slightly before this turning point which may link to their experience of low subjective well-being levels. Research cited in Chapter 2 also indicates that when the relationship with one’s ex-spouse is poor, the resultant conflict could make the transition into a single-parent family more difficult (Emery, 1994). In addition, the divorce transition is reported to take anywhere between two and five years (Schwartz and Kaslow, 1997), and the adjustment to single parenthood could take between one and two years (Barry, cited by Olson & Haynes, 1993). This suggests that the period of divorce, and therefore single parenthood, reported by the participants may impact either positively or negatively on their levels of happiness, depending where they are in this transition. While all participants in this cluster were female, this variable may not have significantly influenced their levels of subjective well-being as research has shown that on the overall level of subjective well-being, women do not differ from men (Lu, 2000). The clusters will be compared in an integrative manner in the following section.
5.4.5 Comparison between Clusters

As has been mentioned earlier, many of the clusters are significantly different in terms of satisfaction with life, positive affect, negative affect, and therefore overall subjective well-being. From a discussion of the biographical trends within the clusters, it can be noted that the clusters show marked differences in terms of three variables, namely job satisfaction, contributor to well-being, and participation in leisure activities. These differences will be discussed below. It is important to note that all figures presented in the following tables are percentages. Also, as with all the tables in this chapter, all figures have been rounded off to two decimal places, and total percentages have been rounded off to 100.00 where necessary.

5.4.5.1 Clusters’ Job Satisfaction

Table 10 represents the levels of satisfaction of each cluster in such a way that clear differences can be seen between these clusters in terms of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been linked to positive subjective well-being (Judge & Watanabe, 1993).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unhappy</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly unhappy</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither unhappy nor happy</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly happy</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very happy</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 indicates that the clear majority (70%) of the participants in Cluster 1 reported being very happy with their jobs. The levels of job satisfaction for Cluster 2 ranged from neither unhappy nor happy to very happy with higher percentages falling in the neither happy nor happy category (33.33%) and the very happy
category (41.67%). Regarding Cluster 3, the majority of the participants reported either being slightly happy (33.33%) or neither unhappy nor happy (33.33%) with their jobs. The job satisfaction level of Cluster 4 ranged from slightly happy to very happy. From these levels of job satisfaction it can be concluded that on average, Cluster 1 had the highest level of job satisfaction and conversely Cluster 3 had the lowest levels of job satisfaction. These results can be related to the clusters’ levels of subjective well-being. Cluster 1 experienced the highest overall subjective well-being; conversely, Cluster 3 experienced the lowest overall subjective well-being. These results may give some support to the literature cited in Chapter 3 that links job satisfaction to positive subjective well-being (Judge & Watanabe, 1993). In the following section a comparison is made between the clusters in terms of whether or not they experienced a contributor to their well-being.

5.4.5.2 Presence of Contributor to Clusters’ Well-being

Table 11 reflects the clusters’ average response to whether or not there was someone in their lives with whom they shared a personal relationship and who contributed to their sense of well-being. A link has been found between positive subjective well-being and the experience of close relationships and interpersonal support (Ziqiang & Liping, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributor to Well-being</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>66.66</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of participants in Cluster 1 (60%) indicated that they did have someone who contributed to their sense of well-being. Regarding Cluster 2, half the participants reported having a contributor to their well-being and half reported that they did not have such a person. The majority of participants in Cluster 3 (66.66%) reported not having someone who contributed to their well-being, as did the majority
of participants in Cluster 4 (75%). Again, these findings can be related to the clusters’ levels of subjective well-being. Cluster 1 had the highest levels of subjective well-being. Conversely, Cluster 3 experienced the lowest overall subjective well-being. Cluster 4 experienced overall low subjective well-being, although higher than that experienced by Cluster 3. These results provide tentative support for literature cited in Chapter 3 that linked the experience of close relationships and interpersonal support to positive subjective well-being, and conversely linked a lack of supportive relationships to negative subjective well-being (Ziqiang & Liping, 2001). The differences between clusters with regard to participation in leisure activities will be outlined below.

5.4.5.3 Clusters’ Participation in Leisure Activities

The responses of the participants within each cluster regarding participation in leisure activities, such as hobbies or sports, are represented in Table 12. A positive link has been found between participation in leisure activities and subjective well-being (Balatsky & Diener, 1993).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in Hobbies or Sports</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.00</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>58.33</td>
<td>77.78</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reflects that the majority of participants in Cluster 1 (80.00%) as well as Cluster 4 (75%) reported participating in a hobby or sport. The majority of participants in Cluster 2 (58.33%) and more notably in Cluster 3 (77.78%), reported that they did not participate in a hobby or sport. Interestingly, Cluster 1, the cluster with the greatest majority that participated in leisure activities, had the highest levels of subjective well-being. On the other hand, Cluster 3, the cluster with the greatest majority that did not participate in leisure activities, had the lowest level of subjective well-being. The majority of participants in Cluster 2 and Cluster 4 reported participating in leisure activities. The differences in participation rates across clusters suggest a potential link between leisure activities and subjective well-being.

The findings from this study highlight the importance of considering the role of leisure activities in subjective well-being. Further research could explore the mechanisms through which participation in leisure activities contributes to subjective well-being, providing a deeper understanding of the factors that influence individual well-being.
well-being. Similarly, Cluster 2, which also had on average more participants that were not involved in leisure activities, had slightly low overall subjective well-being scores. An exception to this pattern is Cluster 4, wherein the majority of participants did participate in leisure activities but had lower levels of subjective well-being. From these results it could be concluded that some support may be given to the trends that emerge in literature cited in Chapter 3 that suggests a positive link between participation in leisure activities that individuals enjoy and positive subjective well-being (Balatsky & Diener, 1993).

This section provided information related to the clusters obtained from the research. Descriptive statistics were presented for the clusters. Each cluster was discussed individually, after which a comparison was made between the clusters in terms of relevant variables. Biographical trends were noted and discussed in terms of appropriate literature. It is important to note that while trends have been identified, no conclusive relationships can be stated due to the small sample size and the correspondingly small cell sizes of the clusters. The qualitative information from the open-ended questions will be presented below.

5.5 DESCRIPTION OF QUALITATIVE INFORMATION

In the section below, the qualitative information obtained through the open-ended questions on the biographical questionnaire will be discussed. The questions were designed to elicit additional information that could relate to the participants’ subjective well-being. This was done in order to enrich the quantitative data of this study. The questions were related to both the participants’ concerns and challenges in life, as well as to the positive aspects of their life style.

5.5.1 Nature of Sample’s Concerns

This question was posed to elicit information regarding the types of things that the sample worried about consistently. The participants reported concerns regarding their children, family and friends, finances, work, ex-spouses and themselves. Table 13 reflects examples of the issues, events or people that the participants frequently worried about. It is important to note that as participants were able to report more than one concern, percentages were based on the total number of concerns reported as opposed to the total number of participants in the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Concerns</th>
<th>Examples of Concerns Reported</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Children’s well-being | “My two children, as they mean everything to me”  
“The psychological well-being of my children”  
“Not having enough quality time with the children” | 11 | 17.74 |
| Children’s future | “My child, who has a learning problem, coping in the future”  
“The future of my child” | 6 | 9.68 |
| Children’s education | “The education of my children”  
“My children’s schooling”  
“Schooling my children” | 3 | 4.84 |
| Finances | “Not being able to afford things for the children”  
“Making ends meet”  
“My financial situation” | 16 | 25.80 |
| Relationships | “I get no financial or emotional support from my ex-husband”  
“My ex-wife and her family are always negative about me”  
“My ex-wife” | 3 | 4.84 |
| Relationship with others | “My relationship with other people”  
“Recent relationship break-up”  
“My girlfriend” | 3 | 4.76 |
| Family | “My mother who is in an old age home and is not well”  
“My sister and her family”  
“My brother” | 6 | 9.68 |
As seen in Table 13, the individual concerns reported by the participants were divided into the following broader categories: children (including education and future), finances, relationships (including ex-spouse, others, family and friends), job, future, and political situation. From Table 13 it can be concluded that of all the worries reported, the most frequently reported concerns related to their children (32.26%). Of this concern, 17.74% of the worry related to the well-being of their children, 9.68% to their children’s future, and the remaining 4.84% to their children’s education. Finances, constituting 25.80% of the participants’ total concern, also rated relatively highly as a worry for the sample. Relationships totalled 20.63% of the reported concern of the sample, consisting predominantly of worry related to family (9.68%) and to the participants’ ex-spouses (4.84%). Concern regarding the participants’ jobs (9.68%), and future (9.68%) was also mentioned. One participant reported a concern regarding the political situation. In this section worries, understood as issues towards which participants devoted mental energy, were presented. The following section will present the main challenges and stressors facing the participants, which constitute issues demanding time, as well as physical and emotional energy from the participants.

### 5.5.2 Challenges and Stressors

One of the questions inquired about the main challenges and stressors experienced by the individuals. Table 14 below reflects examples of the things, events or people that the participants frequently found challenging or stressful. Individual stressors are divided into broader categories to facilitate discussion. It is
important to note that as participants were able to report more than one challenge or stressor, percentages were based on the total number of challenges or stressors reported as opposed to the total number of participants in the study.

### TABLE 14

#### Challenges and Stressors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Stressor</th>
<th>Examples of Stressors Reported</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising children alone</td>
<td>“Being a father and a mother to my child”</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Running everything on my own with no back-up support”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Always being the responsible one, the good, the bad, the ugly all in one all the time”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s education</td>
<td>“Providing for my child’s education”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would like to see my child get a good education”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s behaviour</td>
<td>“Dealing with my daughter’s emotions”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Disciplining the children”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The behaviour of my children”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stress</td>
<td>“To not feel defeated”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To keep focusing on the positive in life and to be happy”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To keep positiveness”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling lonely</td>
<td>“Being unselfish towards children leads to a lot of loneliness”</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not being able to find a suitable partner since the divorce”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Being alone”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others view</td>
<td>“Being a single female other women tend to be wary of your presence and men seem to think you are easy”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stress</td>
<td>“Meeting my financial demands on a monthly basis”</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Surviving financially”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Having to take on private work at home to make ends meet”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-spouse</td>
<td>I must do everything with no support from my ex-husband”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-supportive ex-spouse</td>
<td>“Getting maintenance for my son living with me”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My ex-husband is not supportive”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-spouse’s relationship with children</td>
<td>“My ex-husband not keeping promises to his daughter”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My daughter does not spend enough time with her father, and she is very attached to him”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My children’s relationship with their father”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time</td>
<td>“Coping with having almost no time to myself”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Most of my time is spent working and looking after the children”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Having time for hobbies”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>“Obtaining enough work”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Working hard”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing weight</td>
<td>“Losing weight”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was the case with the sample’s concerns described in section 5.6.1, children also rated as the highest challenge facing the sample, making up a total of
29.51% of the total stress reported by the participants. Of the stress related to the participants’ children, most of the stress reported (19.67%) focused on raising the children alone. Other reported stress relating to children consisted of the children’s behaviour (6.56%) and the children’s education (3.28%). Financial stress and emotional status, both constituting 22.95% of the total stress reported, were also frequently reported by the participants as challenging. Interestingly, one participant reported that the way in which she was viewed by others impacted on her emotional status. The participants rated their ex-spouses, which included the lack of support from their ex-spouses and their ex-spouses’ relationship with their children, as constituting 13.12% of their total stress. Other stressors that were reported include having limited time (6.56%), work challenges (3.28%), and losing weight (1.64%).

The participants’ listing of stressors reflects the general challenges facing divorced and single parents as was discussed in Chapter 2. Regarding raising children alone, literature has reflected that single parents face difficulties in providing quality childcare while having to work to earn an income to support the single-parent family (Renkl, 2001). Financial problems are also common after a divorce. Research has indicated that overall, as a group, women’s income drops about 30% following a divorce (Holden & Smock, 1991). The income of the single parent households headed by women tends to decrease due to reduced earning power, job discrimination resulting in under- or unemployment, and the refusal of spouses to make court-ordered spousal or child support payments (Jung, 1996).

Emotional status was referred to by some of the participants who reflected upon their experiences of emotional stress and loneliness. Research findings have indicated that considerable depression has been found among divorced adults, particularly among those who remain more attached to their previous spouse (Kitson, 1992). Literature links loneliness to a lack of social support following divorce (Schwartz and Kaslow, 1997). It is interesting that the participants rated relationships relatively highly as a source of worry in section 5.5.1. One of the participants highlighted how she was viewed by others. Literature has shown that the negative stereotypes regarding single parents, including those of being seen as a “threat” or as “easy” as reflected by a participant, affect single parents in various aspects of their lives, for example, in their self-esteem, their attitude toward their family and their social identity (Olson & Haynes, 1993).
Some participants (a total of 13.12%) also rated their ex-spouse as a considerable source of stress. This confirms the literature discussed in Chapter 2 which claimed that conflict may be apparent in most divorce cases (Emery, 1994). Indeed, it has been suggested that a major task for divorcing couples is the reduction of conflict (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). In contrast to the above, the positive aspects of the participants’ life style will be discussed.

### 5.5.3 Positive Aspects of Sample’s Life Style

A question was posed to obtain information about the most positive aspects of the participants’ life style. It was important, in keeping with the positive psychology orientation of the research, that the participants were provided with an opportunity to describe what led to their current happiness. The results of their responses are presented in Table 15. Individually reported positive aspects are divided into broader categories to facilitate discussion. Similar to the previous two tables, it is important to note that as participants were able to report more than one positive aspect, percentages were based on the total number of positive aspects reported as opposed to the total number of participants in the study.

**TABLE 15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Positive aspect</th>
<th>Examples of Positive Aspects Reported</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence and freedom</td>
<td>“My freedom and the right to go where I want to go”</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not having to clean up after another adult and having independence”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’m in charge of my own life”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony Less fighting</td>
<td>“No fighting or abuse”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My child and I live in perfect harmony”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not having to hear how terrible I am every day”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling of peace</td>
<td>Emotional status</td>
<td>Single life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have peace”</td>
<td>“The happiness that comes with making my own, correct choice of type of life I wish to lead”</td>
<td>“Being single”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The peace in my life”</td>
<td>“Me and my children are happy”</td>
<td>“Exploring the single life”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Peace of mind”</td>
<td>“Life is less stressful and easier”</td>
<td>“I party hard and have fun, I enjoy the new me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence and freedom</td>
<td>reported most frequently as a positive aspect of being a divorced, single parent; this category contributed 42.59% of all the positive aspects reported. Harmony, which included less fighting and a feeling of peace,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contributed 18.52% to the total of positive aspects reported. An improved emotional status, or a general increase in happiness, was rated as an important positive aspect of the participants’ life style. Of the total positive aspects of the participants’ life style, exploring the single life contributed 9.26%. Following this, in order of frequency, was the participants’ relationship with their children (7.41%), achievements since the divorce (5.56%) and having time to oneself (1.85%) as positive aspects. This might seem contradictory since one of the current stressors listed in section 5.2.13.4 was a lack of time. This participant’s response referred to the time when her son visits his father, and therefore affords his mother time alone. Another participant reported a decrease in expenses in his life as a positive; this can be understood in terms of no longer having a partner to support due to a sole custody situation.

The positive aspects described by the participants confirm much of the literature research findings provided in Chapter 2. Literature states that some individuals report improvements in autonomy, overall happiness, social involvement, and career development following a divorce (Acock & Demo, 1994; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). In addition it has been found that both males and females reported themselves to be significantly more satisfied with life after separation (Rands, 1988). Indeed the current sample reflected freedom and independence, increases in happiness (in the emotional status category), enjoyment of the single life, and career developments (in the achievements category) as important positive aspects of their current life style.

In the above sub-sections, individual reports of the participants’ concerns, challenges and positive aspects of their life style were presented. This provided greater insight into the sample’s experience of subjective well-being.

5.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the results of the study with regards to the two primary aims were discussed. This involved the presentation and discussion of findings related to the results of the measures (i.e., SWLS, AFM-2). This chapter included a discussion of the cluster profiles that were obtained from the participants’ responses to the measures, and the biographical trends that emerged within these clusters. A detailed sample description has also been provided, along with personal reports of concerns, challenges and positive aspects of the single-parent life style; these were included to give a more personalised understanding of the participants’ subjective well-being.
Where possible the results were linked to previous studies as well as to literature cited in earlier chapters. The following chapter will outline the conclusions based on the results of the study, the limitations of the study, and the recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION
The results of the current study were presented and discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The conclusions will be based on these findings. This chapter provides a summary of the main findings along with the limitations and value of the research. In addition, recommendations for future research will be provided.

6.2 AIMS OF STUDY REVISITED
In general this study aimed to explore and describe the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents. There were two specific aims in this regard:
1. To explore and describe the subjective well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and happiness) of divorced, single custodial parents.
2. To identify potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated (i.e., satisfaction with life and the positive affect and negative affect components of happiness), so as to further explore and describe the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents.

The conclusions drawn from the current study are subsequently addressed in terms of the above aims.

6.2.1 Description of Subjective Well-being of Sample
The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 emphasised the role that several variables, such as gender, job satisfaction and leisure activities, may play in the experience of subjective well-being. While the sample was described in terms of these variables, no statistically significant inferences could be drawn from the biographical data due to the small cell sizes. Nonetheless, a comprehensive description of the participants was provided. The questionnaires used to measure the two main components of subjective well-being produced quantitative information that allowed for speculation.

As mentioned above, the first aim was to explore and describe the subjective well-being of the sample. As subjective well-being is seen to consist of two main components, namely satisfaction with life and general happiness, this first aim had
two parts. The first part of the aim was to explore and describe the sample’s level of satisfaction with life. The results of the SWLS indicated that the majority of participants reported being slightly dissatisfied with their lives. When comparing levels of satisfaction and levels of dissatisfaction with life, more participants reported varying degrees of dissatisfaction with life compared to satisfaction with life. It is tentatively suggested that this lower level of satisfaction with life may be because the sample had experienced divorce and the transition into a single parent family, both of which may be highly stressful and could have impacted on the satisfaction with life of the sample. It is also important to note that as there are no established norm scores for the SWLS regarding a South African divorced custodial parent population, it is difficult to determine whether or not the mean score for this sample is a relevant finding that would apply to all the single, divorced, custodial parents in South Africa.

The second part of the first aim involved the exploration and description of the general happiness of the sample. This part of the aim included an investigation of the participants’ levels of positive affect, negative affect, and balance of positive and negative affect or general happiness. The results of the AFM-2 indicated that the participants generally had high levels of positive affect, and low levels of negative affect. That being said, the participants’ overall levels of happiness were still relatively low. Again, as there are no established norm scores for the AFM-2 regarding South African divorced, single custodial parents, it is difficult to determine the significance of the mean score of this sample for the larger population. It can be tentatively suggested that a combination of the concerns and challenges reported by the participants, such as children, finances and emotional stress (see section 6.2.3), may have impacted on their overall happiness. Thus it could be that this sample experienced high levels of stress within their divorced, single-parent life style that could result in their overall levels of happiness being low.

6.2.2 Description of Patterns of Subjective Well-being

The second aim was to explore and describe potential patterns among the aspects of subjective well-being investigated (i.e., satisfaction with life and the positive affect and negative affect components of happiness). It should be noted that causal relationships could not be established in terms of the current research due to its exploratory descriptive nature. The results indicated four clusters which were significantly different from each other on all input variables. The first cluster
experienced high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and high levels of overall happiness. The second cluster experienced predominantly slight dissatisfaction with their lives, high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and slightly low overall happiness. The third cluster mostly reported dissatisfaction with their lives, low levels of positive affect, high levels of negative affect, and very low overall happiness. The fourth cluster experienced predominantly slight satisfaction with life, slightly high levels of positive affect, neutral levels of negative affect, and low levels of overall happiness.

When considering the biographical trends in Cluster 1, which had the highest overall happiness, it can be seen that many of these trends are related to positive subjective well-being. These trends include the following: the majority of the participants in this cluster were aged between 35 and 44 years, they had attended technical college, rated their level of job satisfaction as very happy and their health as good, reported having a sense of responsibility for someone, engaged in a hobby or sport, were active in religion, and had initiated the divorce proceedings. Conversely when considering Cluster 3, which has the lowest subjective well-being, some of the trends included the following: the majority of participants experienced job satisfaction ranging from neutral to slightly happy, they were not involved in a personal relationship, and did not engage in a hobby or sport. The results from Clusters 1 and 3 give some support to the research cited in Chapters 2 and 3 which links the experience of subjective well-being to age, education, job satisfaction, self-reported health, sense of responsibility, involvement in a personal relationship, and engagement in leisure activities and religion.

The overall subjective well-being experienced by Cluster 2 was slightly low, with notable biographical trends being the following: the majority of participants were female, they reported their health as good, felt a sense of responsibility for someone, and they had initiated the divorce proceedings. According to literature cited in Chapters 2 and 3, the majority of these trends are positively related to subjective well-being; however it is possible that other variables, such as the concerns and stressors associated with the divorced, single-parent life style, may have mediated the positive effects of these biographical trends.

Cluster 4, which had low overall subjective well-being, demonstrated the following biographical trends: the majority of participants were aged between 35 and 39 years, were female, had been divorced for a period of two to four years, had a
university level of education, were not involved in a personal relationship, felt responsible for someone, engaged in a hobby or sport, were involved in religion, had the divorce proceedings initiated by their ex-spouse and reported their relationship with their ex-spouse as being poor. These biographical trends include variables cited in Chapters 2 and 3 that have been positively linked to subjective well-being, such as level of education, sense of responsibility, and engagement in leisure activities and religion. However, these trends also include variables that have been shown to negatively impact upon subjective well-being, such as not experiencing a sense of control in terms of initiating divorce proceedings, and the experience of a poor relationship with their ex-spouse. It is therefore possible that a number of factors, both positively and negatively related to subjective well-being, could have impacted on the Cluster 4 participants’ reports of low overall happiness. It should also be noted that Cluster 4 contained the least number of participants (n=4), thus caution needs to be applied when making interpretations regarding the results of this cluster.

When comparing the clusters, three main variables that were markedly different across the clusters were job satisfaction, contributor to well-being, and participation in leisure activities. It appeared that clusters containing participants who were satisfied with their jobs, who were involved in a personal relationship and who participated in leisure activities, all experienced higher levels of subjective well-being. These results give some support to the literature cited in Chapter 3 that relates the variables of job satisfaction, presence of contributor to well-being, and participation in leisure activities to positive subjective well-being.

6.2.3 Qualitative Information

While the provision of qualitative information was not strictly an aim of the research, it was deemed valuable in order to understand what is important and unique to each participant. The qualitative information therefore contributed to a more detailed understanding of the samples’ subjective well-being by providing additional data in the own words of the participants. This contributes to making the research more idiographic in nature, complemented by the more response restricted, quantitative nature of the standardised measures.

Individual reports were obtained from the participants regarding their worries, challenges, and the positive aspects of their life style. It seems that the majority of the sample was most worried about their children, finances and relationships. The
majority of the participants were most challenged by their children, by financial and emotional stress, and to a lesser extent by their ex-spouses. The positive aspects of the participants’ lives included their independence and freedom as well as the harmony in their lives. These findings support much of the literature cited in Chapter 2 regarding the challenges and positive aspects experienced by divorced single parents.

6.3 VALUE OF CURRENT RESEARCH

This research study is rooted in the positive psychology framework. As previously stated, this is a growing field in psychology and is in need of massive research. For practitioners and researchers in the field of psychology, the value of positive psychology relates to the therapeutic situation, where much of the therapeutic work is done by amplifying strengths rather than by repairing weaknesses. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the basic understanding and promotion of some factors that allow individuals, in this case divorced, single custodial parents, to live more happily.

The present study gathered information regarding the life satisfaction and general happiness of the participants. By providing the participants with feedback on the research findings as well as having the researcher offer a workshop that would include guidelines for improving one’s subjective well-being, the participants’ awareness of how they could live happier lives would be facilitated. The workshop would also include a discussion of the issues that emerged from the clusters and the biographical trends that were related to either high or low subjective well-being. This information would also benefit other single parents, and therefore the workshops could be offered on a broader scale to meet community needs.

In addition, this study contributes to a stronger scientific basis, which subsequently could provide clear recommendations for healthcare workers regarding ways to increase life satisfaction and happiness among divorced, single custodial parents. This could be accomplished by sharing the research findings with organisations that deal with family counselling, such as FAMSA, in order to provide counsellors with a description of the challenges as well as the positive aspects of the single-parent life style. This information could then help counsellors to give direction to single parents to improve their overall levels of happiness.
The value of the research lies in that information was gained on a sample of divorced, single custodial parents within a South African context. Little South African research has been conducted on a sample of this nature in spite of the ever-increasing divorce rate in this country. In addition to this, little research has focused on this lifestyle from a positive perspective. Indeed, to date, no known research studies that investigate these variables simultaneously have been conducted within South Africa, and more specifically in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. While there is clear value in this research study, there are also a number of limitations that warrant discussion.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT RESEARCH

There are various limitations to this research study. The limitations refer mainly to the methodology used, the sample size, and the measures used. One of the methodological limitations of this research involves the use of a non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling. This sampling technique implies that the sample was not randomly selected and thus the sample may not be representative of the population. In addition, the voluntary nature of the sampling procedure means that individuals with more motivation to take part in the study were included. This motivation could be positive; for example, one participant voiced that it was important that single parents be viewed more positively or at least more realistically. The motivation for participation could however, also be negative; for example, individuals with a more negative frame of mind could have volunteered in order to gain sympathy. The participants’ motivation for volunteering may thus have impacted upon the findings. Due to the sampling technique utilised in the study, the results obtained cannot be generalised to the larger population of divorced, single custodial parents.

The small size of the sample is a further factor preventing the results from being generalised. The sample size also restricted certain statistical analysis. For example, an important consideration for running a MANOVA is the number of cases or participants in each cell or cluster. While the number of cases per cell met the minimum requirement set some statisticians, this number would nevertheless be seen as too small by other researchers. The small cell sizes of the clusters did not allow for significant relationships to be established between the biographical information and the SWLS and AFM-2 scores. The researcher was thus limited to
discussing trends within the clusters with regards to biographical information. A related limitation was the unequal number of males and females in the sample, meaning that significant conclusions could not be made with regard to possible differences in the experience of subjective well-being between the genders. In addition, while many inclusion criteria were specified, there were nevertheless a number of differences between participants, as was evident in the biographical information collected in the study. A larger sample size with larger cell sizes as well as a more homogenous sample with correspondingly less independent variables, would have led to more conclusive results.

Regarding the measures used, a limitation relates to the language in which the measures were administered. The biographical questionnaire, SWLS and AFM-2 were provided in English. The language medium used in the administration of the measures implied that participants were required to read and write in English as a first or second language. This was not found to be a problem for the participants; however the use of predominantly English measures can be seen as a limiting factor, as it excludes participants who are not fluent in English on a first or second language basis. A further limitation of the Affectometer-2 specifically, is that this questionnaire is not as recently researched and as regularly utilised as the SWLS. Little international or national research studies could be found where the AFM-2 was used. This is a limitation as few opportunities therefore exist for comparisons to be made between the findings of the current study and other studies using the AFM-2, and there is concurrently a lack of normative data.

Another limitation relating to the measures used in the study refers to the biographical questionnaire. The literature search performed before the study was conducted indicated that various variables may impact on subjective well-being. With the compilation of the biographical questionnaire, an attempt was made to include as many of these relevant variables as possible, with the result that the questionnaire may have included too many variables. The small cell sizes made it impossible to make correlational inferences regarding independent variables. In addition, no pilot study had been done to research the appropriateness of the questions chosen for a South African sample, with the result that inferences based on the biographical questionnaire may not be statistically significant. Therefore, as mentioned previously, the researcher was limited to discussing trends as opposed to issues of statistical significance. The following section will provide recommendations for future research.
6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The recommendations in this section are provided after considering the limitations of the current research, as indicated above. It is recommended that the current study be replicated with a larger, more homogenous sample. This would result in the sample under study being more representative of the larger population of divorced, single custodial parents. In keeping with this suggestion, it is recommended that the sampling technique used be randomised sampling in order to maximise the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, a replication of this study, using the AFM-2 as a measure would be beneficial in expanding its local scientific foundation of knowledge. A replication of this study would also add to the research available on the combined variables of subjective well-being and a divorced, custodial parent sample. This would be helpful as most research available on these topics is international in nature and there is a great need for South African research in these areas.

There are specific ideas for future research in terms of the combined variables of subjective well-being and a divorced, custodial parent sample. One of the findings of the current study is that different clusters of divorced, single custodial parents present with different levels of subjective well-being. This might serve as an indication for more specific future research that would identify more detailed patterns of subjective well-being in divorced, single custodial parents. In performing this type of research, it is recommended that the biographical questionnaire be researched in terms of its applicability to a very diverse South African sample. A more reliable and valid biographical questionnaire could also be helpful in making statistical inferences. Future research with larger samples could focus on investigating possible differences between men and women in terms of biographical information as well as subjective well-being. Longitudinal research would be beneficial in order to investigate changes in subjective well-being with regards to age as well as adaptation to the role of single parent. This would also be useful in investigating changes in subjective well-being for divorced, single parents over time.

A further recommendation is that future research on the subjective well-being of divorced, single custodial parents incorporate more qualitative information. In the current study, some personal responses were obtained from participants. It is recommended that future research take this further by including semi-structured, in-depth interviews or case studies to enrich the data by offering a more detailed
account of the experience of individuals who are divorced, single custodial parents. This more in-depth understanding of this population could be beneficial in terms of therapeutic interventions.

As discussed previously in terms of the value of the research, the findings of this study could be used by healthcare workers to gain an understanding of the challenges as well as the positive aspects of the single-parent lifestyle in order to increase life satisfaction and happiness among divorced, single custodial parents. It is therefore recommended that the research findings be shared with organisations that deal with family counselling, such as FAMSA.

Finally, it is recommended that the participants receive feedback on the results of the study. Information should also be provided on how they could utilise these findings to improve their levels of subjective well-being. Assisting participants in achieving higher levels of subjective well-being could result in improved coping with the challenges facing them and thereby lead to more successful completion of the tasks demanded of divorced, single custodial parents.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This study attempted to explore and describe the subjective well-being of a sample of divorced, single custodial parents. It also aimed to identify patterns or clusters within the constructs of subjective well-being and to provide biographical trends that emerged from these clusters. Although generalisability of the results is a limitation, the value of the research has been demonstrated. The results of the study provide valuable information regarding the sample under study. These results also provide guidance for future research in the area of positive psychology with the population of divorced, custodial single parents. It is recommended that future research utilises larger, more homogenous samples and employs experimental designs, thereby enabling the generalisability of the results and the establishment of causal relationships between variables.

The process of divorce and the transition to single parenthood generally differs from individual to individual. However, certain commonalities can be found in terms of shared concerns, challenges and positive aspects of the lifestyle, as well as common variables that relate to positive subjective well-being in general. From the current study, many valuable insights have been gained, all of which could be helpful
in terms of the provision of psycho-education programmes and therapeutic interventions with divorced, single custodial parents.
REFERENCE LIST


Professional liaison with social worker on custodianship (2004).


APPENDIX A:
LETTER OF APPLICATION FOR PRESS RELEASE
Dear Ms

I am currently undertaking my Masters degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Port Elizabeth. As part of my course work I am required to complete a research treatise. The title of my treatise is: “The Subjective Well-being of Divorced Single Custodial Parents”.

As the divorce rate consistently rises, the occurrence of single parent families are becoming increasingly prevalent. The formation of a single parent family is accompanied by the awarding of custody of the children according to the custody agreement. Previously, legal assumption favoured the mother, with the father only being granted custody if the mother was proved unfit. Most jurisdictions now determine custody on the basis of the best interest of the child, as opposed to the sex of the parent. The marked increase in single custodial parents results in this population being an important focus for research. However, little research has focused on the positive aspects of single custodial parents, such as subjective well-being. I have thus chosen to focus my research on divorced single custodial parents.

It would be of immense help to me if you could assist me in obtaining a sample of participants by requesting a press release under the auspices of the Psychology of Department at UPE. If possible I would like the press release to be featured in The Herald (in the classified section and/or in the Le Femme), The Algoa Sun and/or The Apple Express. The inclusion requirements for the participants are:

- Single parents
- 25 – 45 years of age
- Have been divorced for a period of 2 years to 10 years
- Have sole custody
- In full-time employment
- English speaking

The identity of those who choose to partake in this research will be protected.
Participants’ names will not appear in my treatise. Information disclosed by participants will be treated confidentially. Participation in this research project is voluntary and there will be no financial reward for participating. Feedback will be provided to individuals who so request.

The questionnaires that form part of my research will be administered to the participants at an agreed upon venue. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete all the questionnaires.

The contact person is myself, Jaci Henry, and the contact number is 504 2330. Your assistance in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Jaci Henry
(Researcher)

Ms Lynn Markman
(Supervisor)

Ms Veonna Goliath
(Co-supervisor)

Prof D.M. Luiz
(Head of Department)
APPENDIX B:
COVERING LETTER
Dear participant

As part of my course work for the Masters degree in Counselling Psychology, I am required to complete a research treatise. The title of my treatise is: “The Subjective Well-being of Divorced Single Custodial Parents”. The aim of the research is to investigate your own, and others’ satisfaction with life and general happiness.

If you decide to participate in this research you will receive an envelope with a number on it. This number will appear on each questionnaire and will enable the researcher to keep track of the questionnaires to ensure that all your information remains together. In the envelope will be a consent form, biographical questionnaire, and two other questionnaires pertaining to your satisfaction with life and general happiness. The researcher will provide instructions for completing the questionnaires.

You will be required to complete and sign a consent form. You will be required to provide your surname and initials. If you so wish, general feedback will gladly be provided by the researcher. Please indicate if you would like to receive general feedback by completing the appropriate section on the biographical questionnaire.

All responses to the questionnaires will be regarded as confidential. For this reason you are requested to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete all the questionnaires. Once you have completed the biographical questionnaire, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Affectometer-2 Scale, you are requested to place these questionnaires in the envelope and hand it back to the researcher.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.
Kind regards

Jaci Henry          Ms Lynn Markman
(Researcher)         (Supervisor)

Ms Veonna Goliath   Prof D.M. Luiz
(Co-supervisor)     (Head of Department)
INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:
The Subjective Well-being of Divorced Single Custodial Parents

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jaci Henry
CONTACT TELEPHONE NO.: 504 2330

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

I, THE UNDERSIGNED,……………………………………………..(name)
the research participant of
…………………………………………………………………………..
………………………………………………………………………….(address).

A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:

1. I was invited to participate in the abovementioned research project which is being undertaken by Jaci Henry of the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Port Elizabeth.

2. The following aspects have been explained to me:
   2.1 Aim: The investigators are studying: The subjective well-being of divorced single custodial parents.
   2.2 The study forms part of the course requirements for Jaci Henry’s Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology. The information will be used to add to the knowledge and understanding of subjective well-being and single parents.

2.3 Procedures: I understand that I will be required to fill in a biographical questionnaire, consent form and two questionnaires. This will take place in a group context.

2.4 Risks: No risks are involved in the procedure.

2.5 Possible benefits: As a result of my participation in this study I will receive a report describing the main findings of the research study. I may also attend a workshop that will be offered by Jaci Henry at the completion of the research treatise.
2.6 Confidentiality: My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators.

2.7 Access to findings: Any new information / or benefit that develop during the course of the study will be shared with me.

2.8 Voluntary participation / refusal / discontinuation: My participation is voluntary. My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect my present or future medical care/ employment / lifestyle.

3. The information above was explained to me by Jaci Henry in Afrikaans/ English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.

4. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalization.

5. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to myself.

B. I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVEMENTIONED PROJECT.

Signed / confirmed at …………………….. on …………………………… 20…

(place) (date)

…………………………………….. …………………………
Signature Signature of witness
**STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR:**

I, Jaci Henry, declare that

- I have explained the information given in this document to ........................................
- he/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;
- this conversation was conducted in Afrikaans/English and no translator was used.

Signed at .................................................. on .................................... 20......

(place) (date)

.............................................................. ..............................................
Signature of investigator                   Signature of witness

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PARTICIPANT:**

Dear participant,

Thank you for your participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study,
- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or
- you require any further information with regard to the study,
  kindly contact Jaci Henry at telephone number 504 2330.
APPENDIX D:
BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE
Biographical Questionnaire

Please complete the following by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block or by filling in the blank spaces provided. You are encouraged to answer honestly; your responses will be kept confidential.

Personal Details

1. Age: ____________________________________________________________

2. Home language:

   English  Afrikaans  Xhosa  Other

   If other, please specify: ______________________________________________

3. Period of time divorced (in years and months):____________________________

4. If this is not your first divorce, please specify how many times you have been divorced:_________________________________________________________

5. Present marital status (You may cross more than one block):

   Single  Co-habiting  Engaged  Re-married

6.1 Number of own children:_____________________________________________

6.2 Number of children living with you:___________________________________

6.3 Age(s) of children living with you:___________________________________

7. Custodial arrangement:

   Sole custody  Joint Custody  Divided Custody  Split Custody  Non-custody

8. Highest level of education completed:

   None  Grade 5 – 7  Grade 8 – 11  Apprenticeship  Grade 12

   Studied further (eg. technical college)  University

9. Job description:_____________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________
10. How happy in general are you with your job? Please rate your happiness regarding your job on a scale from 1 – 5, where:
   1 is VERY UNHAPPY,
   2 is SLIGHTLY UNHAPPY,
   3 is NEITHER UNHAPPY NOR HAPPY,
   4 is SLIGHTLY HAPPY and
   5 is VERY HAPPY:

__________________________________________________________________

General Health

11. Please rate your own general health at present:
   Poor  Average  Good

Social Support

12. Do you currently have a personal relationship with someone whom you feel contributes positively to your sense of well-being? Yes  No
13. Is there currently someone (including children) whom you take care of? Yes  No
14. Do you have a hobby or sport in which you currently partake? Yes  No
15. Are you committed and active in religion? Yes  No

Stressors

16. Who initiated the divorce proceedings?
   Yourself  Ex-spouse  Mutual decision
17. Please rate the quality of your current relationship with your ex-spouse:
   Poor  Average  Good
18. Are there things, events or people that you frequently worry about?  

Yes   No

If ‘yes’, please list:_____________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

19. What is most challenging or stressful about your current lifestyle since the divorce?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

20. What do you like most about your current lifestyle since the divorce?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing this biographical questionnaire.

Would you like to receive general feedback regarding the results of this study?  

Yes   No