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**Alternative family structures within the contexts of the
Seventh Day Adventist Church: A pastoral approach**

By

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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation, I, Lydia Elizabeth Records, student number 23962225, declare that this entire work, "Alternative family structures within the contexts of the Seventh Day Adventist Church: A pastoral approach," is my own original work (except explicitly stated otherwise) and that I have not previously, in its entirety or part, submitted it in order to obtain any qualification from another university.



Signed: Lydia Records

Date: 23 October 2024

Abstract

This study focuses on providing a pastoral counselling approach for Seventh Day Adventist counsellors for supporting non-nuclear families. Alternative family structures, such as stepfamilies, adoptive families, and single-parent households, have been increasing for the last few years and this is no different within the SDA church. Despite this, the SDA church has not provided counsellors with an appropriate approach to support these families. This study suggests that SDA counsellors can support alternative families with the application of Attachment-Based Therapy and Family Systems Therapy. However, before this can be applied, an understanding of both families and marriage in the Bible, as well as, of the alternative family structures, is necessary. This study addresses this by, firstly, discussing what the SDA church considers the ideal marriage and how this ideal was not always practiced throughout the Bible. Secondly, the study discusses a few of the alternative family structures that are common today.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As society shifts further from the nuclear family structure, which is a family consisting of a couple and their biological children, alternative family structures are becoming even more common. Some of these alternative structures include blended families, which is a family where at least one partner has children from a previous relationship, single-parent households, same-sex couples, as well as couples where one or more of the partners identify as non-heterosexual or identify with a gender that is not the same as their biological sex.

As these alternative family structures become more conventional, it becomes more necessary for the leadership in the church to both develop a deeper understanding of these family structures and to equip themselves with a pastoral counselling approach to interacting with them. Alternative family structures have needs that differ from nuclear families and as such require additional support for these unique needs.

I was raised in the Seventh Day Adventist church and have observed that many different family structures within the community fall outside of what the church would consider ideal, i.e. the traditional nuclear family consisting of husband, wife, and their biological children. Despite the family ministries of the church acknowledging these different family structures, it tended to focus on what was considered the ideal nuclear family. This does not sufficiently meet the needs of alternative family structures. While the church does acknowledge blended families and single-parent households, the church's strong viewpoints concerning divorce, premarital sex, and alternative sexual orientations, have made it difficult for these families to receive the support they need from the Adventist Church. The Seventh Day Adventist Church states that divorce is only advised in extreme cases and remarriage after divorce is only endorsed by the Church in specific circumstances (General Conference Executive Committee 1996).

This study will focus on how counsellors within the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) can assist these families with their unique challenges. However, this study will

be limited as to not include homosexual couples or couples which include transexuals, as well as other members of the LGBTQIA+ community. While there are varying opinions on these topics within the SDA Church, the official statements of the church are very well-defined. The Church's official statement on marriage and homosexuality is as follows:

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships.

(General Conference Executive Committee 2012)

Regarding transgender people the SDA Church also has a clear standpoint.

On the mental-emotional level misalignment occurs with transgender people whose sexual anatomy is clearly male or female but who identify with the opposite gender of their biological sex. They may describe themselves as being trapped in a wrong body... However, the desire to change or live as a person of another gender may result in biblically inappropriate lifestyle choices. Gender dysphoria may, for instance, result in cross-dressing, sex reassignment surgery, and the desire to have a marital relationship with a person of the same biological sex. On the other hand, transgender people may suffer silently, living a celibate life or being married to a spouse of the opposite sex.

(General Conference Executive Committee 2017)

Despite these statements, the Church proclaims the need to treat all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, with respect and love.

Jesus affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling

people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices. As His disciples, Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the Lord's instruction and example, living a life of Christ-like compassion and faithfulness.

(General Conference Executive Committee 2012)

In light of the above official statements of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and as this study is focusing on families within the SDA Church community, this research study will not cover alternative family structures that include members of the LGBTQI+ community. As it is not the purpose of this study to critically examine the SDA Church's doctrines on the LGBTQI+ community, a study of this topic would require research that is outside of the scope of this study.

1.2 Research Question

How can Seventh Day Adventist counsellors support blended families, single parents, and other non-traditional family structures, from a pastoral counselling perspective, through the unique challenges that these families face?

1.3 Literature Overview

Throughout the Bible, different family structures can be clearly seen. While not as various as the structures that are present today, there are many examples of different family structures. According to scholars, such as Dreyer (2008:501) and Van Eck (2020:2), marriage is a social construct, formed by culture and socio-economic norms, and while it is influenced by religion, it is a human-made institution. On the other hand, other scholars, such as O'Rourke (2014:46–53), propose that marriage is a God-given institution. The Seventh Day Adventist Church states the following regarding marriage: "Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship" (Adventist.org 2020).

There are scholars outside of the SDA church that subscribe to this view. Doukan (1999:14) states: "Family did not come by itself. The idea and the event did not originate as a human initiative or as the simple result of chance. God created family (Doukhan 1999:14)." According to Voster (2014:125) the model for marriage was established in Genesis 1-3 and monogamous marriage was part of creation. If one proceeds under this assumption, as SDA scholars do, then it is from the Bible that an

understanding of what constitutes a family is, should be drawn (O'Rourke, 2014:46–53). According to Doukan (1999:14), God created the family unit in God's image. It is the view of the SDA church that the union of marriage is an analogy of the unity within the Godhead (General Conference Executive Committee 1996). Marriage is considered a “covenant-based union” which makes two people one on every level “physically, emotionally, and spiritually” (General Conference Executive Committee 1996). The SDA Church states that the union of marriage was established in the Garden of Eden on the sixth day of Creation, according to their understanding of Genesis 2:18-24.

Family life can also have a long-lasting influence on the children raised within the family. This also applies to the relationship that these children will have with religion. Parents are the first representation of God and God's love for their children (Adventist.org n.d.). A study done by McPhail (2019:47) has found that children growing up in households with parents who share the same religion are more likely to remain religious as adults compared to children whose parents have different religious persuasions. As interreligious couples are becoming increasingly more common, the religiosity of society may likely decrease (McPhail 2019:48). Thus, it can be concluded that McPhail states that parents and their relationship with religion can affect their children either positively or negatively.

Blended families and other alternative family structures have been the subject of academic research for many years by researchers such as Elizabeth Einstein (1982), Margorie Engel (2007) and Paul R. Amato (2014; 2016). These studies have been mainly in the fields of psychology and sociology. A 2018 study that was cited by Newman (2022), found that only 25% of children in South Africa live in nuclear families (see Hall, Richter, Mokomane & Lake 2018:34). If this is the case, blended families, single-parent households, and other types of alternative family structures are quickly overtaking the nuclear family. Because of this, there is an increasing need for research on these families and their needs.

There are many different structures of alternative families, such as single-parent households, adoptive families and other families where children are being raised by extended family members. However, one of the most prevalent structures is blended families or stepfamilies. “A stepfamily is created when a lone parent starts

living with or marries, an individual or another lone parent” (Juby, Bourdais & Marcil-Gratton 2001:1). This type of family structure may also include stepsiblings and half-siblings. Blended families are very unique as each individual family has a different structure and different arrangements and courses of action (Zeleznikow & Zeleznikow 2015:322). The structure of the family depends on the relationship between the new set of parents, the number and age of the children from previous relationships, and the relationship between the previous parents. All of these factors influence the needs of the family and whether or not the new family will stay together (Zeleznikow & Zeleznikow 2015:322–323). One of the biggest factors that determine the success of a newly blended family is the relationship between the children and the stepparent (Wenck 2009:ix). This relationship can be promoted by both the biological parent and the stepparent but should never be forced by either party.

Factors outside of the immediate family can influence it. This may include factors such as the community around the family and includes the grandparents and step-grandparents in the blended family. The extended family can help cement the bonds in the blended family (Myers & Schwiebert 1999:50). Because people live much longer today than in the past, there are more living grandparents than ever before (Myers & Schwiebert 1999:51). This means that in a blended family a child can have at least four pairs of grandparents if the parents themselves did not come from blended families. These grandparents can have a positive or negative effect on the blending of the family as they can impact the opinions and affections of both the parents and the children (Myers & Schwiebert 1999:54). As such, it is important that the grandparents need to be on the same page as the parents. Myers and Schwiebert (Myers & Schwiebert 1999:57–58) suggest that this may be difficult as the grandparents may have taken on some parental responsibilities after their child became a single parent which they now need to relinquish as there is a new partner to take on this role (Chapman, Coleman & Ganong 2016:639–641).

There are many ways in which to approach pastoral counselling, some of which have been adapted from the field of psychology. As this study will be focused on families, it will also focus specifically on family counselling. This is to address the needs of the entire family rather than just the individual. This is especially true when something has occurred that influences the whole family unit, such as the death of a family member.

Family therapy is based on the belief that the family is an interactional unit in which all the members influence each other. Therefore, it is not sufficient to treat each individual in relationship to the deceased and to deal with his or her grief without relating to the total family network.

(Tjibeba 2019:1)

The way in which this grief is dealt with can either strengthen or weaken the remaining family's bonds (Tjibeba 2019:2).

Gonzales (2009:150) suggests that one of the issues that blended families and other alternative families face is that there is not much information about what to expect when entering into these family dynamics. One of the responsibilities of the counsellor or pastor is to provide the family with some realistic expectations of how their new family structure may function (Gonzales 2009:150–151). This can be done with the provision of literature as well as what Gonzales (2009:150) calls “preblended family counselling”. This counselling focuses on including the whole new family in the counselling rather than just the couple, as well as what can be in the future rather than issues of the past (Gonzales 2009:155–156). However, that does not mean that this counselling would not include preparing the family for what lies ahead. This includes facilitating the family's learning of conflict resolution skills that they will need in order to prevent the family from breaking down once more. One of the most important conflict resolution skills that can be taught in premarital counselling is forgiveness (Arafani 2017:4; Gaspard 2016).

Family therapy originated in the field of the psychodynamic model, in which family members would be invited into the session, but these family members were considered part of the individual's issue (Friesen 1995:4). Later on, there developed four major schools of thought in family therapy: Multigenerational (Brown 1999:94; Kerr & Bowen 1988:13), Structural (Minuchin 1974:13, 89), Cognitive Behavioural (Dishion, Forgatch, Chamberlain & Pelham 2016), and the Strategic approach (Friesen 1995:7). However, with the rise of postmodernism, many questions arose concerning how family therapy was viewed and conducted (Friesen 1995:8).

Behavioural therapy can also be applied to families with a model called Behavioural Family Therapy (BFT). This term was originally coined by Forgatch and Patterson

(Dishion et al. 2016:812–813; Forgatch & Patterson 1998:85–107; Crane 1995:229). This model has shown some success in “complex family situations” (Jhadray et al. 2015:466).

1.4 Research Gap

While there is much research on blended families, single-parent households, as well as other alternative family structures, and the needs of these families, this study will contribute to how to support these families from a pastoral counselling perspective within the SDA Church context. through the unique challenges they face. This is especially difficult as these families are becoming more prevalent inside the SDA Church.

1.5 Methodology

This research study will consist of qualitative literary research. It will examine literature from several different disciplines, including psychology and pastoral theology in order to answer the research question. It will take an eclectic approach towards pastoral counselling and as such will not limit itself to one stream of psychology. In order to do this, the study will examine several different counselling approaches including Narrative Counselling (Epston & White 1992), Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Beck 1976), Emotionally Focussed Therapy (EFT) (Greenberg, Ford, Alden & Johnson 1993), Attachment-Based Therapy (Bowlby 1979), Family Systems Therapy (Bowen 1966) etc.

Narrative Counselling is an approach that focuses on storytelling and reshaping the personal narrative in order to gain insight and agency (White & Epston 1990:4). This enables the client to address challenges and achieve their goals. White (1990:3) states that Narrative Counselling is suited for family therapy, but that it should be approached carefully so as not to infer that the family system is responsible for each member of the family's behaviour.

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy as outlined by Aaron T. Beck (1976, 2019:18) is an approach used to treat emotional disorders. Rational techniques are applied to correct misconceptions and conceptual distortions that contribute to neuroses (Beck 1976:18). Cognitive Behavioural Therapy aims to challenge and modify dysfunctional thought patterns (Beck 2019:19).

Emotionally Focussed Therapy, based on the work of Leslie S. Greenberg, Cindy L Ford, Louise S. Alden and Susan M. Johnson (1993:78) is a structured therapeutic approach primarily designed for couples. It integrates individual and interpersonal perspectives to help couples create new, more satisfying interaction patterns (Greenberg et al. 1993:78). EFT provides a framework for addressing emotional distress, improving communication, and enhancing relationship satisfaction (Greenberg et al. 1993:84).

Attachment-Based Therapy is based on the work of John Bowlby (1970:75). The theory explains human bonding and the importance of secure emotional connections (Bowlby 1982:675). It posits that humans have an inherent need to form close bonds with caregivers (Bowlby 1970:76). Techniques include exploring attachment history, identifying attachment patterns and promoting secure bonds (Bowlby 1970:76).

Family Systems Therapy, as conceptualized by Murray Bowen (1966:346) provides insights into the dynamics of family relationships and their impact on our lives. The theory emphasizes personal autonomy and balance (Bowen 1966:371–372). It suggests that family of origin experiences significantly impact current functioning in relationships (Bowen 1966:346).

This study will also discuss families in the Bible. It will use the works of scholars such as Lisa S. Cahill (2000), Philip F. Esler (2011), Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch (1997) and Leo G. Perdue et al. (1997) to examine the historical and social context that these families found themselves in. It will look at the different family structures found in both the Old and the New Testaments with a specific focus on non-nuclear families that do not fit the ideal suggested by the SDA General Conference (1996). It will also examine any important SDA documents that relate to these topics in order to provide Seventh Day Adventist counsellors with the tools to support these alternative family structures.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 – Diverse Family Structures in the Bible

Throughout the Bible, there have been many examples of various types of families. This chapter will analyse what is considered the Biblical ideal for families and those that do not fit this ideal. As such, this chapter will also examine some of these non-

nuclear family structures. This study likewise will include how the members of the family acted within their family unit. It will do this by examining both the Biblical text as well as looking at the cultural and social background. It will study both families in the Old and the New Testament, specifically examining the views of Jesus on the family.

Chapter 3 – The Changing Family Structure Through the Years

This chapter will discuss the changes in the family structure over the last few decades, and the movement from the traditional nuclear family to various structures that have become more prevalent today. It will examine some of the non-nuclear family structures which have become more widespread in recent history (Hall et al. 2018). This includes both blended families, in their various structures, as well as single-parent households. This chapter will endeavour to determine some of the causes of this change, as well as, analysing some of the challenges that these families face that are unique to them. It will also examine if the same trends of change can be seen within the Adventist Church. As part of this study, an Adventist perspective on families will need to be considered.

Chapter 4 – Pastoral Approaches to Supporting Alternative Family Structures

Most families go through difficult times in which they may require additional support and occasionally this may necessitate counselling. This is just as true for blended families, single-parent households and other alternative family structures. This chapter will explore different pastoral counselling approaches in order to support these families through any difficulties that they might be facing. To decide on the pastoral counselling approach most suitable, research will be drawn from the field of pastoral counselling. Many of the difficulties that these families face may be most concentrated during phases of transition, such as a nuclear family becoming a blended family. As such, a part of this chapter will focus on assisting families transitioning into different structures.

Chapter 5 – Findings

This chapter will reflect upon all the research that was conducted throughout the study. It will strive to answer the research question as well as examine if the question was answered sufficiently.

1.7 Key Terms

Alternative Family Structures

Blended Families

Single Parent Families

Christian-based Counselling

Seventh Day Adventist Church

Alternative Families in the Bible

Chapter 2

Diverse Family Structures in the Bible

2.1 Introduction

Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of various types of families. This chapter will analyse what is considered the Biblical ideal for families and those that do not fit into this ideal. As such, this chapter will also examine some of these non-nuclear family structures. This study likewise will include how the members of the family acted within their family unit. It will do this by examining both the Biblical text and looking at the cultural and social background. It will study both families in the Old and the New Testament, specifically examining the views of Jesus on the family.

Before one can study family structures in the Bible, it is important to note that one cannot study them in isolation. There are historical, cultural, social and economic factors that influence the way in which families develop over time.

2.2 Views on Marriage

There are diverging views on the origin of marriage. While scholars such as Coontz (2006), Dreyer (2008), Cherlin (2010), and Van Eck (2020) have concluded that marriage is a social construct, while others state that marriage was established in the Garden of Eden (Doukhan 1999; Rubio 2003; Vorster 2008; O'Rourke 2014; General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024)

According to Dreyer (2008:501,503), marriage is a tradition which is a social construct. According to Blyth et al (2008:34), a social construct is a concept that is based on “the dominant values and opinions of a particular culture at a particular time.” These values then lead to social practices that reflect these values. According to Blyth et al. (2008:34), because these constructs are based on the values of a particular culture at a specific time, they are thus subject to critical doubt. Dreyer (2008:501–503) states that her postmodern view of the Bible, historical evidence of the influence of culture on marriage and her decision to move away from biological differences as the core of the theological discussion on marriage are some of the reasons why she considers marriage as a tradition rather than a God-ordained institution. Similarly, Van Eck (2020:2) describes marriage as a cultural construction that has developed under the

influences of the traditions of the day. Van Eck (2020:2) states that marriages in the Bible are very different from what is considered “Biblical” regarding what most churches think about marriage. As traditions change over time, so has marriage, although, throughout Biblical history, the patriarchy has remained (Dreyer 2008:504). This ideology are found throughout the Bible and include the idea that marriage’s main purpose is reproduction (Dreyer 2008:504). As such, marriages were often arranged by families for social, financial, or political reasons (Van Eck 2020:2; Dreyer 2008:504). They were very rarely based on mutual attraction (Dreyer 2008:504). This is because marriages were often for the benefit of the families rather than the individuals (Van Eck 2020:2). These marriages were for the honour of the head of the household (Van Eck 2007:98).

Just as there are slightly differing views on marriage among the Christian denominations of today, there were differing approaches to marriage at different periods in Bible history (Van Eck 2020:2). Van Eck (2020:4) states that because marriage strategies have changed throughout the Bible there cannot be one type of marriage that was ordained by God. In this case, marriage is rather based on a construct ‘theology of marriage’ that adapts to the cultural environment in which it finds itself. According to Van Eck (2020:6), the majority of denominations are creating a false consciousness in presenting their view of marriage as biblical and using this false consciousness to control their members’ sexual behaviour.

The institution of marriage is influenced by culture, and this is where the various marital forms originate (Dreyer 2008:507–508). The main variations of marriage are monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is defined by Dreyer (2008:507) and Borgerhoff Mulder (2009:131) as having one partner at any given time. Often, monogamy is now described as serial monogamy, meaning that someone may have only one spouse at a time but several in their lifetime (Borgerhoff Mulder 2009:131). Polygamy is when someone has multiple spouses at the same time.

There are two types of polygamy: polygyny and polyandry (Nyarko 2023:140), but Dreyer (2008:508) suggests a third, namely group marriage. Polygyny is the most prevalent and quite common in ancient Israel and the Old Testament (Dreyer 2008:508–509). In these cases, one husband has two or more wives (Nyarko 2023:140). It is still the most common form of polygamy and is allowed in about 75%

of societies, including South Africa (Dreyer 2008:508). Usually, even in countries where polygamy is sanctioned, monogamy is still the more popular as it is financially difficult to support multiple wives and the children that they conceive. Polyandry is when one wife has two or more husbands (Nyarko 2023:104). This is very rare and usually occurs when there are more men than women in a sociality, or there are major economic factors that influence this. Lastly, group marriages are even more uncommon than polyandry and are not considered a social norm. They are typically associated with cults and other fringe groups (Dreyer, 2008:509). These group marriages generally consist of at least two men and two women who are married to one another (Murdock 1949:24).

According to Dreyer (2008:510), there are four viewpoints on marriage within the Western Christian Church: socialist, contractual, religious, and naturalist. The socialist view states that marriage is a social and legal contract with certain expectations and privileges and is regulated by law. The contractual view sees marriage as a contract entered into between willing partners and this contract can be alternated to suit the needs of each couple. The religious view treats marriage as a sacred ritual regulated by the spiritual community. Finally, the naturalist view sees marriage as a combination of reason, conscience and Biblical interpretation (Dreyer 2008:510).

As many denominations have somewhat different combinations of the previously stated views, it is important to understand some of these various views. According to van Eck (2020:1), the vast majority of churches in South Africa hold the view that marriage originated from God and should be monogamous and heterosexual. The Roman Catholic Church (Pope Francis 2023) views marriage as being natural, contractual and sacramental. They view marriage as natural in the sense that God created males and females with the ability to procreate, and as such, marriage is also seen as a method of controlling sexual urges. However, even within marriage, sexual acts were meant purely for procreation (Dreyer 2008:510–511; Just 2014:4–5; Pope Francis 2023). Marriage is also contractual as it requires the consent of both the man and woman and provides some guidelines for a lifelong relationship. Lastly, the Catholic church views marriage as a sacrament as it was instituted by God as part of creation and through it, they can experience salvation (Dreyer 2008:511; Pope Francis 2023).

Protestants have a somewhat different view on marriage. While they agree that marriage is natural and contractual, Protestants do not generally agree that marriage is a sacrament (Dreyer 2008:518). However, while marriage may not influence salvation, it can influence the religious experience of the individual (Dreyer 2008:518). According to Buitendag (2007:452–453), Lutheran theology states that marriage is a social endeavour ordained by God to serve spiritual purposes, such as teaching love and restraint, and limiting sexual sins (Synod n.d.:1). On the other hand, Dreyer (2008:519–520) explains that Calvinism views marriage as a way covenant between husband and wife, God, and the church community, and thus the state was only responsible for the legal aspects of the marriage contract. Calvinism understands marriage to be a holy bond that should be carefully regulated by the church, including when divorce is allowed. The Anglican church still views marriage to be a sacrament as it is a “symbol of the divine” (Southern African Anglican Theological Commission 2001:6–7; Dreyer 2008:520; Makhanya 2022:5). However, there are still social and contractual elements, and the whole concept is referred to as the commonwealth model (Southern African Anglican Theological Commission 2001:3–6). The concept of the commonwealth model was placed under some stress as marriage laws developed in England during the Age of Enlightenment; however, this model continues (Dreyer 2008:520).

While many denominations have differences in their views on marriage, the majority of them hold that God instituted marriage as a lifelong commitment between a consenting man and woman (Van Eck 2020:1). This understanding is generally derived from Genesis 2:24-25 where a union between Adam and Eve is declared. In this account, there is a strong inclination towards companionship as God declares that it would not be good only to have one sex (Letellier 2015:55). The union between man and woman is described as becoming one flesh. This union is not merely a sexual union but a deep communion and a familial bond (Letellier 2015:55). In this union, the two members develop a new singular identity (Letellier 2015:56). Letellier (2015:56) states that “the couple dwells a common identity that each one contains the other, that each one is both.” It is also from this marriage union that the parallel is drawn to the relationship between Christ and the Church as his bride (Batey 1961; Letellier 2015:55).

2.2.1 Theology of Marriage

According to Adrian Thatcher (1999:9), there have been several different theologies of marriage throughout history. These theologies were often out of touch with the reality that many individuals and couples face (Thatcher 1999:9). Thatcher (1999:11) further suggests that a fully satisfactory theology of marriage cannot be developed. This is partially because many experience marriage to be loveless and violent.

However, this has not stopped scholars, such as Thatcher (1999), himself, from attempting to develop a theology of marriage. A full theology of marriage must include aspects such as holy love, romance, companionship and lasting commitment (Thatcher 1999:11). Marriage partners are viewed as equals despite their biological differences.

According to Thatcher (1999:18), love, which serves others' needs above their own, can have important implications in the theology of marriage. Firstly, this is because Christianity is, in and of itself, based on a God, who gives Himself in the form of Christ, for the sake of others. Secondly, traditions sometimes ignore the needs of marginalised groups and as such, care is needed to correct this. Similarly, marriage has been used by patriarchy for their own purposes. In the past, men have often used marriage as a manipulative construct which would serve their own interests, such as political alliances, with no thought given to the wife. Finally, it is within Christian marriage that God's love is meant to be incarnated. Thus, a theology of marriage should "therefore seek to affirm genuinely other-regarding love, as opposed to the manipulative love which serves the interests of one partner only." (Thatcher 1999:19)

Thatcher (1999:21) suggests that marriage should address the question of those who are affected by marriage. This includes both those inside and outside the Christian community as marriage is universal (Thatcher 1999:24). Thatcher (1999:9) states that marriage is universal as it was a part of creation. However, it was specially blessed by God. He goes so far as to state that marriage is a way for people to encounter God's grace and this grace is at the core of human relationships (Thatcher 1999:24).

Thatcher (1999:27–28) suggests that marriage and the understanding thereof have been influenced by culture over the years. As such, traditions around marriage have changed, and no guidelines are established in the Bible regarding marriage age or ceremonies.

Marriage cannot be separated from sexuality, and this has led to some difficulties in recent years with the debate on sexuality and gender (Thatcher 1999:27).

Thatcher (1999:31) suggests that there are two streams of dialogue in the understanding of marriage. Both streams of dialogue work towards “the living tradition of theology” (Thatcher 1999:31). The first is internal dialogue, which refers to the development of marriages within the Christian community (Thatcher 1999:31–47). One of these discussions is whether marriage should be viewed as purely something to sate lust or as a sacrament that displays the love of God for the Church. Whether marriage is indissoluble and inseparable or if divorce and annulment are allowed, has also been a topic of debate. If marriage should be considered a sacrament or if celibacy is preferred, and how to include the perspective of women, whose experiences challenge the patriarchy, has also been debated. On the other hand, external dialogue involves discussions and debates between the Christian community and those who have rejected, either in part or in whole, the Christian tradition of marriage (Thatcher 1999:47). This discussion includes topics such as the flexibility of marriage roles and sexuality, the ethics and morals of marriage and sexuality, and the role of love in marriage (Thatcher 1999:47–61). Thatcher (1999:67,87) suggests that all these discussions need to be taken into account when forming a contemporary theology of marriage.

Thatcher suggests that the concept of marriage as a covenant is central to Christian marriage (Thatcher 1999:87). However, there are several aspects of the covenant that need to be re-examined as concerns about gender and power. The covenant of marriage should be understood as a covenant, rather than a contract, between a husband and wife, who are equals, that has been ratified by Jesus (Thatcher 1999:87–91).

Richard Shenk (2018) presents a theology of marriage from a Baptist perspective. His study examines the biblical and historical aspects of his theology on marriage before discussing what he considers to be God’s intentions for marriage (Shenk 2018:15). Shenk (2018:54) discusses the origin of marriage in Genesis 2. He goes so far as to state that marriage is a very central theme throughout the Bible as it starts and ends with marriage (Shenk 2018:54). First, the marriage in the Garden of Eden and finally in Revelation when Christ marries His bride.

Shenk (2018:107) considers marriage to have several intentions. First, it is considered to be an image of the Trinity. Second, it should display God's faithfulness to God's covenant. Finally, it was intended to display God's steadfast love. As such, marriage is a covenant made before God that shows God's faithfulness and love to the church. Couples should thus go into marriage knowing that they should uphold the character of God and support other marriages in the church. Unfortunately, these intentions have been distorted.

Shenk (2018:55) acknowledges that throughout the Bible, there are very few marriages that do not distort God's character. Shenk (2018:57) also suggests that there is a parallel between the first commandment and the tenth commandment as he compares idolatry to spiritual adultery or covetousness. However, there is no direct statement on this within the Bible, but there are allusions to this theme in both Ezra and Nehemiah. While there do not seem to be many examples of marriages that reflect God's covenant and faithfulness, Shenk (2018:65–66) finds that Ruth and Boaz achieve this goal. As Shenk (2018:66–68) works through the Bible, he pauses at the Song of Songs. While this book of the Bible speaks about love and marriage, it does not mention procreation. According to Shenk (2018:68), this shows a romantic side of God that desires a passionate and intimate relationship with humanity.

Shenk (2018:101) suggests that marriage be viewed as a sacrament as this will lead to a greater appreciation of both God and marriage. Despite Shenk's (2018:102) Protestant background, the view of marriage as a sacrament is not Protestant. He, thus, proposes the following definition for a sacrament: "a dramatic sign, commanded by God, which mirrors his grace, and sanctifies his people – sacramental because it connects us to God's three-part Creation & Crisis chiasm of the Bible" (Shenk 2018:102). However, he does not insist that marriage is something that everyone has to do but rather something humans "get to do" (Shenk 2018:105). He, thus, views marriage as being an honour given by God to participate in the revelation of God's nature and character to the world. However, he does state that while marriage is a sacrament to the Christian community, it was given to the whole of humanity through Adam (Shenk 2018:107-108). However, this does not mean that the essence of marriage can be affected by culture (Shenk 2018:117). Shenk (2018:118) also suggests that state marriage and Christian marriage are not the same thing. While they exist congruently, they cannot be viewed as identical.

If marriage is a sacrament, it is important to reconsider divorce and remarriage (Shenk 2018:103). Because of Shenk's understanding of marriage, anything that affects marriage can be viewed as an attack on how God is perceived. According to Shenk (2018:105), the ethics and theology of marriage should not be influenced by the cultures surrounding them. Shenk (2018:106) states that marriage has become very rule-orientated and that this is part of the reason for the high divorce rate within the Christian community. Shenk (2018:107) deems that in order to mitigate this, the focus needs to be on staying together despite difficulties. Marriages also require chastity, which does not mean abstinence but rather fidelity. Shenk (2018:110–111) considers divorce to undermine God's character and marriage's intention. This is because marriage is considered a display of God's character, and any breaking thereof would cause a faulty perception of God. As such, divorce is strongly discouraged. If divorce does take place, however, remarriage should not take place unless an unbeliever divorces a believer. However, the focus should still be on remaining married. Shenk (2018:119) suggests that in order to preserve marriage, forgiveness is essential.

According to Shenk (2018:108–110), the sacrament of marriage does not influence married couples but those who are single as well. When those who are single practice chastity, they form part of the marriage drama. Those who are single can support those who are married in part by remaining chaste. Not only this but both Christ and Paul remained single for the sake of working for the salvation of others. As such each member of the church has a part to play in the function of the church and bride.

Cormac Burke (2015) presents his theology of marriage from the viewpoint of the Catholic Church, which states that marriage is a sacrament. According to Burke (2015:3), this means that marriage has a supernatural power imbued upon it by Christ. Burke (2015:6) explains that it is only when two individuals, who are both Christians, enter into marriage that marriage can truly be seen as a sacrament. The sacrament of marriage is meant to be a display of God's grace (Burke 2015:30–31). This marriage is viewed as being in Christ, and as such, marriage is viewed as a public interaction that takes place in the body of the Catholic church. However, Burke (2015:7-8) makes a clear distinction that the act of exchanging marriage vows in a church building is not what constitutes the sacrament of marriage.

According to Burke (2015:37), the sacrament of marriage has a sanctifying effect on the individuals who participate in it. This can be viewed as a progressive holiness; it is a working of sanctification rather than a static holiness given by the sacrament itself. However, this is not its only purpose. Marriage is also to serve as a sign of Christ's marriage to the church (Burke 2015:36–39).

Many scholars including Merz (2001), Dreyer (2011), Curle (2013), Zaloudek (2014), and Solevåg (2019) have conducted studies on the relationship between marriage and the metaphor of the Church as Christ's bride. However, these scholars have differing views surrounding its implementation. Metz (2001:132) suggests that hierarchy is necessary for marriage and that wives should be submissive towards their husbands as the church is under the authority of Christ. Dreyer (2011:4-5) finds that too much emphasis is placed on the differences between men and women and that they should be seen as equals, including in marriage. Curle (2013:134-136) describes that spouses should submit to each other rather than simply the wife to the husband. Zaloudek (2014:643-644) found that the metaphor should not be applied rigidly, as this is incongruent with lived experience. Solevåg (2019:107) explains that this metaphor was used to encourage the hierarchical view of marriage and has shaped the Christian understanding of marriage.

Burke (2015:39) explains this using Ephesians 5:25.31-33, which shows that Paul compares the husband to Christ and the wife to the church. However, he states that Christ should be the model for both of the spouses. Burke (2015:40) continues that marriage is both a sign that shows the sacrament between Christ and the church, and sanctifying as in learning to love one's spouse in marriage, as marriage is to "become conformed to Christ in the generous dedication of his love."

However, marriage is not only spiritual but has a natural aspect as well. Burke (2015:2) states that it is natural because it forms a part of God's creation of nature. Burke (2015:2) deems marriage to be "exclusive, permanent, and open to life." If one of these parts is absent, it can no longer be viewed as a true marriage. In the same way, if the individuals who are marrying are not Christian, the marriage is no longer a sacrament.

Despite the focus on the sacrament nature of marriage, the main purpose of marriage is considered to be procreation and its secondary purpose is to remedy sexual urges (Burke 2015:50–51). However, Burke (2015:52) suggests that, on the other hand,

mutual love can be seen as the main purpose of marriage and that the act of sex has a purpose outside of reproduction. Burke (2015:60) states that there should not be a focus on a single purpose of marriage but rather that each purpose should be viewed as valuable.

Solomon Ademiluka (2021) considers marriage from an African, Nigerian perspective. He explains that for many African societies, marriage is seen as an obligation. He explains that this is partly because of their understanding of marriage as based on the passages found in Genesis 1:28 and 2:18, 24. These passages focus on procreation, which is often considered to be the purpose of marriage. The phrase “be fruitful and multiply” is considered the moral imperative (Ademiluka 2021:4). However, Ademiluka (2021:4) states that this should be read, not as a command, but as a blessing.

Ademiluka (2021:5-7) discusses the understanding of marriage based on Genesis 2. He states that marriage was instituted as a cure for man’s need for companionship. He highlights the thought that a woman was created from the man’s side and was meant to be a supporter and helper. It is upon this passage that Ademiluka (2021:6) then bases his understanding of marriage as a union between a heterosexual couple. However, Ademiluka (2021:6-7) comes to the conclusion that marriage is not commanded to everyone, but rather, that these verses prescribe what marriage should look like.

Ademiluka (2021:7-8) then considers 1 Corinthians 7, which is not in line with the understanding of obligatory marriage. Ademiluka (2021:7) explains that Paul’s words can be interpreted to mean that he does not wish for the people to remain unmarried but rather for them to gain control of their passions. However, it can also be taken at face value that celibacy is preferred over marriage. Ademiluka (2021:8) comes to the conclusion that there is no biblical necessity for marriage but that it is an optional institution. He states that it is not good for a woman to be desperate to marry. He states that this desperation for marriage is not in line with his understanding of marriage in the Bible.

2.2.2 The Adventist Church's View and Theology of Marriage

The Adventist Church adheres to the view that marriage was established in the Garden of Eden by God (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2020:10). It is contractual, naturalistic, and religious but not sacramental. It is naturalistic as it is part

of creation, and the desire for companionship was instilled in humanity even before the creation of Eve (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024). It is contractual, similar to Calvinism, as the couple makes a type of covenant with each other before God (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024). Finally, it is religious because it was instituted by God (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024) and can assist in spiritual growth (Holford 2012:6).

While the SDA church deems monogamous, heterosexual marriages to be the ideal, it recognises that this ideal was not always upheld by the individuals throughout the Bible. According to Bauer (2015:5), polygamy, voyeurism, homoeroticism, rape, prostitution and adultery were all practised by various individuals throughout the Bible; however, polygamy was the most regularly practised. Polygamy was practised from early on in Bible history, starting in Genesis 4 when Lamech married two wives (Bauer 2015:2). Bauer (2015:2) states that this was the first departure from the marriage structure found in Genesis 2 and a redefinition of marriage to include another person. This is also seen in the families of Abraham and Jacob. In both of these cases, there were negative situations that arose due to their polygamous lifestyle (Bauer 2015:3). Bauer (2015:3) proposes that these stories serve as warnings against polygamy. Polygamy, especially polygyny, are still present today and encouraged in certain cultures; however, this is rejected by the SDA church, not only because it is against the church's understanding of marriage, but because of how the wives are viewed and treated (Bauer 2015:3). It is important to note that while these individuals stepped outside of the example set in Genesis 2, it does not mean that the ideal has changed or that they should be imitated.

Wade (2002) presents a theology for marriage from a Seventh Day Adventist perspective. According to Wade (2002:73–75), marriage should be viewed as a covenant that parallels the covenant God made with Israel. It is thus important to understand what a covenant is. Wade (2002:73) states that a covenant is “a mutual choosing; it was a reciprocal promise of exclusive dedication and loyalty.” God had originally made a covenant with Abraham, which was renewed with his offspring, eventually with Israel and later extended to the Gentile believers.

Wade (2002:80–90) states that marriage is not only considered a covenant in the Bible but is also considered a covenant symbol. Throughout the Bible, marriage covenants

are viewed as a public commitment, although there are no guidelines in terms of a marriage ceremony. Wade (2002:81) compares the making of a covenant to a betrothal and the keeping of the covenant to a marriage. He compares this to the thought that God's covenant with Israel and the New Testament church represents a marriage. This is seen in Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19. It is because of this symbolism that unfaithfulness to God is considered spiritual adultery.

Covenants have several implications (Wade 2002:74–80). Firstly, Wades (2002:74) suggests that a covenant provides people with a sense of chosenness as God claims possession of the Israelites. Secondly, it provides a sense of belonging as this covenant is not just with an individual, but the individual is added to the family of God. Thirdly, it can also provide a feeling of separation, as it provides separation in exclusive worship, holiness, and transcendence. Fourthly, a covenant with God provides a deeper knowledge of God through a relationship with God. Finally, a covenant provides faithfulness and unceasing love, even when one party is not faithful to the covenant. However, when one of the parties does not uphold what is required of them, they can no longer benefit from it.

These can also be applied to marriage (Wade 2002:82–90). In marriage, both parties must choose each other. Marriage should also provide a sense of belonging, which is accentuated by the oneness of husband and wife. Here, Wade (2002:82–84) examines Adam and Eve and their marriage in Genesis 2. Eve is seen as an extension of Adam, as she was created from a part of his body. This represents the closeness that should be present in marriage. It is then further explained that when it is stated that a man should leave his mother and father, the emphasis is on how the relationship between husband and wife should supersede any other relationship, including parental relationships. The statement on cleaving refers to the intimacy, both physically and mentally, that is found in marriage. In the same way, the text states that both Adam and Eve were naked but unashamed. Wade (2002:83–84) interprets this to go beyond physical nudity, but rather to mean that in marriage, the partners should know who the other truly and intimately is.

Wade (2002:84) also examines the concept of separation in terms of marriage. While marriage constitutes a union between husband and wife, it also constitutes the separation from the parent-child relationship. This separation also implies the

exclusive nature of marriage. Marriage demands a separation from any other intimate relationship. Wade (2002:84) states that marriage is considered holy because it is exclusive to the couple.

Wade (2002:85) compares knowledge to an intimate relationship. For example, Adam is said to have known his wife, which refers not only to physical intimacy but to close relationship and involvement. Within Adventist theology, there is an understanding of human wholeness, which considers the mind, body and spirit to be indivisible. This means that marriage represents intimacy on each of these levels.

Finally, marriage also requires faithfulness and steadfast love. Wade (2002:85–87) argues that self-sacrificing love is required in marriage. This is partially because marriage is viewed as making the two into one flesh, which means that one should love the other as oneself. Ephesians 5 provides some principles on how this love may be practised, including nurturing, cherishing and seeking your partner's honour. Wade (2002:86) suggests that as part of faithfulness in marriage, the Bible gives at least three requirements, including caring for physical needs, food and clothing, as well as sexual needs. In both Exodus 21:10 and 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, the importance of not neglecting the sexual needs of one's spouse is noted.

Just as with the covenant that God made with God's people, the covenant between husband and wife can be broken (Wade 2002:89–90). In both cases, the covenant can be broken by unfaithfulness. In 1 Corinthians 7, it is explained that divorce may be allowed when a Christian has an unbelieving spouse who makes it impossible for them to live in peace. However, no matter the reason for divorce, reconciliation is encouraged, and the believer should remain celibate unless reconciliation is impossible.

Besides marriage paralleling God's covenant with God's people, Wade considers the marriage covenant to be a cure for loneliness, as it provides the closest relationship possible for humanity (Wade 2002:91). However, this is not the only cure for aloneness. For those who are single, either by choice or circumstance, can find connectedness through the community with other believers (Wade 2002:92–93).

2.3 Families in the Old Testament

To understand the narratives of the Old Testament, one needs to step into the world of ancient Israel. According to Esler (2011:35), this is very difficult, as, despite the knowledge that scholars have accumulated about ancient Israel, one can never truly understand what it would have been like to live in that world.

Van Eck (2007:92-93, 2020:3) identifies several marriage strategies throughout the Bible and divides them into different periods. The first period is classified as the patriarchal period in which endogamy and conciliatory were the preferred strategies. Endogamy involved marrying within the family for example, Abraham married Sarah, who was his half-sister, and Isaac married Rebekah, who was his cousin's daughter. Endogamy was intended to preserve the tribe by ensuring that inheritance remained within the tribe, the wife knew the traditions and practices, and this would also preserve the family's religion (Ford 2023:238). However, Ford (2023:239–240) suggests that this does not seem to be the main intention of the patriarchs. Rather, the patriarchal promise seems to be the main driving force in their endogamy. Polygyny was common during this period, as in most of the Old Testament, and women were largely seen as the property of their husbands or, before marriage, fathers to do with as they please (Van Eck 2007:94). They could even offer their wives or daughters as sexual hospitality (Van Eck 2020:3).

The second period of the Israelites is characterised by an aggressive marriage strategy (Van Eck 2007:94). In this strategy, fathers would seek husbands for their daughters who were as closely related to their family as possible and wives for their sons who came from outside of the family. This was because this would increase the size of the lineage of the father. This approach is seen as aggressive as there would be tension between the families who are giving daughters to be married as each wants their daughter to stay within the family lineage or go to a family with high political or economic power (Van Eck 2007:95). As such, marriages were largely for economic or social gain with the patriarch of the family having the most say in who would wed who (Lemos n.d.). However, it would seem that men had some agency in their marriages as can be seen in the example of Samson (Lemos n.d.). Thus, women were again viewed as a means to an end, and polygamy was still practised, although not encouraged (Van Eck 2007:95, 97).

Finally, during the Jewish or post-exilic period, the marriage strategy was defensive (Van Eck 2007:96). During this period, the focus was on protecting the purity of their nation. Ezra and Nehemiah had given a two-part declaration, being that no marriages outside of the Jews would be permitted to protect the purity of the nation (Hayes 1999:6). To protect the purity of the Jewish people, the men who had married non-Jewish women were asked to leave them and marry Jewish women instead. This was to protect the covenant that God had made with Israel (Van Eck 2007:97). However, Snyman (2017:181) suggests that the reason for this proclamation was political and cultural reasons rather than religious. Ezra and Nehemiah seem to take a harsher approach than Malachi, who seems to be happy to co-exist with the surrounding nations despite discouraging intermarriage (Snyman 2017:181). There is a return to the laws given in the book of Leviticus, including the shunning of sexual hospitality and adultery (Van Eck 2007:97). While polygamy was permitted at this time, it was not held to the ideal

As can be seen, marriage during the time of the Old Testament was often simply a case of economics (Davis 2022:195). However, romance did exist in some form, as can be seen in the Song of Songs (Lemos n.d.). Despite the aggressive approach of the Israelites, marriages were meant to be mutually and economically beneficial as the husband's family would gain the wife who could produce children, and the wife's family would often receive a bride price (Davis 2022:195).

2.3.1 Women in Families: Tamar

Many different focuses can be placed on the story of Tamar and Judah (Meyer & Pietersen 2016:243). Abasili (2011:286–288) indicates the search for descendants and progeny, while Kim (2012:558–559) chooses to focus on family building, humiliation and deception. Kruschwitz (2012:409–410) compares the narrative of Tamar and Judah to the story of Joseph which surrounds it, and Wüncch (2012:804) states the purpose of the narrative is to explain how Judah became the leader of the family and the role that he played later on. Claassens (2012:661) discusses the ethics of the narrative. Similar to Wüncch (2012:804), Claassen (2012:672) states that Judah learnt from his experience to protect the vulnerable. He also discusses the concept of dignity and the struggle to preserve humanity.

In ancient Israel, the importance of childbearing was immense. If a woman did not bear children, she was often considered a liability (De-Whyte 2018:27). This could have a major impact on how the woman was treated and viewed. Looking at the story of Tamar (Genesis 38), Esler (2011:77, 91) states that Tamar was unwilling to be sent back to her father's house after the death of her second husband, without having borne any children, especially a son. Having a son was the highest honour a woman could have, as not only did she produce an heir for her husband, but she established a place for herself in her husband's family where she was essentially a stranger (Esler 2011:86–87). Tamar would rather construct a shameful plan in which she could have the possibility of bearing a child for the family to which she had been married than be seen as a barren woman (Esler 2011:78). A childless widow did not have a place in society (Olanisebe & Oladosu 2014:2).

Before this is considered any further, some thought needs to be given to how Tamar ended up in Judah's household. Unlike how marriages are conducted in the Western world, in ancient Israel, it was the father's responsibility to find a wife for his son, and this was also to be arranged with the woman's father (Esler 2011:90; De-Whyte 2018:243). This was the case with Tamar, as Judah took a wife for his eldest son, according to Genesis 38:6. As was tradition, Judah's first concern was for his eldest son (Esler 2011:90). While the text does not provide any background on Tamar's family, it is thus likely that they were Canaanites meaning there would be major cultural differences between Tamar and her new family (Esler 2011:91). This also shows that Judah did not have much concern for what kind of family his son was marrying (De-Whyte 2018:243).

When a woman married, she would completely leave her family behind and become part of her husband's family. She was often considered a stranger until she produced a child for her new husband (Esler 2011:86–87). As Tamar never bore children for Judah's sons, she was likely never truly accepted as part of the family (Esler 2011:92), as is evidenced by Judah's treatment of her after his second son's death.

The death of Er was a rather sudden occurrence. Genesis 38:7 states that Er was evil in the sight of God but gives no reason as to why. While scholars have speculated as to the reason, there is no factual explanation (Esler 2011:92; De-Whyte 2018:243). As was tradition, his family would have gone through a period of mourning. How long this

period was is uncertain. The family would have taken this to reflect on Er's untimely death (Esler 2011:91). It is evident that Judah and his wife did not hold Tamar responsible for Er's death, as they did not prohibit her from marrying their second son, Onan (Esler 2011:93). Onan was to fulfil the responsibilities of a levirate marriage.

Levirate marriage was the responsibility of the brother to marry his deceased brother's widow (Olanisebe & Oladosu 2014:2). Genesis 38 is the first time this custom is found in the Bible, but it becomes a long-standing tradition as it is found in the story of Ruth as well. There are several purposes to this arrangement. The reason for this tradition is explained in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, which explains that if the brother produces offspring, the deceased's name "may not be blotted out of Israel" (Deu 25:6) (Esler 2011:93). De-Whyte (2018:243) provides two reasons for levirate marriages. Firstly, because the children and specifically sons born from this the levirate marriage would be considered the deceased's, this marriage would ensure that the memory and name of the deceased does not disappear as is stated in Deuteronomy. The deceased was seen as having a right to a son. Secondly, it would ensure that the inheritance intended for the deceased and his descendants would remain in the family. Olanisebe and Oladosu (2014:2) on the other hand, suggests that the purpose of marriage was rather to protect the widow who did not have any children and was considered an outcast.

Onan thus partly, fulfils his levirate duty by marrying Tamar. However, he too is struck down by God. The reason behind, Judah's second son, Onan's death is not veiled like his brother's. Genesis 38: 8-10 explains that Onan did not want to produce children for his dead brother as was required by the levirate marriage (Esler 2011:93; De-Whyte 2018:243–244). The thought of these children not being his own did not always seem very attractive to Onan and was likely not always attractive to other brothers. Olanisebe and Oladosu (2014:2) state that the brother could refuse to marry the widow, however, this could be accompanied by great public shame for his descendants. However, this did not discourage everyone. This may partially be due to the loss of inheritance (De-Whyte 2018:244). After the death of the firstborn son, the second son would take the place of the first-born and according to tradition, the firstborn would receive a double portion of the inheritance when their father died (Esler 2011:92). However, if the second son was to produce offspring for the first-born son, he would lose his inheritance as this would mean that the second son would lose his now double inheritance (Esler 2011:94; De-Whyte 2018:244). This was likely the case

with Onan. With his elder brother's death, Onan was now considered the eldest and as such would receive the double inheritance. However, then he was given his brother's wife to create offspring for Er. Because he wanted to save face, it was beneficial for him to accept Tamar as a wife but not to impregnate her (De-Whyte 2018:244). Instead of fulfilling his responsibility, he tries to deceive his family by performing coitus interruptus (Esler 2011:94). It is this that the Bible identifies as the cause of his death. Genesis 38:9-10 states that Onan's behaviour was evil in God's sight. Onan's actions were not only selfish financially, but he was also selfish towards Tamar as she would not have the honour of bearing children who would care for her later on (De-Whyte 2018:245). Because of his actions, God took Onan's life.

While Judah and his wife may not have previously considered that Tamar was responsible for Er's death, after the death of Onan, they were bound to have suspicions (Esler 2011:96). This is clear from Judah's interaction with Tamar when he asks her to return to her father's house until his youngest son is old enough to marry. This was an odd occurrence as she no longer had a place in her father's house (Olanisebe & Oladosu 2014:2). While Judah did not share his thoughts with Tamar, after a while it would become quite apparent to her that Judah had no intention of giving her to his last son for another levirate marriage (Esler 2011:96). However, this did not only mean that, Tamar could not come back to Judah's house but that she would remain a widow in her father's house (Esler 2011:96). She was not free to remarry anyone as Judah had told her to wait for his youngest son to reach maturity (Esler 2011:96). This meant that Tamar was stuck under Judah's command without receiving the honour of being a wife and mother (Esler 2011:96).

It is at this point that Tamar decides to take the situation into her own hands. In Genesis 38:14 it states that Tamar had seen that Shelah had grown up and was ready to marry, but Judah had not called for Tamar. It was here that her suspicions were realised that Judah did not want her to marry Shelah (De-Whyte 2018:245,247). As such, Tamar came up with a plan (Esler 2011:98). She disguised herself as a prostitute to trick Judah into having a child with her (Esler 2011:99). Up until this point, Tamar had been rather passive; this was to be expected of a woman in this society, but now she springs into action (Esler 2011:99; De-Whyte 2018:246). She had been submissive to Judah, obeying his commands, but now she steps out of the accepted patriarchal role of a childless widow (Esler 2011:99).

Tamar removes her mourning robes and dresses herself up as a prostitute with a veil so that Judah would not recognise her (Esler 2011:99). De-Whyte (2018:247) explains that it is unsure whether Tamar was masquerading as a prostitute, but Judah views her as such. It seems that Judah does not know his daughter-in-law well enough to recognise her with a veil on or even recognise her voice (Esler 2011:100). Judah and Tamar agree on the payment of a kid goat in exchange for sexual intercourse. However, Judah obviously did not have a kid with him, as such, he left his signate roll, staff and waist cord with Tamar as insurance that he would return with the payment (Esler 2011:100; De-Whyte 2018:248). This would have left Judah in a bit of an awkward situation as he needed these items to prove his identity (Esler 2011:100). Nevertheless, they perform the deed, and Tamar holds onto the items that Judah gave her. Not long thereafter, Judah sent Hirah to deliver the kid to Tamar, but the “prostitute” was nowhere to be found (Esler 2011:100; De-Whyte 2018:248). Judah, seemingly too embarrassed to go see Tamar (Esler 2011:100), sent Hirah to deliver the kid. However, while Hirah was looking for Tamar, he referred to her as a cult prostitute rather than just a common prostitute (Esler 2011:100–101; De-Whyte 2018:248–249). No matter which way he referred to her, no one knew about this prostitute, so Hirah returned to Judah, still holding the kid (Esler 2011:101). Judah decided that they should try to save face by not trying to pursue this woman. He was concerned that his reputation would be sullied by being associated with a common prostitute (Esler 2011:102).

After this, the story skips forward three months. Judah is informed that his daughter-in-law had an extramarital affair and had become pregnant. When Judah heard about his daughter-in-law’s promiscuity, he became enraged with her (Esler 2011:103). He once again tried to save face by reacting in the extreme. However, Tamar remained calm and set the second part of her plan in motion. As the people gathered to watch Tamar be burnt, she sent the items that she had collected from him as proof of their illicit meeting and Judah was shocked (Esler 2011:105). He had not realised that he had slept with and impregnated his daughter-in-law. Judah stated that Tamar was more righteous than himself. He not only admitted that she was more righteous, but he cleared her of any guilt because she had done what was right in his estimation (Esler 2011:105; Olanisebe & Oladosu 2014:2). Tamar is vindicated (De-Whyte 2018:250). Whether or not Judah actually gave Tamar to Selah as wife is not certain

(Esler 2011:105). He did have children, but we were not told about his mother (Esler 2011:105).

Throughout all of this, Tamar can be considered the heroine of the story (Esler 2011:105). Throughout the story, Tamar is the main character. By the end of the story, Tamar has healthy twin boys named Perez and Zerah, named Judah (De-Whyte 2018:250). While the rest of Tamar's story is unknown, she is in the genealogy of both David and Jesus (Esler 2011:106), an honour that very few women have ever received. One can only assume that Tamar was a very proud mother and proud of the family that she had created, even though it had seemed impossible (Esler 2011:106). Tamar's story shows the practice of levirate marriage and displays all its flaws. In the end, she needed to take her fate into her own hands.

2.3.2 Polygamy in Families: Hanna

The story of Hanna, Peninnah, and Elkanah shows the role of women in the family, the effects of polygamy and the influence of childlessness on the entire family. The story is found in 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2, which document the story of the prophet Samuel's conception and birth. It focuses on Samuel's mother, Hannah, and her importance cannot be overemphasised (Esler 2011:111). She was incredibly influential in Samuel's life, which is why it is included in his story. However, Hannah's childlessness is noted in the first few verses. In the first three verses of the chapter, the characters are introduced: Elkanah, the father; Hannah, the first wife; Peninnah, the second wife; Eli, the high priest; Hophni; and Phinehas, Eli's two sons.

As is still found in many cultures today, Elkanah was a polygamist. The specific type of polygamy is known as polygyny, meaning multiple wives. This is still prevalent in Africa, making up between 20-50% of all marriages on the continent (Abasili 2015:582). There are many reasons why a husband would take a second wife, but the most predominant reason is childlessness (Abasili 2015:582). If the first wife was barren, the husband was entitled to take another wife to preserve his lineage. Elkanah came from a very highly esteemed family lineage, however, he was not an elite (Esler 2011:119–120; Abasili 2015:584). Still, Elkanah was wealthy enough to support two wives, as it was tradition to treat each wife equally, if possible, providing each wife with her own house or at least room (Esler 2011:116). The tradition of polygyny was the

normal practice of the day (Abasili 2015:584), as Elkanah was a man of good repute and would not risk doing something to bring that into jeopardy.

However, this complicated matters when the husband passed away. In ancient Israel and similarly today, property is passed down from parent to child. However, unlike today's culture, property was usually passed from father to son of the closest male relative (Esler 2011:113–114). However, in Numbers 27, there are laws surrounding inheritance, which state that the eldest daughters may inherit if their father dies without having a son (Davis 2022:194). Nonetheless, to preserve this inheritance inside the family, daughters were often married off to their patriarchal cousins (Esler 2011:114). This meant that once the father passed away, his property would stay with the extended family. To a certain extent, this was to protect the daughter as well (Esler 2011:114). As mentioned previously, women would need to leave their father's house and live with their husband and new father-in-law because the son's family was generally added to the patriarch's family (Davis 2022:195). She was completely isolated from her family and often treated as little more than a slave. By having her marry within the family, she had a certain sense of security that her family would take better care of her than a stranger (Esler 2011:114).

However, this custom of the wife moving into the house of her husband's family is in contrast to the mandate given in Genesis 2:23-24 which states that the husband should leave his father and mother. This again shows the breakdown from the ideal set for marriage in Genesis 2, just as polygamy is also a departure from the ideal (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024).

While this system has safeguards intended to protect women, it is flawed. If the father of the family died, the sons would look after their mother and allow her to live with them. This is if the father did not have a brother who could take on the widow in a levirate marriage (Davis 2022:194). However, if the mother did not have any sons, the inheritance would be passed on to the daughter's husband, likely a cousin. The inheritance would stay in the family, but there was always a chance that the husband was not very interested in taking care of the family's matriarch. This would become an issue if the inheritor rejects the matriarch. She may be forced to leave her family and return to her father's house (Esler 2011:115)

The wife would need to produce a son to prevent this. However, if she does not produce a son, the husband could take a second wife who would hopefully produce a son for him (Esler 2011:115), or the father could decide to adopt someone to become his heir (White 2014:18). Alternatively, the husband could divorce his wife because of her bareness, but this would come at a price. The husband would need to pay a settlement equal to the bride price originally paid (White 2014:19). However, this was not the only reason men would obtain a second wife. Sometimes, it was merely because the husband wanted a younger and more attractive wife, and sometimes, the household simply needed more female labour (Esler 2011:115–116).

No matter the reason for the addition of a second wife, it often causes tension between the wives, and their relationships are rarely positive (Esler 2011:116). Quite often, these women see each other as competitors for the husband's attention (Esler 2011:116). Generally, this would lead there to a favoured "beloved" or first wife, who would be considered the "mistress" of the house (Esler 2011:117; White 2014:18). She held priority over the other wife or wives, and her children would too, and children would often be drawn into the mothers' rivalry (Esler 2011:117). However, in the case where the first wife was unable to have children, this would make her position very precarious, as a marriage without children can be seen as not being a fully-fledged marriage (White 2014:18). This meant that the woman was often very sensitive about their situation, especially if someone else was expecting a child (Esler 2011:118). If the first wife had been barren, she would have been in danger of losing her position (White 2014:18). This might have been the case for Hanna.

It is safe to assume that Hannah was Elkanah's first wife as she was listed before Peninnah, and she was the one unable to have children, which could have led Elkanah to marry a second time (Esler 2011:121; Abasili 2015:585). This could not have been an easy situation for Elkanah or Hannah, both experiencing the shame of not having a child. For Elkanah, it would be the shame of not continuing his esteemed family lineage and for Hannah, the shame of bareness (Abasili 2015:585). The bareness Hannah was experiencing would have been seen as a curse (Esler 2011:121). This left Elkanah with little choice but to obtain a second wife to maintain his family's honour. However, it is possible that Hannah may have been the one to suggest that Elkanah take a second wife just as Sarah had done (White 2014:18). While this may endanger her position as first wife, it would prevent divorce. Legally, a husband may

only take on a second wife if he did not divorce the first, and he could only take a second wife if the first became incapable of performing her wifely responsibilities (White 2014:18). However, this was still a large risk as it would be very likely that the two wives would become rivals (Esler 2011:121). Positive relationships could develop between the wives, but this does not seem to be the norm (Esler 2011:122).

However, Elkanah took a second wife, and as can be seen in 1 Samuel 1, Hannah and Peninnah did not have a positive relationship. The account begins with a yearly feast at Shiloh. Elkanah and his whole family would go to Shiloh each year for the feast. When Elkanah made an offering, he would provide each family member with a portion of the offering. Each member would receive an equal portion; however, Elkanah gave Hannah a double portion. He did this because he loved her. While it is not explicitly mentioned, it would be quite possible that Hannah and Peninnah fell into the pattern of a loved and unloved wife, Hannah being the beloved and Peninnah the unloved (Esler 2011:123). It would follow that Hannah would be considered the wife with the most authority (Esler 2011:123).

Hannah and Peninnah had a contentious relationship. Verse 6 very clearly states that Peninnah was Hannah's rival. Peninnah teased and provoked Hannah about her bareness (Abasili 2015:585). She would do this yearly when they went to Shiloh. While it is not directly stated, Hannah might have been rather unhappy with the concept of sharing her husband even if she understood and supported the need for a second wife (Abasili 2015:585; Esler 2011:124). This would mean that she may have acted coldly, not necessarily harshly, but certainly not warmly welcoming (Esler 2011:124). Peninnah would also have been in a difficult situation. As previously discussed, a wife would need to leave her family behind and go to live with her husband, where she had practically no status until she bore a child (Esler 2011:124). This would have been the same in Peninnah's case. When Peninnah had her first son, she would have received a place of honour in the household (Esler 2011:124). This would mean that she would have gained respect in Elkanah's eyes, and he would be somewhat indebted to her for producing him an heir, however, she had not gained Elkanah's love (Esler 2011:125). This would have been difficult for Peninnah as she had done everything right and still not gained her husband's affection. The rivalry between the two wives would have been aggravated by the circumstances at Shiloh.

The space where the offering took place was rather wide open and very public (Esler 2011:125). This meant that Elkanah's actions were public, and everyone could see how Elkanah treated Hannah as more special than Peninnah despite the children she had provided for her husband (Esler 2011:126). This public humiliation likely caused Peninnah to degrade Hannah (Esler 2011:126). However, she humiliated Hannah so badly that she refused to eat because she was weeping so heavily. Peninnah challenged Hannah for respect and position in the household, and instead of accepting it, Hannah chose to accept further humiliation (Esler 2011:127).

Whatever Peninnah had said affected Hannah very severely. It is possible that it was not Peninnah's humiliation or children that brought about Hannah's desire to have children; that was an internal desire that had been long unfulfilled (Esler 2011:128). On the other hand, it is quite possible that she was still severely affected by Peninnah and would welcome the respect she would gain from having a child (Esler 2011:128).

Elkanah saw how upset Hannah was and he tried lovingly to comfort her. However, he did not do this most tactfully. He asks her "Am I not better to you than ten sons?". While this came out of a place of love, it seems that Elkanah did not have a full understanding of the situation (Esler 2011:128). It would seem that because Elkanah was no longer childless, he struggled to empathise with Hannah's bareness (Abasili 2015:586). While Elkanah seems to be fully aware of how Peninnah treats Hannah, he seems to think that his love and support should be enough to make the humiliation of no effect (Esler 2011:129). He also seems not to understand that Hannah may have other concerns about not having a son, including what might happen to her after his death (Esler 2011:129). Hannah is left alone in her suffering (Abasili 2015:586).

Hannah, despite Elkanah's attempts to soothe her, goes into the temple to continue her petition with God for a son and promises to return him to God (Esler 2011:130). Eli, the priest, mistook her for a drunk and was unable to hear her. After some time, Eli did, recognize Hannah's earnestness in her prayers following their conversation. He gave Hannah the assurance that God would hear her plea and grant her want to go back to her family and eat. Hannah was relieved and comforted by this event because her expression had brightened.

Upon returning home, Hannah falls pregnant with Samuel. This would have changed the relationship between Hannah and Peninnah drastically as Peninnah now no longer

had anything that Hannah did not (Esler 2011:131). As Peninnah could no longer torment Hannah about her bareness, she most likely kept her distance and as such, she is not specifically mentioned again (Esler 2011:131). Elkanah would still have looked after Peninnah as his responsibility; however, his love was directed to Hannah (Esler 2011:132).

2.4 New Testament and Early Church History

According to Van Aarde (2020:199-200), the New Testament places special emphasis on the concept of being adopted into God's family. Many places in the New Testament, but especially in Paul's writings and in the book of Matthew, refer to believers as children of the promise or as children of adoption.

Jesus also speaks to this concept, and it may be somewhat reflected in His choice of celibacy. According to Van Eck (2020:4), Jesus may have chosen to remain celibate and not partake in the family structure of the day as it was often used to marginalise women, children and weaker men. Jesus tended to reverse the expected roles of society. For example, Jesus states in Luke 18:16-17 that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the children. This turns the normal household hierarchy upside down.

In other family matters, Jesus speaks on the topic of divorce, as in Matthew 19. The Mishnah Gittin 9:10 states that there are three opinions on divorce. The first took a conservative approach and stated that divorce was only permitted in case of a sexual offence (Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi 190AD). The second allows for divorce even for minor infractions on the wife's part, such as burning food. The third allows divorce for reasons as trivial as the husband finding another woman more attractive and wanting to marry her instead (Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi 190AD). Mueller (2017:2) explains that some viewed divorce as something that was given to Israel by God and thus saw divorce as a privilege. This is somewhat reflected in the attitude of the Pharisees when they approached Jesus with the question of divorce. However, in both Matthew and Mark, Jesus displays a different attitude. He starts by referring to Genesis 2 speaking on the creation of man and woman and their union. Both Martens (2021:18) and Nyarko (2023:138) suggest that Jesus is referring back to this to argue that marriage is "a lifelong union of body, mind, and spirit between one man and one woman." According to Hillel (2015), Jesus' teachings tended to be protective of marriage.

Jesus further states that while divorce was allowed, there were certain conditions surrounding remarriage. Mueller (2017:2–3) found several different ways in which these conditions are interpreted. The first states that divorce is not allowed at all and as such remarriage would also not be permitted. Marten (2021:24) suggests that the exemption clause was never said by Jesus but added by Matthew or his followers. This would mean that Jesus never allowed divorce. On the other hand, scholars such as Johnston (1994:15), suggest that the clause speaking on remarriage was not spoken by Christ but added later on by the church under the authority of the Holy Spirit and that, as such, the Church has the authority to determine other reasons for divorce and remarriage (Mueller 2017:3). Secondly, divorce is only permissible in cases of adultery; however, there is some debate on the word used that is translated as adultery (Fitzmyer 1976:207–211; Martens 2021:24–26) 210. Both Fitzmyer (1976:207–211) and Martens (2021:24–26) suggest that the word “porneia” should not be understood as adultery but rather refers to incestuous marriages that were in conflict with the regulations found in Leviticus 18. Mueller (2017:3), however, suggests that other behaviours may also be included in this exception clause, such as behaving in a manner that is unbecoming of a Christian. More broad interpretations suggest that while the Bible is opposed to divorce, it does make allowance for it in circumstances such as abandonment or abuse, and in these cases, remarriage would be possible (Mueller 2017:3; Hillel 2015). Mueller (2017:3) also states that the passage can be interpreted as figurative, and as such, marriage is seen as permanent, but divorce and remarriage are allowed.

Mueller (2017:2) suggests that there are three different views on remarriage. This includes remarriage not being allowed (Fitzmyer 1976:207–211; Martens 2021:22). Remarriage is only allowed if the divorce was due to adultery (Van Tine 2018:405–406; Martens 2021:31; Nyarko 2023:141) and remarriage only being allowed for the party who did not commit adultery, and remarriage only being allowed when the relationship was broken during the engagement (Mueller 2017:2). On the other hand, Farley (2008:308–309) suggests that marriage is not as indissoluble as is suggested. Farley (2008:309–310) also suggested that while a marriage will change a person, this does not prohibit someone from remarrying.

According to Mueller (2017:15), the disciples react interestingly to Jesus’ statement on divorce. They seem to agree with the Pharisees and even state that it is better not

to marry if they cannot divorce their wife. Despite Jesus' support for marriage, He responds to the disciples' statement by saying that not all men can remain celibate but that there are some for who this is the best option. Jesus then speaks about three groups of eunuchs, both literal and figurative eunuchs (Hillel 2015; Mueller 2017:16). The first group are those who are born eunuchs, which refers to literal eunuchs, such as those who have medical conditions regarding their reproductive systems (Mueller 2017:16). The second group contains people who have been made eunuchs by other people. This can refer to anyone who is not suited for marriage due to other people's actions (Mueller 2017:16). Finally, the last group includes those who decided not to marry to serve God without the distraction of a partner (Mueller 2017:16; Martens 2021:21). Martens (2021:21) suggests that Jesus may be saying that celibacy was a requirement for discipleship. It can be argued that Jesus was part of this last group, although He may have had other motives as well as suggested by van Eck (2020:4), who states that His celibacy may have been a protest against the marriage systems of the time that were often used to marginalise women, children and weaker men.

Van Eck (2020:3) identifies two marriage strategies in the New Testament, the first being found during the time of Paul's apostleship and the second being found after the time of Paul (Van Eck 2020:3). In Paul's letters, Paul advocates a defensive strategy similar to that found during the post-exilic period (Hayes 2002:92; Van Eck 2007:3). As with the Jews, there is a focus on the purity of the Christians, however, unlike the Jews, Paul does not advise the Christians to leave their non-believing spouses unless the spouse is causing them major difficulties regarding their faith (Hayes 2002:100; Van Eck 2020:3). However, if a Christian came to the faith unmarried or if they wanted to remarry, they were advised to marry within the Christian community. In a sense, the defensive strategy had not ended but was adopted from the Jews by the Christians (Van Eck 2020:3).

As the Christian church developed after Paul's letters, this defensive approach was solidified, and Christians were encouraged to avoid marriage with non-believers completely and rather marry those born in the church or new believers who had not previously been married (Van Eck 2020:3). While it is clear that polygamy was still practised within the Christian community, those who could be chosen as leaders could only be chosen, if they were monogamous (Van Eck 2020:4). As such, monogamy was encouraged.

Despite Paul's advice about marriage, he chose to remain celibate. While he promoted celibacy by stating that it is good for a man not to be married, he did not deem that marriage itself was wrong (Van Eck 2020:5). However, he did not see this as the best option, but rather as a method to prevent sexual immorality as it would curb fornication (Nicolaides 2018:5; Van Eck 2020:5). He advocated celibacy if at all possible even after someone had been married before such as in cases of divorce or the death of a spouse (Nicolaides 2018:5–7; Van Eck 2020:5). The main reason for Paul advocating so vehemently for celibacy is that marriage takes time away from working for God and distracts both people from their duties to God (Van Eck 2020:5).

According to Van Eck (2020:5), the letters to Timothy and the Hebrews explain that believers should not heed the teachings of groups such as the Encratites, who forbid marriage, and these letters explain that marriage should be esteemed. Throughout the New Testament, marriage is considered the norm with instruction given on the conduct of married couples towards each other and their children (Van Eck 2020:5). Family was also important to the early church as it was the first mission field for Christianity (Van Eck 2020:6). Extended families were often the first convents (Van Eck 2020:6). This focus on families was supported by the Hellenised Roman culture of the day (Van Eck 2020:6). This helped the spread of the Christian message as the family values reflected the values of the surrounding culture (Van Eck 2020:6).

Celibacy in the early church has an interesting history. Some early church fathers regarded celibate Christians to be egotistic, believing themselves to be better than their peers (Van Eck 2020:5). Some groups, such as the Encratites, denied their members marriage and groups like the Gnostics regarded sexuality as a part of this world's base desires, and such be overcome for spiritual marriage (Van Eck 2020:5). Van Eck (2007:5) explains that Tatian also understood that celibacy was the ideal and considered all sexual activity sinful and that believers should return to pre-fall conditions. Olsen (2008:11–12) also explains that Tertullian expressed that “celibacy was the most effective technique with which to achieve clarity of the soul.” The theology of celibacy developed, and by the 3rd-century celibacy was considered the ideal by most Christianity (Van Eck 2020:5). Throughout the Middle Ages, celibacy was seen as superior to marriage (Olson 2008:12). In the Middle Ages, celibacy became a prerequisite for anyone who wanted to take any religious position (Olson 2008:11). It is for this reason that monasteries started to arise at the end of the 2nd

century (Van Eck 2020:5). In these monasteries, monks could live a life of high morality, solitude and celibacy (Van Eck 2020:5). However, as time went on the emphasis on celibacy subsided and the emphasis returned to marriage and family (Van Eck 2020:5).

2.5 Summary

Throughout the Bible, there are different structures of family, including polygamous households, celibate individuals and widows. While some scholars deem that marriage is a social construction developed through the influences of culture, and as such, there is not one ideal for marriage. However, the majority of Christian denominations express that marriage was established by God in the Garden of Eden and this marriage portrays the ideal. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that culture influences the way in which marriage is practised throughout the world and in biblical history. This is then why there are marriages within the Bible that do not mirror the ideal and include things such as polygamy and divorce as well as the unfair treatment of women.

This chapter also briefly examined some understandings of the theology of marriage. It specifically examined Thatcher's (1999), Shenk's (2018), Burke's (2015), and Ademiluka's (2021) views on marriage. While this was not a comprehensive study, it provides a basic understanding that there are varying views on the theology of marriage.

Generally, women's social stature was linked to their ability to have children, and they were generally viewed as either the property of their father and ownership could then be transferred to their husband. When a woman was married into a family, she could earn stature and respect in the household by providing children for her husband. If she could not bear children, her husband could divorce her, send her back to her father's house, or he could take a second wife. As such, the ability to bear children was the most important factor in a woman's standing within the family.

The inability to conceive was not the only reason why a man would take a second wife. Polygyny is found throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. The reasons for polygyny range from the need for children to political marriages and displays of wealth. Polygamy still exists in many societies today for similar reasons.

However, towards the time of the New Testament, polygamy had decreased among the Jews but was not absent. By the time of the early church, there were many questions regarding celibacy, with some claiming it to be more advantageous than marriage. Some of the early church leaders preferred this lifestyle, encouraged by Paul's teachings and the statement about celibacy made by Jesus. This view developed over time; however, the majority of Christian denominations today state that marriage is preferred over celibacy. Despite this, there are some churches, such as the Roman Catholic church, that do not allow their clergy to marry.

This chapter examined two views on the origin of marriage and the implications thereof. It took a close look at the experiences of two women in the Old Testament, Tamar and Hannah, as a case study of the importance of childbearing at this time, but are also prime examples of how levirate marriage and polygamy affected families. It viewed what scholars say about what the Bible says on topics such as divorce and celibacy. It also examined the theology of marriage. It also examined the views of the Adventist church on marriage and divorce as this is the understanding that will be used throughout the study. This view will be used as it is, firstly, in line with the majority of Christian denominations' interpretation of Bible literature on marriage and divorce. Secondly, the research questions call for an understanding of the Adventist perspective as this is the understanding that Adventist counsellors would generally hold.

Chapter 3

The changing family structures

3.1 Introduction

The shape of the family structure has changed since its conception. As seen in the previous chapter, the family structure in ancient Israel was very focused on the extended family and had a patriarchal leader. This family structure is still prevalent in some cultures; however, Western cultures are generally focused on a nuclear family structure.

This chapter will discuss the changes in the family structure over the last few decades and the movement from the traditional nuclear family to various structures that have become more prevalent today. It will examine some non-nuclear family structures which have become more widespread in recent history (Hall et al. 2018). This includes blended families in their various arrangements, as well as single-parent households. As part of this changing landscape, there is also the LGBTQ+ community who are creating their unique families by means of adoption and assisted reproduction.

This chapter will endeavour to determine some of the causes of this change and analyse some of the challenges these families face that are unique to them. It will also examine if the same change trends can be seen within the Adventist Church. As part of this study, an Adventist perspective on families must be considered.

3.2 Demographics

Within South Africa, the amount of alternative family structures is fast overtaking the amount of nuclear families, with as few as 25% of children growing up in nuclear families (Newman 2022). The marriage rate among South African women of reproductive age has dropped dramatically in the last three decades, and in 2015, only 34.8% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 were married (Makiwane, Nduna & Khalema 2016:27). According to Makiwane et al. (2016:31), in 2014, only 37.8% of families were headed by a couple, while 62.2% were headed by a single parent.

However, from an African cultural perspective it is not simply the nuclear family that raises children, but the community as a whole (Makiwane, Nduna & Khalema 2016:26). So if the biological parents are not present, the extended family will take over the role (Makiwane, Nduna, et al. 2016:26). This, however, does not mean that the social parents can fill the gap left by the biological parents (Makiwane, Nduna, et al. 2016:26).

3.3 Changing Family Structures

Family structures have changed since the inception of the family unit. According to Adventist theology, marriage was instated in the Garden of Eden (Adventist.org n.d.). This would mean that the original plan for marriage was similar to the nuclear family as we know it today. The family structure is to be protected, and divorce is discouraged (“28 Fundamental Beliefs” 2020:10), with adultery and abuse seen as the only valid reasons for divorce (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024). Even so, reconciliation is encouraged in cases of infidelity (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024). Despite this, only 27% of Adventists do not agree that marriage is a commitment for life and should be preserved at all costs (Sahlin 2010:63).

However, despite the ideal, the SDA Church’s policy does not shun individuals and families that do not fit the ideal (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2024). This is reflected in the fact that in 2009, 27% of Adventists in the United States had been through a divorce (Sahlin 2010:1). While this is not on par with families in the USA outside of the SDA church, it shows that families in the church are not immune to the changes in family structure with a significant increase in divorces from 1974 to 2009 (Sahlin 2010:2). While the official statement of the church is to support families experiencing divorce, there is a small percentage of the members who are of the opinion that divorced members should lose their membership (Sahlin 2010:94). There is stronger support for the idea that only the party which was the cause of the divorce should be removed from membership (Sahlin 2010:96). This however is not always an easy distinction. There is also more support for the idea that divorced members should not be ordained as elders (Sahlin 2010:98).

Over 70% of Adventists regard the family structure as disintegrating (Sahlin 2010:65). However, there is not much evidence to support this belief except personal experiences with 67% of Adventists personally knowing families who had dissolved

(Sahlin 2010:67). 14% of Adventists reported having a child outside of marriage and 18% reported living together before marriage (Sahlin 2010:27). This may be because 60% of Adventists report having sex before marriage (Sahlin 2010:27) even though it is not in line with the Church's doctrines (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee 1987).

The majority of Adventist families have children (Sahlin 2010:40). Most have biological children, 26% have stepchildren, and 7% have adopted children (Sahlin 2010:42).

Different cultures have always had different attitudes towards marriage, sex and family (Malinowski 1962:37-38). However, no matter what the culture, these attitudes change over time. The changes to family structures have not happened overnight. The nuclear family, as it is known today, has not always been the norm. Before the 18th century in Europe, the family was considered to be everyone in the household (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). Children were often sent to live with other families to learn trades or to become their servants (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). High infant and maternal mortality contributed to a larger focus on survival than family (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). In the 19th and 20th centuries, as mortality rates decreased, the nuclear family emerged (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). In the 1960s, changing attitudes had already been noted (Malinowski 1962:36–37). One thing that has not changed is the importance of family (Hughes & Munoz-Guzman 2016:XI).

Just as with family, marriage has more than one definition. The current definition of marriage in South Africa is very broad as includes civil marriages, African traditional marriages as well and many types of religious marriages (Makiwane, Gumede & Molefi 2016:28). Despite this broad definition, marriage rates in South Africa are surprisingly low (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:28). According to Greeff & Cloete (2015:188), marriage rates within South Africa have declined since 2008. The marriage rate in South Africa is lower than in other African countries (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:27). The reasons for the low and declining marriage rate are numerous, including inaccurate historical recordkeeping, cultural changes regarding lobola and the disparity in the sex rate (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:28-29). Higher rates of cohabitation are also associated with lower marriage rates, even though most women do not see cohabitation as a replacement for marriage (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:30). However, cohabitation rates are not high in all population groups

(Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:30). While Makiwane, Gumede, et. al. (2016) is a not entirely up to date, it helps to show the changes in family structures over time.

Couples in South Africa are getting married later on with the average age for women getting married being 29 but men being 34 (Statistics South Africa 2022a; Govender, Naidoo & Taylor 2019:74) and only 34.8% of reproductive-age women being married (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:27). However, sexual activity and reproduction do occur outside of marriage (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:28; Biney, Amoateng & Ewemooje 2020:3). In fact, because people are getting married later, they generally have more sexual partners (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:34). The average age at which individuals become sexually active is 15.8 (Onoya, Zuma, Zungu, Shisana & Mehlomakhulu 2015:100). However, Biney et al. (Biney et al. 2020:14) found that if women become sexually active before the age of 14, they will generally have more children. Men report having multiple sexual partners more often than women, and this is especially in the 15-24 year age range, with 37.5% of men between the ages of 15-24 in 2012 reporting multiple partners but only around 8% of women in the same age group reporting the same (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:34; Onoya et al. 2015:99). Despite the lower sex partner rate of women, many unplanned pregnancies do occur. This is partially because contraception, while widely available for free throughout South Africa, is only used by 48% of reproductive-age women (Biney et al. 2020:3). 71.9% of reproductive-age women report having had at least one child (Biney et al. 2020:10). Nevertheless, married women on average have 3.5 children while unmarried women have 2.5 (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:31).

According to Pasley and Garneau (2012:149), 60% of American marriages end in divorce. In 2011, about 4% of South African marriages were second marriages (Greeff & Cloete 2015:188). This has increased to about 5% by 2022 (Statistics South Africa 2022b:8). This does not include partners who are living together but not married. Unfortunately, these second marriages do not seem to last, as an American study conducted by Bramlett and Mosher (2002:28) found that more than 20% of second marriages end in divorce within 5 years and this is even more prevalent in families with stepchildren. Greeff & Cloete (2015:188) found that it is not the structure of the family that influences divorce but rather the quality of the family relationships.

In South Africa, the family is very important and often the extended family is much more involved in the family than in European society (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:23; Baloyi 2014:24). Hall et al. (2018:34) found that 36% of South African households are comprised of extended family. This makes it the most prevalent family structure. There are many cases where the extended family will raise the children, and this can happen for a variety of reasons (Mokone 2006:193; Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:26; Hall et al. 2018:38). Grandparents will often care for their grandchildren as a result of unemployment, parents who work far from home, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and teenage pregnancy (Mokone 2006:193; Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:36). However, it is not only the extended family, who influence the nuclear family in African society but the community as well (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:25–26; Baloyi 2014:24–25).

3.3.1 Single Parents

The percentage of single-headed households has increased in the last few decades. In 1997, 54.7% of households were single-headed, which rose to 62.2% in 2014 (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:31). Additionally, in 2014, 70% of live births were to women who had never been married (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:31). This is partially because South Africans are getting married later than in previous years (Govender et al. 2019:74).

Unplanned pregnancies create some alternative families. According to Barron, Subedar, Letsoko, Makua & Pillay (2022:252) the teenage pregnancy rate in South Africa is in line with the global average of 41 births per 1000 girls aged 15-19 from 2015 to 2020. However, according to the District Health Information System, in 2017/18 the birth rate of 15-19 years old was 49.6 per 1000, and this increased to 57.9 per 1000 in 2021/22 (Barron, Subedar, Letsoko, Makua & Pillay 2022:253). This is an increase of 14.1% (Barron et al. 2022:254). These numbers may not be that high considering that this only translates to 70 656 live births in 2021/22; however, there were also 7211 known terminations for 10-19-year-olds in the same period (Barron et al. 2022:253). There has also been an increase of 8.3% in terminations for 10-19-year-olds since 2017 (Barron et al. 2022:253).

All of these statistics come down to the fact that as many as 39% of girls aged 15-19 have experienced pregnancy and 49% of them will be pregnant again within 24 months

(Coert, Adebisi, Rich & Roman 2021:2). In a study on Sub-Saharan single mothers, it was found that 15% of single mothers have a second child within three years usually without marriage (Odimegwu et al. 2020:9). A similar but smaller South African study found that 19.9% of teenage mothers had a repeat pregnancy before they reached 20 (Govender et al. 2019:78). Some factors influence the likelihood of repeat pregnancy. Firstly, if there were issues with the first pregnancy, such as spontaneous abortion or miscarriage, the probability of repeat pregnancy increased by 66% (Govender et al. 2019:78). According to Govender et al. (2019:79), this is likely because the mothers use this as a coping mechanism after the loss of their previous pregnancy (2019:79). Secondly, teenage mothers who have a lower educational background are at a higher risk of repeat pregnancy than mothers who have received higher levels of education (Govender et al. 2019:79).

These early pregnancies are due to the young age at which sexual activity begins, with the South African average being 15 for males and 16 for females (Govender et al. 2019:73). Compared to the average age of first marriage for females being 29, many women will become pregnant before getting married (Govender et al. 2019:74). According to Govender et al. (2019:74) and Wall-Wieler et al. (2016:2) the daughters of teenage mothers as well as the sisters of teenage mothers are at a higher risk of becoming teenage mothers themselves. These adolescent pregnancies can lead to some difficult family dynamics. This is especially true for unwed mothers as they often request help from their parents and extended family for assistance with childcare with about 70% of the test group that was studied by Coert et al. (2021:4) asking other adults in the family to assist with child care. However, this study also found that single mothers who have a suitable social support structure rate higher satisfaction levels with their parenting abilities (Coert et al. 2021:8). Single teen mothers have higher levels of efficacy when they feel confident in their abilities and are socially supported (Coert et al. 2021:10). This is beneficial as 43.7% of adolescent mothers will experience some form of mental disorder compared to 25.7% of adult mothers (Kumar & Huang 2021:8).

Adolescents are not the only single mothers. While many women have their first unplanned pregnancy during their adolescence, they often have a second child much later in life after careful consideration. (Makiwane, Gumede, et al. 2016:32). In the United States of America, there are 25 million single-headed households with 80% of

these being single-mother households (Vo & Canty 2023:69). Single mothers experience many hardships and they are at higher risk of mental health issues, specifically depression (Rousou, Kouta, Middleton & Karanikola 2019:68). Rousou et al. (2019:80) found that 44.6% of the single mothers in the study displayed serious symptoms of mental distress. It was also found that high levels of mental stress were most closely associated with women between the ages of 35-44, who had received higher education but had reported economic hardships in the last year (Rousou et al. 2019:81). The study also revealed that mothers who had been single mothers for less than 2 years were twice as likely to experience mental distress than those who had been single mothers for more than 5 years (Rousou et al. 2019:80). One of the strongest correlations that was noted was that mothers who had the strongest social support were at the lowest risk of mental distress with the inverse also being true (Rousou et al. 2019:82).

However, mental distress is not the only issue that single parents face. There are also economic hardships. It would seem that these hardships fall harder on single mothers than single fathers due to the pay disparity between men and women (Lu, Walker, Richard & Younis 2019:1). On average, single fathers earn one and a half times as much as single mothers, however, in terms of non-working income, single mothers earn three and a half times more than their male counterparts (Lu et al. 2019:5). While single fathers may be better off financially, a study found that single fathers do not spend their money as wisely as single mothers (Lu et al. 2019:1). Nevertheless, single mothers are still much more likely to experience poverty than single fathers (Lu et al. 2019:6). Gender, however, is not the only factor that influences income. It has been suggested that ethnicity can play a role in economic growth (Lu et al. 2019:1). Age seems to be influential, considering that as age increases, so does income logically however, only until a point (Lu et al. 2019:7). This is important as single fathers average two years older than single mothers (Lu et al. 2019:12). There is also a clear distinction between the income and poverty status of single parents who are separated and single parents who are divorced. Single parents who are divorced seem to be better off financially than those who are separated (Lu et al. 2019:7). Unsurprisingly, higher levels of education correlate to higher income (Lu et al. 2019:11). This correlation seems to be very strong as the highest levels of poverty were among single mothers without a high school diploma (Lu et al. 2019:12). In South Africa, many single

mother households receive social grants for every child in their care as such some women see this as the secondary income or child support that they would have received from the father (Manyatshe 2016:236).

Many single parents are so due to divorce. Usually, if there are children involved, the parents will negotiate custody or if they cannot agree, the legal system will get involved. This was not always the case. Before the 1900s, children were largely deemed their father's property, and as such, in the rare cases that divorce did occur, children stayed with their father (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). This changed, however, as psychologists grew to understand the importance of the mother. It became the norm for children to remain with their mothers after separation (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). However, in recent years, the importance of fathers has also been noted, and some re-evaluations have been made (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111).

Some women are single mothers due to the absence of the father of their children. Unfortunately, some children not only have absent fathers but do not know the identity of their fathers at all (Manyatshe 2016:228). This is especially true in South Africa, where absentee fathers are very common, with 42% of children living with their mothers only (Manyatshe 2016:237; Freeks 2022:2). According to Freeks (2022:1), South Africa is becoming a fatherless society. Despite the understanding of the importance of the mother, the presence of the father has been linked to positive development (Manyatshe 2016:228). Research has found that the presence of an active and supportive father improved academic performance and higher emotional and behavioural stability (Manyatshe 2016:229). On the other hand, children growing up without fathers were more likely to have poor academic performance and display anti-social behaviour (Frees 2022:2). As such, there is a need to encourage paternal participation in their children's lives even if they are in no way involved with the mother (Manyatshe 2016:238).

However, some would argue that families are sometimes better off without a father in these circumstances as they are often violent and disregard their family responsibilities (Manyatshe 2016:238; Freeks 2022:3). Even if the violence is only directed at the mother, this can have a long-lasting impact on the child and may even lead to the need for professional counselling to recover (Manyatshe 2016:238). In these circumstances, it is thus better for the family as a whole to live without the father as this will also help

to stop the generational abuse cycle (Manyatshe 2016:238; Freeks 2022:3). This, however, depends on the reason for the father's absence, as not all fathers are absent due to abuse.

It was also noted that children who did not know the identity of their father experienced mental distress as a result (Nduna 2014:218–219; Manyatshe 2016:228). Nduna (2014:218) suggests that this non-disclosure denies the child of a part of their heritage which may contribute to their distress. This can be avoided but mothers and other caregivers often do not want to share the father's identity and the child is often too frightened to ask (Manyatshe 2016:228). If the child does raise questions about their biological father, their family may view this as a betrayal as such many just avoid the question (Manyatshe 2016:229).

There are many reasons why the identity of the father may not be revealed. The mother, herself, may be unsure of who the father is and may not feel it necessary to determine as the child may already have an active father figure or because the father denies accountability for the child (Manyatshe 2016:228). Some fathers simply deny their paternity completely (Nduna & Jewkes 2012:314; Manyatshe 2016:237). In African cultures, if pregnancy outside of marriage occurs, the father's family may deny paternity if they do not see a resemblance between the father and child (Nduna & Jewkes 2012:314–315). If the father then does not pay lobola, he is not viewed as the father (Manyatshe 2016:228). This is not only seen as a denial of paternity but a betrayal as they refuse to pay compensation (Manyatshe 2016:232). Outside of these reasons, some mothers consider their non-disclosure of the father's identity as simply a reaction to the father's behaviour (Manyatshe 2016:230). This is often because the father abandoned the family (Manyatshe 2016:230). They do not want their child to experience the pain of their father's rejection (Nduna & Jewkes 2012:320; Manyatshe 2016:230). Other times, the father does not deny their biological relationship but does not uphold their paternal responsibilities (Manyatshe 2016:231). In these cases, the mother will generally not keep the father away from the child should they return but is rather reluctant to share the identity of the father (Manyatshe 2016:231). The mother may also not know where the father is or have much information about him (Nduna 2014:320; Manyatshe 2016:231). This makes it very difficult for the mother to share information about them.

There is often a darker reason for omitting the father's identity. Domestic and gender violence is a significant problem in South Africa that was only aggravated by the recent Covid-19 pandemic (Amaechi, Thobejane & Rasalokwane 2021). Domestic violence has been linked to the absence of fathers (Alvare 2011:125; Amaechi et al. 2021:136). Once the father becomes abusive, he alienates himself from the family, but often, either the father will leave the family or the mother will take the children and run away from the abusive father (Manyatshe 2016:232). The father's actions mean there is very little chance of reconciliation, and the mother would likely not want to expose the child or children to the father again (Manyatshe 2016:233). While women often struggle to leave, it is the best course of action, as 57% of female murders in South Africa are committed by current or previous partners (Abrahams, Mathews, Martin, Lombard & Jewkes 2013). In these cases, the non-discloser is often to protect the children. The mother may also find it difficult to share information about the father as this would include information about the abuse (Manyatshe 2016:234). It would also seem that the father's behaviour near the time of the child's birth affected the relationship between the parents later on (Manyatshe 2016:233).

No matter the reason for the omission, these children often feel betrayed by their mother as they reason that she has intentionally kept their father's identity a secret, and this can breed feelings of mistrust as well as "anger, hostility, aggression, dependence or defensive independence, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional instability, emotional unresponsiveness, and a negative world view (Nduna 2014:219). This can lead to a strained relationship between the mother and child. Despite single mothers reporting a good relationship with their children, they are unsure of how to approach the topic of their father's identity and history (Manyatshe 2016:233). In some cases, this is because this discussion would include some details of the mother's sexual activities, which is considered a somewhat taboo topic (Manyatshe 2016:233). The mother may also not know when or what to communicate to the child (Manyatshe 2016:234).

In other cases, the child may have inquired about the father and could sense the mother's discomfort, and as such, they do not inquire any further (Manyatshe 2016:233). The mother may react by evading the questions and becoming avoidant or responding with aggression (Nduna 2014:219). However, some children do not ask about their father as they sense their mother's apprehension (Manyatshe 2016:235).

In these cases, the mother will often state that the child is unaffected by their father's absence (Manyatshe 2016:235). This may be because 47% of children grow up with an absent father, and as such, the mother deems that the child should not be affected by the absence as many other children have also grown up with an absent father (Nduna 2014:218; Manyatshe 2016:235). Sometimes the mothers may not intend to inform initially but later change their decision (Manyatshe 2016:234). This may partly be because the mother considers the child too young to expose them to information about their father (Manyatshe 2016:234). This may also be because the mother is concerned about the child not having contact with the father's extended family (Manyatshe 2016:235).

However, mothers often report that they would like the child to have a relationship with the father (Manyatshe 2016:236). Alvare (2011:138) found that a positive relationship between the absent father and the present mother had a positive influence on the development of the child, especially in cases where the father provided financial and emotional support. These mothers were even willing never to receive payment or financial support from the father if he would be willing to have a relationship with his child (Manyatshe 2016:236). Some single mothers, however, have many financial struggles and as such the mothers confirm that financial support from the father would be appreciated (Nduna & Jewkes 2012:322–323; Manyatshe 2016:236). This is not only an issue for mothers with lower incomes though. Mothers in the middle class may not immediately struggle to pay for child care, but they struggle to build a retirement plan (Manyatshe 2016:236).

On occasions when the child knows the identity of their father and some details about him, or even may have met the father once or twice, the mother may still report that the father was unknown to the children (Manyatshe 2016:234). This is largely because the mothers deem that while the child may know about their father, they do not truly know them (Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane 2014:45; Manyatshe 2016:234). Some children reported feeling the same way as their mothers (Padi et al. 2014:45). Even after all this information has been shared, the mother may still find it difficult to speak to the child about their father (Manyatshe 2016:234). This may lead to the child feeling unfulfilled by the answers that the mother provides (Padi et al. 2014:50; Manyatshe 2016:234). The mother may also find it difficult to speak about the father as they are worried that they would be blamed for the absence (Manyatshe 2016:235). The

mothers further report that they cannot force the men to take accountability for their children (Manyatshe 2016:237).

Single mothers struggle to obtain support from their communities (Manyatshe 2016:237). This is especially true in the case where the father is absent, with the mothers reporting that they did not feel that there was sufficient professional counselling for women in their situation as the counselling was mainly aimed at divorced mothers (Manyatshe 2016:237). However, Widan and Greeff (2019:154,161) found that counselling was available for these women and their children. Other mothers struggled to share their circumstances as they were worried about what others in the community would think of them (Manyatshe 2016:237). There is a perceived social stigma about pregnancy outside of marriage, and this leads mothers to feel shamed and reluctant to seek trained assistance, especially in South Africa (Utrata 2015:20; Manyatshe 2016:237). These women feel that the availability of support and information on their situation is lacking (Manyatshe 2016:237). However, there has been normalisation of the concept of being a single mother (Manyatshe 2016:237). Widan and Greeff (2019:160–162) reported that the majority of single mothers received social support from both family and friends. Some women also seek out support from religious communities as they are seeking out forgiveness for themselves and occasionally their abusers (Manyatshe 2016:237). Children with Christian belief systems and absent fathers have also reported the importance of forgiveness to them (Manyatshe 2016:237).

Chen et al. (2019) conducted a study about the influence of gender roles and parental attitudes on the social adjustment of children in single-parent households. It highlights that parents' traditional concept of gender roles influences their child-rearing attitudes, which in turn affects the development of children's gender roles and their social adjustment (Chen et al. 2019:317). The study also underlines how the family's socio-economic status can have an effect on the attitude of the child towards the parent's gender role and subsequently on the children's social adjustment. The study also found that children in single-parent households have difficulties adjusting which can lead to problems, including depression, anxiety, and behavioural issues such as aggression, non-compliance and difficulty with self-regulation. Reifman et al. (2001:32) also found that children with divorced parents were more likely to experience

negative behavioural outcomes. Chen et al. (2019:316) also present contrasting views on the social adjustment of children from single-parent families.

Additionally, Chen et al. (2019:316–317) discuss the Risk and Resiliency Perspective, which was originally presented by Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1999). Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan's (1999) Risk and Resiliency Perspective integrates various factors contributing to children's adjustment in divorced and remarried families (Chen et al. 2019:317). Chen et al. (2019:322) emphasise the importance of considering multiple trajectories of interacting risk and protective factors in predicting the well-being of children in single-parent families. Overall, Chen et al. (2019:322–323) stress the importance of parental attitudes, gender roles, and family socio-economic status in shaping the social adjustment of children in single-parent families while also acknowledging the intricacy and diverging outcomes associated with this family structure.

Kroese et al. (2021) conducted a study examining the influence of parental separation on children's likelihood of becoming juvenile delinquents by utilising population registration data from the Netherlands. This can influence the adult life of the adolescent. According to Gilman et al. (2015:45), there is a strong link between juvenile criminal behaviour and adult involvement in crime. Kroese et al. (2021:597) found that it was not simply single parenthood that affected adolescents' criminal behaviour, but the gender of the single parent and the age of the child when the household became single-headed. They also suggest that the type of single-headed household can also have different outcomes (Kroese et al. 2021:598).

According to the family crisis model of Mack, Leiber, Featherston and Monserud (2007), the separation of parents has a more significant negative influence on the child than if the child had never had two parents. Similarly, there seem to be stronger feelings of resentment and displays of antisocial behaviour when the biological parents are separated as opposed to if one of the parents passes away (Kroese et al. 2021:598). As such, children who are born into a single-parent household also do not experience these negative emotions. However, Berg et al. (2019:7) found that children who experience the death of a parent are still at risk of falling into criminal activity.

According to Kroese et al. (2021:599), the age of the child when their family structure is disrupted can have an influence on the child's likelihood of criminal behaviour. When

parental loss is viewed through Bowlby's (1982: 1991) attachment theory, it shows that this loss can lead to a disruption of the attachment process, which can have a negative impact in the long term. These effects are most noticeable if the loss took place before the age of 5. Sogar (2017:207) found that insecure attachments have been linked to delinquent behaviour, and the contrary is also true. Kroese et al. (2021:606) found that if a child lived with a single parent before the age of 12, they are much more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour. This was true for children with separated parents, a deceased parent and those born to single mothers. The age of the child at the time that the family structure changed was found to have an influence on delinquent behaviour, but it was more influential before the age of 6 (Kroese et al. 2021:609-610). The younger the child is at the time of separation, the more likely they are to participate in delinquent behaviour during adolescence.

Kroese et al. (2021:600) also found that the sex of the single parent can affect the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. According to attachment theory, separation from the mother is more disadvantageous than separation from the father (Ainsworth & Bowlby 1991). Eitle (2006:742) found this to be true for female children but not males. The same-sex hypothesis suggests that it is better for a child to live with a parent of the same gender, however, Eitle (2006:730) does not find much support for this theory as it is only found to have an effect on girls living with their mothers. On the other hand, Kroese et al. (2021:610–612) found that children, regardless of gender, in single-mother-headed households were more likely to be involved in delinquent behaviour, and children in single-father-headed households were the least likely to exhibit this behaviour. However, there was a small amount of support for the same-sex hypothesis, as single fathers' sons had a decreased risk of delinquency. They also found no difference between separated parents and the death of a parent (Kroese et al. 2021:611–612).

Morawska (2020:553) found that the gender modelling of the parent can have a significant impact on the development of the child. This is especially true when it comes to the first few years of life. Serbin et al (2001) found that children as young as 2 years old already have an understanding of the difference between toys intended for girls or boys. However, Morawska found that a single parent could enforce the normal gender stereotypes for their opposite-gendered child.

3.3.2 Artificial Reproduction

While most women become single mothers out of circumstances such as divorce or the death of their spouse, this is not always the case. With modern reproductive medicine, men and women now have the option of having children without a partner (Tober 2019:14). The nature of reproduction has changed because of these technologies. Women can decide to have their eggs frozen and have children even after menopause. Men can use a surrogate to carry a child for them.

Because this technology has moved so quickly, legislation has had difficulty keeping up (Tober 2019:15). When the sperm bank was first introduced in the United States, there was a lack of standardised regulation about who was eligible for fertility treatments. Some of these banks had discriminatory policies that only allowed heterosexual couples to receive treatment. Later on, several European countries put legislation in place that enforced this discrimination (Tober 2019:15). In recent years, several countries have changed these policies, but there are still many that have not. In South Africa, these policies broadly do not prohibit a person from receiving these treatments because of marriage status or sexual orientation (Department of Health 2012).

Because of the legislation prohibiting single or lesbian women from receiving artificial reproduction, many women made arrangements with their doctors (Tober 2019:15). However, this caused many difficulties regarding parental rights, as the sperm donor would still have paternal rights. However, not all countries are this strict. Spain is the most liberal of the Western European countries. Spain allows sperm and egg donation for anyone required, however, it does not allow surrogacy as the birth mother retains legal rights to the child (Tober 2019:16). Almeida et al. (2019:170) state that in Brazil, there are public clinics that assist lower-income families with assisted reproduction, but they are scares and often aimed at families rather than single women which leads many women to seek out private clinics.

According to Steenberg, Koert, Schmidt, Bogstad & Sylvest (2024:1) and Ravn (2021), women sometimes see bearing children as the thing that gives their life meaning. Almeida et al. (2019:170) state that the desire for motherhood can be motivated by external factors such as long-term relationships, family members and friends having children, or even advancing in their professional careers. Similarly, Hertz (2008:4–5)

states that despite the development of feminism, the desire for motherhood is still strong. This can leave women in a difficult situation when their “biological clock is ticking”, and they are still in search of a partner. According to Almeida et al. (2019:173), this is the motivation for many single mothers to choose to use artificial assisted reproduction. However, while assisted reproduction can extend women’s reproductive age, the higher the age of the mother, the more complex technology is necessary (Almeida et al. 2019:172). For example, egg donation may become necessary. According to Almeida et al. (2019:172–173), there is some debate regarding whether a maximum or minimum age limit should be set for single mothers seeking assistance for assisted reproduction.

Fortunately for these women, medicine has advanced to the point where they can use a donor to have a child. A study conducted in Denmark found that 10% of all births were conceived with medical fertility assistance, and of that, 12% were single mothers by choice (Steenberg et al. 2024:1).

However, this can come with a multitude of repercussions. Not everyone views single motherhood by choice in a positive light, with Layne (2021:194) stating that this can be viewed as a threat to traditional family values. This study (see Steenberg et al. 2024:3) found that women who are considering becoming single mothers experience many negative emotions, including self-blame, guilt and inadequacy. Many women blamed themselves for not being able to find a partner to start a traditional family or that they had done something that influenced their fertility (Hertz 2008:11; Steenberg et al. 2024:3). This is because the mothers had originally wanted a nuclear family but due to circumstances were unable to (Hertz 2008:11; Almeida et al. 2019:170; Steenberg et al. 2024:3). They expressed a strong desire to become a mother even though it would mean that they would need to make sacrifices even leaving a partner who did not want children (Steenberg et al. 2024:4–5). However, Almeida et al. (2019:170) found that some women had decided to be single mothers from the start. This was not a decision that these women made easily. They put much thought into this and consulted with family and friends to gain their opinion and to build a support network before they become single mothers by choice (Steenberg et al. 2024:1, 4). They also worked hard to build a good social circle to surround their child as the child would have fewer relatives (Hertz 2008:187–188; Steenberg et al. 2024:5). According to Almeida et al. (2019:171), single mothers by choice do have negative feelings about

the lack of a father for their child. However, they do seem to clearly distinguish between having an absent father and not having a father. These negative feelings can be caused by the tension that the mother feels about needing to explain the child's origin to them and how the child would be perceived socially during events such as Father's Day. Despite the mother fulfilling the physical role of the father, many still feel that there is a gap, which can lead the mother to feel anxious about their ability to raise the child on their own (Almeida et al. 2019:171). The mothers also tried to ensure that the child would have a father figure to look up to (Steenberg et al. 2024:5). This figure may be the father of the child's friend (Hertz 2008:188). While not evident within this study's participants, many single mothers, by choice, find themselves struggling with criticism and stigmatisation (Steenberg et al. 2024:4).

A Swedish study conducted under healthcare professionals found that while 81% of the participating psychologists, nurses and physicians had no issue with the legalisation of donating sperm to single women wanting to become single mothers by choice, one-third considered these children would be at a higher risk of mental health problems and social stigma (Armund, Skoog Svanberg, Lampic, Elenis & Sydsjö 2020:3, 5). However, the data suggests that children of single mothers by choice score within the normal range for both socio-emotional development and adjustment (Armund et al. 2020:5). Thankfully, the participants also acknowledged that they have a lack of information on the subject (Armund et al. 2020:5). Wennberg et al. (2016:41) found that among women, 76% were comfortable with the thought of single women receiving fertility treatments, as well as 68% of men.

Sweden was the first country to make it obligatory for sperm and egg donors to make their identity public (Armund et al. 2020:5). This was done as they deemed that the child should have the right to know the identity of their donor parent. However, many women do not want to tell their children that they are the product of sperm donation (Armund et al. 2020:5). Hertz (2008:67) suggests that the concept of "half adoption" could remove some of this stigma. The children who are informed of their origin often have questions that their mothers have difficulty answering, as such many of the children wish that their mothers had received some counselling on the topic (Armund et al. 2020:5). Most mothers would seek this counselling from their primary healthcare provider, but most of them report having very little information on the subject (Armund et al. 2020:5).

It is not only single mothers by choice who seek out medical assistance to have a child. Many couples who are struggling with natural conception will seek medical assistance to have a biological child (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). Dyer and Kruger (2012:168) found that between July and December 2009, about 1300 pregnancies in South Africa were the product of artificial reproduction. These procedures can range from a sperm donation to something as complex as sperm and egg donation with the use of a surrogate (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114; Dyer & Kruger 2012:167). This may mean that the eventual child is not genetically related to either of its social parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). While this is not regularly the case, some of these situations can become quite complicated. There have been mothers who are surrogates for their own daughters (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). Because of these circumstances, the child may have different relationships with many different parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:115). Almeida et. al (2019:170) suggest that “senses of motherhood in non-conjugality scenarios, the nexus between reproduction and women’s life courses, and the implications of reproduction technologies on gender dynamics” are some of the issues that arise from assisted reproduction.

Couples have often been struggling with infertility for a long time before making the decision to seek fertility treatments and this is often not their first choice (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114; Ásgeirsson & Nordal 2015:20). Before that point, the couple had most likely tried many different unconventional methods in order to conceive (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). Usually, these couples are a bit older than most who are starting their parenting journey, and this makes it harder for them to conceive but usually places them in a better financial situation than younger parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). However, Hoghughi and Long (2004:114) suggest that this does not necessarily mean that all of these older couples are the most prepared parents. Golombok and Cook (1995:286) suggest that this long struggle with infertility may cause difficulties when attempting to build a relationship with the child. As they have had difficulty having a child, they may become over-protective of their child or have unrealistic expectations of what their children may achieve (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). They may also find it more difficult to adjust to the responsibilities of parenthood (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). All these factors can have an impact on the child (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). Ásgeirsson and Nordal (2015:20) state that parents who need to seek fertility treatments or artificial reproduction may experience internal conflict, even

asking themselves if there is something wrong with them on an emotional level. They may even feel unfit for the role of parent because of their inability to conceive naturally.

Surrogacy is a complex process and differs from other forms of assisted reproduction because it involves another person in the reproduction process (Ásgeirsson & Nordal 2015:32). This is a complicated process as often the surrogate is treated as an organ donor, and both the medical staff and intended parents can become controlling towards her. The surrogate carries a baby who is not biologically related to her, and of who she will not be the legal mother (Bandelli 2021:3). As such, legislation is necessary to protect the rights of all involved. Surrogacy has been the source of many scandals worldwide and is the subject of debate by many governments and political parties (Bandelli 2021:1–6). Some countries, such as Ukraine, provide surrogates for couples from other countries. However, this has caused some debate as to whether this could be seen as trading with children (Bandelli 2021:2). Ásgeirsson and Nordal (2015:33) suggest that surrogacy falls between medical treatment and adoption. The child's welfare should be at the forefront of this process.

Just like adopted children, children who have been conceived by donation can appear physically different from their social parents as they may not be completely biologically related to their parents (Posner 1992:421). This can influence how family, friends and peers react to the child and their parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:115). As children become old enough to question these differences, it is important that they receive information that is as accurate as possible as questions about their cultural and ethnic identity may present themselves in their teenage years (Hoghughi & Long 2004:115).

While artificial reproduction is becoming more common, it still remains highly expensive, which makes it unattainable for lower-income individuals (Tober 2019:17). In South Africa, the private sector charges between R9 000 and R80 000 for IUI (Intrauterine insemination), ICSI (Intracytoplasmic sperm injection) or IVF (in Vitro Fertilisation) (Cape Fertility 2024; MedFem 2024).

3.3.3 Stepfamilies

Many parents prefer not to remain single. Stepfamilies or blended families have been around for a long time (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). Stepfamily are formed in a variety of ways, including the death of a spouse, divorce and remarriage and cohabitation (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111; Jensen & Shafer 2013:127; Mashile, Mudau & Ncube

2022:19967). Divorce is often the case for the breakdown of the family, but remarriage is common with 75% of divorcees remarrying (Coleman, Ganong & Fine 2004:1290).

Stepfamilies can also be formed by single mothers who had never been married previously but found a husband after they already have children (Kiernan 1999:12; Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). Some stepfamilies can even include children from both parents and children that the stepparents have had together (Mashile et al. 2022:19967). In many of these cases, the child or children do not have a relationship with their biological father which can cause difficulty in forming a relationship with the new father figure (Jensen & Shafer 2013:128; Hoghughi & Long 2004:112).

Each stepfamily is different. However, there are some commonalities among them. Hoghughi and Long (2004:112) found that no matter the biological relationship of the parents to the children, the mother or stepmother takes the primary role of parent (Feijten, Boyle, Feng, Gayle & Graham 2009). The stepmother is often left to discipline the stepchildren, which can contribute to the wicked stepmother trope (Mashile et al. 2022:19972). Naturally, this does not mean that the father or stepfather does not have a parenting role to play. Nevertheless, having a stepparent may be a very difficult adjustment for children to make as they are being parented by a non-biological parent who requires the time and affection of their biological parent (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112). This can even lead to resentment for the children if they have a good relationship with their father, as they do not want to share the father with their children (Mashile et al. 2022:19972).

The children are not the only ones who need to adjust. Parents and stepparents must establish a connection with their new stepchildren, even in the face of resistance, while also maintaining a relationship with their partner. (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112). To add to the complications of these relationships, the adults often try to act as if they are not a stepfamily but a biological family (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112). This can lead to role strain on the side of stepparents (Fellmann, Galán & Lloreda 2008:733). Unfortunately, children tend to resist this type of parenting from their stepparent (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112). Mashile et al. (2022:19971) report that stepchildren display hatred towards their stepmothers, specifically. Some stepchildren also direct blame towards their stepmother as they may hold her accountable for destroying their family. This is particularly difficult when the biological mother is still present in the children's lives

(Mashile et al. 2022:19971). On the other hand, the stepmothers may also have difficulty in accepting their stepchildren, with some mothers acknowledging that they have no love for their stepchildren. Mashile et al. (2022:19972) suggest that there is a general lack of respect within stepfamilies. When the stepchildren do not respect their stepmother, there is often great conflict in the household. The child or children may also move households regularly, making it difficult for the stepparent to institute routines and rules (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112). This can make it very challenging for stepparents to make their relationship last, with studies showing that 20% of second marriages fail within the first five years (Bramlett & Mosher 2002:28). Despite this statistic, families do not seem to be discouraged, as one in five children under the age of nine have already been in three different family situations according to Hoghughi and Long (2004:112).

As with children, families need to be resilient to survive. Greeff and Cloete (2015:189) use the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation by McCubbin and McCubbin (1993; McCubbin, Boss, Wilson & Dahl 1981:1) to measure how stress influences factors such as “(1) interpersonal relations, (2) structure and functioning, (3) development, well-being and spirituality, and (4) community relationships and nature” and apply it to stepfamilies. Greeff and Cloete (2015:180) state that families respond differently to stressors, and this can either strengthen the bonds between the family members, or it can push them apart. These stressors can cause the families to change their normal patterns of behaviour, which may cause positive change or lead to negative behaviour. These behaviours, either positive or negative, can be influenced by internal factors such as fantasies that the family will immediately adapt to the new family system. This is especially difficult as stepfamilies often do not have as clearly defined roles as in a first marriage (Greeff & Cloete 2015:190). It can be beneficial for the biological and stepparent to present a unified front in order to assist in the transition of family structures. According to Greeff and Cloete (2015:190), there seems to be a tendency to avoid sensitive topics in second marriages more so than in firsts. Skilled communication abilities are vital for enduring marriages and increased happiness among partners.

Greeff and Cloete (2015:190) found that, in addition to communication, different cultural and religious backgrounds influence the course of a relationship. Strong cultural and religious backgrounds can strengthen families experiencing

reconstruction. However, significant cultural or religious differences can lead to strain between the spouses (Greeff & Cloete 2015:190).

Greeff and Cloete (2015:196) identified three factors that influenced the success of stepfamilies adaptation. These three factors are routines that encourage family interaction, the family's hardiness, and honest but supportive communication. Braithwaite et al. (2018:94) stated that "interaction, openness, clear rules and boundaries, family problem solving, spending time together, and maintaining a positive image of the non-residential parent contribute to stronger stepfamily relationships." Greeff and Cloete (2015:197) state that supportive communication during a crisis, a commitment toward problem-solving, the reframing of stressful events, and effective social support were some of the best predictors of success in South African families. For children, it was also important that they receive support from their peers and learn how to reframe crisis events. Greeff and Cloete (2015:197-198) discovered that South African children perceived affirming communication, reframing of life events, social support, and activities that encourage family time as the best indicators of family adaptation. Mashile et al. (2022:19973) found that, unfortunately, this level of communication is not regularly achieved. Some children report that they feel their stepmothers only speak to them when they need something or are disciplining them. On the other hand, stepmothers report that conflicts occur between themselves and their stepchildren, they end up arguing with their husband instead.

Greeff and Cloete (2015:198-200) studied stepfamilies in both South Africa and Belgium and compared the indicators of family adaptation in the two countries. They discovered that in both countries, the most important indicator of family resilience was affirming communication. Firstly, communication is very important in any relationship, even more so when they are experiencing a stressful situation. Positive, warm, affirming communication can effectively calm tension and promote a supportive and loving atmosphere. Secondly, family hardiness was also found to be an important factor in the adjustment of stepfamilies. This hardiness refers to the attitude of the family towards stressful circumstances and their ability to cope with these challenges. Thirdly, passive appraisal of the crisis after divorce can improve the resilience of the family. Fourthly, just as with hardiness, the reframing of crisis situations can be helpful but is generally more helpful for the children involved than the parents and stepparents. Finally, different activities and routines that encourage

the family to interact with one another were found to improve the family's resilience. These activities do not always have to be especially pleasurable, as routine activities help to establish new rituals and bring cohesiveness to the new family.

There are also factors outside of the family that can positively influence resilience. Social support outside of the family is very beneficial for the entire family. According to Greef and Cloete (2015:200), the children stated that the mobilisation of family resources, like the inclusion of the extended family, can be beneficial. However, there are also factors that influence the family negatively. Mashile et al. (2022:19973-19974) suggest that financial difficulties can be a source of conflict in marriage. Money is often a scarcity in families and the way in which different members of the family use it can cause disagreements. This is especially true in stepfamilies as the father is often still paying money to support their previous family. Mashile et al. (Mashile et al. 2022:19973) found that some children feel that their stepmothers do not spend a reasonable amount of funds on their needs, and others feel that their stepmothers use too much of their father's money to buy expensive items for themselves. On the other hand, some stepmothers feel that their stepchildren are spoiled.

Eberson and Bouwer (2013:1-2) found that in circumstances where a marriage was ended by divorce, children's development is divided between two households and as such in two-family systems. These families can affect each other positively and negatively. In order for communication between two family systems to be effective, it should be regular, comprehensive, face-to-face, and long-term.

According to Ebersohn and Bouwer (2013:2, 2015:2-6), children are not inactive in their own development. Their unique personalities will influence how their family systems interact and how they develop. Ashiabi and O'Neal (2015:1-2) also states that there are many influences on a child's development, including the neighbourhood, parenting and other family factors. The various dispositions of the children and parents influence how they adapt to their new living situation. "It is not always easy for parents to have open communication. Negative emotions, such as unrealistic expectations for reconciliation, can make it difficult for them to navigate the new family dynamic" (Ebersohn & Bouwer 2013:2). Many factors can make these family dynamics difficult. These include unresolved grief from the loss of the core family, dissatisfaction with how the changes have been dealt with, differing parenting styles, and conflict between

stepsiblings and children and stepparents, as well as between spouses (Ebersohn & Bower 2013:7, 2015:7).

While children are very resilient, this reorganisation of family structure can be very difficult for them to deal with. For Ebersohn and Bower (2013:8) the factors that can improve this resilience, are emotional security, accepting authority, and a desire for autonomy. Other factors that can improve a child's resilience include an effective support network of both family and friends, as well as support from the school that the children attend. The relationship with the parents and stepparents can also have a noticeable effect.

Ebersohn and Bower (2013:9-10) found that divorce has an impact on the development of a child and adolescent. Han (2023:3) confirms that divorce can cause attachment interruption which can cause difficulties later on in life. The development of adolescents with divorced parents is an intricate process. The interaction between the two families can have a noticeable effect on the children, yet they have very little control over this as it is generally the biological parents who have control over the interactions between the families. Not surprisingly, divorce also has an impact on the academic performance of children (Jeynes 2002:86). Jeynes (2002:87) also found that the influence of divorce on academics does not dissipate over time but rather increases. Remarriage also seems to have a negative effect on a child's academic performance. Han (2023:3) also suggests that there is a correlation between the number of different family configurations that the child experiences, and general well-being, with well-being decreasing as the number of family configurations increases. This means that it is serial marriage leads to more negative outcomes than a once-off divorce.

Children in blended families where there is effective communication between the biological parents coped better with the restructuring of the family than those whose biological parents had a strained relationship. If both of the parents support the child much of the negative effects of divorce can be mitigated (Han 2023:4). Ebersohn and Bower (2013:10) state that adolescents who received therapeutic intervention were better equipped to manage the restructuring of the family than those who did not. If they do not undergo some sort of therapeutic experience, they will most likely use the

same copying strategies as they have used before, but these strategies are unlikely to be beneficial in these circumstances.

Mashile et al. (2022:19974-19975) found several coping strategies that stepfamilies use in order to avoid conflict and create a better home environment. Many stepmothers may try to avoid the issues that present themselves. Others discuss the issues in the family with their spouse in order to help them cope. Stepchildren report speaking with trusted adults in the extended family or outside of the family to vent about issues inside the family. They also try to find solutions for their problems on their own. Despite all of these strategies, stepfamilies often find that some issues cannot be resolved, but they must learn to live with them.

3.3.4 Foster families

In South Africa, about 2% of all children are in foster care, also called family care (Goemans, Van Breda & Kessi 2021:227). Goemans et al. (2021:227) state that 14% of South African children have experienced the death of at least one parent. Consequently, a significant number of foster children are in care because they have lost their parents or other guardians. Du Toit et al. (2016:391) reported that in 2014 more than half a million children in South Africa were in foster care.

The specifics of the fostering process differ from country to country, but most countries follow the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regulates some of the basic rights regarding children (Pösö, Skivenes & Thorsen 2021:1). Some of these basic rights include the importance of the child's well-being, with an emphasis on family relationships, and minimal involvement from the government (Pösö et al. 2021:1). These are of course open to interpretation by each country and legal system (Pösö et al. 2021:1).

According to Pösö et al. (2021:10), some countries are more risk-oriented while others are more needs-oriented. The countries that are risk-oriented are focused on preventing maltreatment of the child and, as such, have a high tolerance for compulsory intervention. On the other hand, in countries that are needs-oriented, the focus is on the overall well-being of the child and are more likely to intervene. This orientation has two branches being family-based and child-based (Pösö et al. 2021:10). All of these approaches inform how the government and court systems will handle difficult cases.

Pösö et al. (2021:2) found that usually children will first be fostered before being adopted by their new parents, but when a child is removed from their parent's custody, they are placed in foster care and cannot be adopted. As such, children can only be adopted if their parent's parental rights have been terminated or if their parents have died. The full termination of parental rights is a very rare occurrence as the rights of the child's guardian are closely protected, and it only happens in extreme cases of abuse or neglect. However, these laws differ somewhat from country to country.

Each government has its own set of criteria for prospective foster parents, and even within governments, there seems to be a difference of opinion on what is needed in a foster home (Carter & Van Breda 2016:208). Carter and van Breda (2016:215), however, propose that there are four themes that make for a good foster environment. The first is unconditional love which means that the foster parents will love the children regardless of behaviour or circumstances. Secondly, the foster parents must provide a physically safe environment which enables the child to feel as safe as possible and free from anxiety. Thirdly, the environment must be nurturing, which will foster growth and hopefulness in the child. Lastly, the home must be stable on an emotional level. This will provide the child with a feeling of psychological safety.

The purpose of fostering is to create a family environment from which the child will be adopted (Pösö et al. 2021:4; Jones Harden 2004:31). According to Skelton and Hansungule (2021a), there are three objectives to foster care. The first is to provide the foster child with a protective and nurturing environment. Secondly, there should be a long-term plan for the child in order to create stability. Lastly, foster care should be respectful of culture, ethics and diversity meaning that the foster child should be free to express their religion, culture and language. If a child is then placed with a family who does not have the same culture or religion, the family should not deny them the right to express themselves.

The majority of counties follow this system of adoption from care. According to Pösö et al. (2021:4-6), there is a shift in the care system away from adoption if there is a possibility of reconciliation between the child and their biological parents, even if this means long-term foster care rather than adoption. When possible, an extended family member of the child will be asked to foster them (Skelton & Hansungule 2021a). In South Africa, the majority of foster carers, regardless of their relation to the child, will

receive monetary grants that help them to support their foster child (Skelton & Hansungule 2021a). Many family members are applying for foster care grants rather than child support grants, as the former is higher.

Skelton and Hansungule (2021a) found that the foster care system was falling apart in South Africa. In 2011, the high court attempted to find a solution to this problem, but by 2017, a long-lasting solution had not been found.

Older children often end up in group care homes rather than foster families (Pösö et al. 2021:6). Unfortunately, this may not be the best situation for children, as research indicates that the states do not sufficiently care for children or protect their rights (Pösö et al. 2021:8)

In South Africa, foster children may end up in cluster or group homes. These cluster homes are homes in which many children are fostered at once, and they may be overseen by either a social worker or a foster parent (du Toit et al. 2016:391). Unfortunately, children will often not be adopted out of cluster homes, but they will age out of them. In South Africa, not much research has been done on the topic of how children adapt once they have aged out of the foster system (Goemans et al. 2021:227). Van Breda and Dickens (2017:266) explain that from 2012 onwards there were only between three and eleven papers written on the subject. This means that not much is known about how children fare when they age out of care once they reach 18, or 21 if they still need to complete their high school education. From then on they are expected to continue life on their own (Goemans et al. 2021:227).

Foster families are just as varied as adoptive families. All of these children would come from difficult situations as they would have lost their parents to death, been relinquished by them, or been removed from them for their own best interest (Hoghugh & Long 2004:113). According to Pösö et al. (2021:5-9), there are four ways in which children can be separated from their parents, being “emergency removals, voluntary admissions, involuntary admissions and adoptions”. Generally, no matter which kind of separation has taken place, the ideal is to unify the family again when possible (Jones Harden 2004:42; Skelton & Hansungule 2021a). Emergency removals are usually when the child is in immediate danger or there is a concern for the child’s well-being and is for a short period only. When voluntary administration takes place, the parents relinquish some of their rights for a short period of time to provide the child

with the care that the parents cannot provide at that time, as such, this situation is also short-term. They do retain some rights and with assistance from a social worker are still responsible for the decisions regarding their child. Involuntary admissions are also referred to as care orders and are a more long-term endeavour. There are many different reasons why this may take place for example abuse or neglect or it may be no fault of the parents, but they may be vulnerable adults causing parents to be unable to meet the needs of a child full-time. In the case of involuntary admissions, more of the parents' rights are removed and the children become wards of the state, however, the objective is still to return the children to their parents' custody. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and it is only then that children become adoptable. When a child is adopted, the biological parent's rights are completely terminated (Pösö et al. 2021:6). As such, foster care is a multifaceted endeavour with short- and longer-term commitments in which the biological parent does not automatically lose their parental rights (Skelton & Hansungule 2021a).

According to Goemans et al. (2021:227-228) and Skelton and Hansungule (2021a), there are three types of foster care in South Africa; non-relative care, kinship care, and cluster foster care. Non-relative care is when a child is placed under the guardianship of someone to who they are not biologically related, while kinship care refers to a family member taking guardianship of the child. Kinship care is thought to house most children in foster care and is preferred according to Jones Harden (2004:42). Finally, cluster foster cases refer to homes where groups of children will live under the supervision of parents who are registered with the state under a non-profit organisation. There is a growing inclination to move away from institutional care and rather place children in family environments, even in cluster foster care (Goemans et al. 2021:228).

These children may have had many difficult experiences early on in life. (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). This is partially due to the fact that foster families are not generally considered permanent, meaning that the child is not entirely considered a part of the family (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). According to South African law, foster care should not be a permanent solution (Skelton & Hansungule 2021a). This may mean that the foster parents limit their affection for a child that they know will not be a permanent part of their family (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). Some foster parents may also be economically motivated as many countries, including South Africa, provide financial

support for every child fostered (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113; Skelton & Hansungule 2021a). This leads to the idea that they are professional child carers rather than parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). This is especially true when the foster parents are caring for multiple foster children as well as their biological children, which is normally the case (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). This is reflected by the foster children, who report being treated differently from the biological children and stated that they did not feel that they belonged with the family (Goemans et al. 2021:228).

If these children were not placed into foster care shortly after birth, they most likely experienced some form of neglect, ill-treatment or rejection (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114; Jones Harden 2004:32). This usually means the child may not have had the best start in life (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). Some of these children may have experienced trauma such as the violent death of a parent, domestic violence, and an unsafe and insecure family environment as well as neglect and substance abuse issues (Pettit, Ziegler & Brown 2023:188). Unfortunately, these experiences may even continue into foster care. When these children have experienced maltreatment, trauma, and loss, they need the support of a stable family environment (Jones Harden 2004:34; Pösö et al. 2021:7). Unfortunately, this environment is not always created. When this environment is not created children may suffer from a variety of issues, including attachment disorders, which lead to problematic behaviour.

According to Pettit et al. (2023:186), trauma can have a lasting effect on the brain, which influences the adolescent's ability to learn. While foster parents are the main source of support for these children, teachers can also be of aid. Teachers and other school staff who support children should provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all their students, including those who have experienced trauma (Pettit et al. 2023:187). Part of what the teacher needs to understand is that foster children may have stressors that can trigger a limbic response, which can be a fight-flight or freeze reaction (Pettit et al. 2023:189–190). This is usually due to a prolonged stress experience. When the teacher interacts with these students, the teacher should attempt to reduce stress in the classroom and implement a strategy that focuses on trauma-informed practices. This can include identifying students who are in foster care and understanding their triggers.

According to Pösö et al. (2021:8), there are generally three main differences between long-term foster families and adoptive families: legal permanence, residential permanence, and relational permanence. Legal permanence involves the legal connection between the parent and child largely the parental rights that the adoptive parents have obtained (Pösö et al. 2021:8). Residential permanence refers to the fact that a child has a permanent household and will not move from one foster family to the next. Finally, relational permanence refers to the parental relationship between a child and adoptive parent where both view each other as family.

There is not much research on foster children in South Africa or those who are leaving foster care (Goemans et al. 2021:228). Of the few studies that had been conducted, even fewer focussed on children in cluster homes (du Toit et al. 2016:391). According to Goemans (2021:228-229), the studies that have been conducted found that foster children who were leaving foster care reported being unready for life on their own and would have liked assistance from social workers after leaving the care system. The children report that they rarely saw their social workers and felt that their social worker could have assisted with their transition out of foster care. Social workers confirmed this and explained that the previous foster child's case would be terminated by the age of 18, or at the latest, by 21. There is no legislation surrounding the care of the child after they have aged out. Some children noted receiving no notification that their case and foster child grant had been terminated.

The children also reported financial difficulties as they were no longer receiving social grants, and the loss of this grant can mean that the child cannot complete high school as they cannot pay their school fees (Goemans et al. 2021:229). This, in turn, leads to difficulty finding a job as they do not have a matric certificate (Shaw, Steyn & Simeon 2020:2). This is further complicated by the fact that 55% of young people in South Africa are unemployed. As such, they often need to rely on their previous foster parents. Goemans et al. (2021:231-233) found that foster children reported concern about finances as one of their greatest anxieties about leaving care. They were also unsure whether they would receive any support from their cluster home after they aged out. This is challenging because although the children may not express it directly, they desire to be independent. The foster children and parents agree that independence should be a learnt experience and as such, the foster mothers saw it as their duty to teach the children the skills to live independently. Unfortunately, not all of the foster

children presented with these opportunities use them. There is also some doubt about how effective these independent living programs are.

According to Goemans et al. (2021:228), the children reported having little to no social or emotional support network. This may be due to the fact that many foster children feel unaccepted by their foster families and, as such, do not have much of a support structure. This leaves the child feeling abandoned by both their foster family and social services. They noted being unsure of where to go after leaving foster care. Goemans et al. (2021:229-234) found that in rural areas there is a high chance that the child would remain living with the family even after being aged out of the system. This is in line with the African concept of *ubuntu* which encourages the community to rely on each other. Unfortunately, while the need for social networking is promoted among those preparing to leave the foster system, they do not seem to have the skills to build the social support system and the competence to leverage it.

Shaw et al (2020:1) report that in other countries there are halfway houses, known as independent living programmes have been set up to support these young people as they move out of foster care. Here the children are taught the skill to become self-sufficient. If these individuals were capable of joining an independent living program, they would be taught some social skills that would assist them with building a life outside of the system (Shaw et al. 2020:2). Unfortunately, these are not available in South Africa.

According to Goemans et al. (2021:228), some of the foster children who have not yet aged out of the system but were preparing for it sounded hopeful for the future with plans for further studies or finding work. Some foster families also reported saving money from the foster care grant for the child's future; however, this grant is not much and therefore the savings are also sparse (Goemans et al. 2021:229). More often, though, there is little talk of financial support from the foster family after leaving care but rather emotional support (Goemans et al. 2021:231). The foster mothers often come to see these children as their own and, continue to support the children emotionally (Goemans et al. 2021:232). The foster mothers in the cluster homes emphasise the desire to be a mother and parental figure for the children (Goemans et al. 2021:232). On the other hand, not all foster children come to see their guardians as their parents (Goemans et al. 2021:233). While the foster parents do support

emotionally, they may not financially, which can cause tension between them and the foster child (Goemans et al. 2021:234). This can leave the child unsure about whether they are still part of the family (Goemans et al. 2021:234).

3.3.5 Adoption

Adoption has a long history. However, according to Pösö et al. (2021:2), it is not very well known some parts of the history of adoptions are somewhat obscured. Adoption can be traced as far back as the Greek, Egyptian and Roman empires (Posner 1992:405; Van der Walt 2014:421). In the second half of the 20th century, in the UK, single mothers' children were removed from them as a form of punishment for their seeming immoral acts, and in Chile and Spain, newborns were kidnapped under oppressive governments. Despite this history, adoption is about creating a family for a child who has lost their own (Posner 1992:405).

The history of adoption in South Africa has also come a long way. Prior to 1923, private agreements constituted the majority of informal adoptions in South Africa; adoption as a method of transferring parental authority was not recognized by law (Van der Walt 2014:430–431). This was confirmed by the court in *Robb v. Mealey's Executor*, wherein it was decided that adoption was not a valid way for a parent and child to establish a legal relationship. Early in the 20th century, it became clear that adoption needed to be regulated by law, which led to the adoption of the Children Act in 1923. The English Adoption of Children Act was passed in 1926, three years after the South African Adoption of Children Act, although the bill was based on the New Zealand Infants Act. The House of Assembly debates provided clarity on any misunderstandings regarding the beginnings of child adoption (Van der Walt 2014:430–431).

Adoption is often a difficult process that can be very stressful for the parents. The parents need to create an entirely new family, change the child's legal identity and work out parental responsibilities (Pösö et al. 2021:9; Ward, Moggach, Tregeagle & Trivedi 2021:14). All these things can be very stressful for the family. This combined with improvements in reproductive technology, easily accessible contraception and abortion facilities, and changing laws around inter-county adoptions, means that adoption rates are declining (Posner 1992:410–411; Pösö et al. 2021:3–4). It was also estimated that in 2013 there were more children born through surrogacy than were

adopted inter-country in the EU (Pösö et al. 2021:4). This means that many people who in the past would have adopted children are now having their biological children through developing reproductive technologies (Pösö et al. 2021:4). Due to the fact that people are not adopting, the number of children in state care is increasing in many countries (Posner 1992:410–411; Pösö et al. 2021:8).

Pösö et al. (2021:5-6) state that in order for a child to be adoptable, their original guardians' rights need to be terminated completely. This means that they no longer have any claim on the child and full parental rights are granted to the adoptive parents (Skelton & Hansungule 2021b). Not only are the rights of the biological parents and extended family terminated, but their responsibilities are also terminated. However, there is an exception to this rule. Skelton and Hansungule (2021b) found that there is a president for grandparents who adopt their grandchild to claim child support from the biological parents. When adoption takes place, the child is no longer under the care of the state, and it will not intervene unless there is a very good cause.

In many cases, children would have first gone through foster care. Pösö et al. (2021:8) report that even though many foster homes do their best to create a loving and supportive environment, research has concluded that children find more emotional security, a greater sense of belonging and higher general well-being in adopted homes than in long-term foster homes. Adoption carries a certain change of status with provides the child with more stability and the opportunity for lifelong relationships (Skelton & Hansungule 2021b). As such adoption is a better solution than long-term foster care as adoption has improved developmental outcomes and offers a smooth transition into adulthood. However, Skelton and Hansungule (2021b) state that adoption is not the best option for all children. Generally, this is the case when there is a good chance that the child and parents can reunite. Oftentimes, extended families take in orphaned children but may not always adopt them (Posner 1992:408). According to Skelton and Hansungule (2021b:), adoption has two primary focuses to protect and nurture the children in a safe and healthy environment, as well as to promote permanency planning that provides the child with lifelong security.

Pösö et al. (2021:6-7) state that in some countries, social workers or the adoption agency (McBride 2016:111) will keep in contact with the adoptive parents in order to provide them with assistance if and when necessary. This may be due to the fact that

some adoptions can be rather complex such as non-consensual adoptions and situations where there is still contact between the child and their biological parents. However, governments differ on policies surrounding the details of adoption, including the interaction between the biological parents and the adoptive parents (Pösö et al. 2021:6–7; van Wichelen 2019:56–57). According to Morris (2016:197-198), there is an ongoing debate about the benefits and disadvantages of remaining in contact with the biological parents. There seems to be a general understanding among adoption authorities that some form of contact is important for all involved. However, many adopters do not agree. This can get complicated when there is more than one adopted child in the household, as the contact arrangements can vary from parent to parent. Morris (2016:198) found that bonds between siblings adopted by different families can be very beneficial. However, this contact can be determined by the laws of the country.

Adoption is often a long and difficult process. Emotionally, financially, and legally it can be very taxing on the entire family. It can also be difficult for the family socially as there is often a stigma associated with adoption and fostering. Some families adopt children from underprivileged countries. While this can be seen as a benevolent act, it can also be viewed as an act of structural violence (Pösö et al. 2021:2). This is because the child is removed from everything that it knows, its county, culture, and often its language (van Wichelen 2019:57).

In South Africa, not all adoptions are through the normal legal channels (Skelton & Hansungule 2021b). Customary law adoption exists in various forms. Generally, these adoptions occur when a relative would like to adopt the child. However, these adoptions have caused debate about if the correct procedures have been followed. According to Skelton and Hansungule (2021b), adoption must be a public event. The traditional leader may perform a ceremony that marks the official adoption.

Many adoptive parents preferred to keep the adoption a secret from everyone (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112; McLeod 2017:40). This may be because the process of adoption often brings about many difficult emotions. Some parents may feel embarrassed about their inability to have children of their own, and some others may be concerned about how they will be perceived by the child and others around them as they are not the biological parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:112). On the other hand, Morris (2016:239) found that many adoptive parents share the truth with the child

before they are even capable of understanding what adoption means. While this openness is encouraged, parents report that they have not received guidance on how to share this topic with their child.

According to Houghugi and Long (2004:113), there appears to be a widespread belief that biological parents and their relationships with their children are somehow better than those of adoptive parents (Posner 1992:408). However, statistical evidence does not fully support this notion, as adopted children perform better in some areas and worse in others. Some factors influence adoption, with the age of adoption being the most significant. However, external factors such as the reactions of peers and family to the child's adoption status can also impact the child's success.

Houghugi and Long (2004:113) found that the relationship between adoptive parents and their children may be somewhat different from biological parents as they do not have the bonding experience during pregnancy and birth. This is not the only challenge that these parents face, as many of them would have tried to have biological children first before trying fertility treatments. This can be a very difficult road for the parents as they are likely to have experienced many disappointments and gone through many invasive and costly medical procedures before eventually deciding to adopt. Adoptive parents occasionally have issues with forming a secure attachment between themselves and the child (Morris 2016:211). Adopted children often have unhealthy attachment styles due to the abuse or neglect that they may have suffered. The child does not even need to remember the separation from their caregiver for it to affect them. These harmful attachment styles must then be reshaped. To improve these relationships, the parents should create a safe, “playful, loving, accepting, curious and empathic” environment for the child to grow in

No two adoptive families are alike. The parents could be single or mixed race, be headed by a single parent or a couple, or the children could be adopted into a stepfamily (Houghugi & Long 2004:113). A newer part of the adoption landscape is parents belonging to the LGBTQ+ community as they only recently obtained the right to adopt (Carone, Bos, Shenkman & Tasker 2021; Zhang et al. 2023). Zhang et al. (2023:16) found that children adopted into these families have very similar outcomes to children adopted by heterosexual couples. The adopted children are just as varied, with different ages at adoption, different backgrounds before adoption and different

reasons for adoption (Hoghughi & Long 2004:113). This will make every family and their relationship unique.

According to Hoghughi and Long (2004:112), many birthmothers do not want to be associated with the fact that they have given their child up for adoption. However, they can still have an influence on the child even before they are born. Antenatal smoking and drinking can cause health complications.

3.4 Summary

Each family is unique, but some have more complex needs than others. The “norm” of a nuclear family does not reflect the needs of alternative families (Hughes & Munoz-Guzman 2016:XI). This chapter discussed some common structures of these alternative families, including stepfamilies, adoptive families, single-parent households, and families created by artificial reproduction. It discussed how these families are formed, some of their needs and some of the complications that come with each of these families.

In South Africa, non-traditional family structures are progressively outnumbering nuclear families, with merely 25% of children being reared in nuclear households (Newman 2022). The marriage rate among South African women of reproductive age has markedly decreased over the last thirty years, with only 34.8% of women aged 15 to 49 being married in 2015 (Makiwane, Nduna, et al. 2016:27). In 2014, just 37.8% of families were headed by a couple, whilst 62.2% were led by a single parent (Makiwane et al. 2016:31).

Many couples facing challenges with natural conception seek medical assistance to attain biological parenting, which may include simple sperm donation or complex sperm and egg donation coupled with surrogacy (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). This may result in a child being genetically unrelated to both of its social parents (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114). Some spouses serve as surrogates for their daughters, leading to the child having relationships with various parental figures (Hoghughi & Long 2004:114).

A considerable number of parents choose not to remain unmarried. Stepparent families, or blended families, have existed for an extended period (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111). Stepfamilies are established through several circumstances, such as the

passing of a spouse, divorce and subsequent remarriage, and cohabitation (Hoghughi & Long 2004:111; Jensen & Shafer 2013:127; Mashile, Mudau & Ncube 2022:19967). Divorce frequently leads to familial disintegration; yet, remarriage is prevalent, with 75% of divorcees entering into new unions (Coleman, Ganong & Fine 2004:1290).

Approximately 2% of children in South Africa are placed in foster care (Goemans, Van Breda & Kessi 2021:227). According to Goemans et al. (2021:227), 14% of children in South Africa have experienced the death of at least one parent. A substantial proportion of foster children are in care due to the loss of their parents or other guardians. Du Toit et al. (2016:391) indicated that in 2014, over 500,000 children in South Africa were placed in foster care. The fostering process varies by country (Pösö, Skivenes & Thorsen 2021:1). Basic rights encompass the significance of a child's well-being, highlighting the role of family relationships and advocating for minimal governmental intervention (Pösö et al. 2021:1).

Adoption has a long and complex history. Skelton and Hansungule (2021b) identify two primary focuses of adoption: the protection and nurturing of children in a safe and healthy environment, and the promotion of permanency planning to ensure lifelong security for the child.

Chapter 4

Pastoral approaches to supporting alternative family structures

4.1 Introduction

Many families go through difficult circumstances and the cause can range from financial difficulty to mental illness of one of the family members. Sometimes, the family may require additional support and occasionally even professional counselling. This can be especially true for blended families, single-parent households and other alternative family structures as they are placed under greater stress than the majority of nuclear families would be. Many complications faced by alternative families stem from transitional phases, such as the shift from a nuclear family to two single-headed households and eventually to a blended family. In this chapter, some approaches to assist families who are transitioning between these different structures will be discussed.

This chapter will explore various psychological that will be used as part of a pastoral approach to counselling to support families through their challenges. The methods that will be examined are Narrative Counselling (Epston & White 1992), Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Beck 1976), Emotionally Focussed Therapy (EFT) (Greenberg et al. 1993), Attachment-Based Therapy (Bowlby 1979), Family Systems Therapy (Bowen 1966).

4.2 Different Counselling Approaches

4.2.1 Narrative Counselling

Narrative Counselling focuses on storytelling and rewriting a person's life stories so that they gain a better understanding and acquire agency in their lives (White & Epston 1990:4). When this approach is implemented, the individual is enabled to face challenges and achieve their goals. White (1990:3) states that while Narrative Counselling can be used for family therapy, it should be approached carefully. This is because there is a possibility that a single member of the family can be held responsible for the rest of the family's actions.

Michael White and David Epston (1990) developed the narrative approach to therapy. Madigan (2019:14–17) states that this theory was influenced by the works of Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979) and Michael Foucault (1972, 2001). However, it is still different from most psychological and psychiatric theories as White (1990; 1992) based it on humanist, structuralism and individualism (Madigan 2019:12). Epston (1986, 1989) later added elements of postmodern anthropology, folk psychology, cultural studies, and literary criticism. Because of all of these influences, narrative therapy is seen as the first post-psychological therapy (Madigan 2019:12). There were also other contributors to the theory of Narrative Counselling. Cheryl White (n.d.:4) was the founder of Dulwich Centre Publications and contributed concepts such as therapeutic letter writing, externalising conversations and rites of passage. During the development of narrative therapy, White and Epston (1990:17) recorded the stories of their clients and then used these counter-stories to develop therapeutic letter writing and other types of literary therapy.

White and Epston (1990:143) found that it is through stories that people bring meaning to their lives. Thus, the purpose of narrative theory is “to interpret and alter the stories people create to make sense out of their lives” (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:495). Stories are important because thoughts follow a narrative configuration (Fitch, Marshall, Maise & McCullough 2020:49). Oral tradition is found throughout different cultures and helps people to make sense of their experiences and to create history. As such, Narrative Counselling views these stories as an integral part of people’s lives and as social constructions (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:496). According to Capuzzi and Stauffer (2016:494–496), there are two basic concepts which Narrative Counselling uses, being that individuals can only base their worldview on their experiences and that people compare themselves to and with the lived experiences of others.

Narrative Counselling uses metaphors and literature to understand the challenges and problems that people are confronted with (Fitch et al. 2020:49–50). Language is the primary way in which people express themselves and, as such is key in the development of new narratives. However, it is important to understand that language and metaphors are interpreted through the cultural context in which the individual finds themselves (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:496). Narrative therapy empowers individuals to redefine their life stories, which may have been oppressive and led to problematic behaviours (Fitch et al. 2020:49–50). This process of rewriting is called authoring. This

reauthoring is important as the overarching narrative of a person's life contains the metaphor through which people view themselves and those around them. Once the person has rewritten their story, they often realise that they prefer this narrative (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:497).

The therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and client primarily consists of dialogue, with the main contributor being the client (Levitt & Rennie 2011:2). However, the focus of these conversations can differ. Some counsellors focus on dividing the client's narratives into themes as they reveal themselves and then discussing them individually. Other counsellors determine themes beforehand that they use as a springboard to open narratives with their clients. Furthermore, some other counsellors go into the sessions with themes already in mind. According to Levitt and Rennie (2011:2), this, unfortunately, does not allow much opportunity for reflection on the therapy itself. Levitt and Rennie (2011:2–3) reported that a new offshoot of narrative therapy was developing in which both the counsellor and client can express how they feel about the counselling itself. In this approach, not only is the story examined, but also how it is told. This allows the client to reveal motives and intentions that would not normally be discussed.

Problems are viewed as separate from the individual, and the counsellor helps reduce their impact by guiding them to focus on their skills, beliefs, and values to create a new narrative (Fitch et al. 2020:49). These narratives involve “events linked in sequence across time and according to a plot” (Fitch et al. 2020:50). Narrative Counselling states that people are not the problem and that problems are formed within the context of cultural values, beliefs and traditions. The counsellor's purpose is to listen to the client's stories and discover clues about the problems they are facing and how to mitigate the influence of these problems on the client and those around them (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:497).

In Narrative Counselling, the counsellor starts by exploring how the individual's life and relationships are being influenced by the problems they are facing before looking at how the problem influences the individual themselves (Fitch et al. 2020:50–51). The counsellor will also explore alternative stories for past and future events, after which they will examine if any parts of these stories are true and how these stories can be implemented. Finally, they will help the client examine the value of past, present and

future. The Narrative Counselling approach has several objectives. Fitch et al. (2020:50–51) found that some of the objectives of Epton and White's (1992; 1990) theory include unifying the family using skills such as normalising, active listening, empathising, and reflecting, separating the client from their problems, understanding how the problem is affecting them, finding the unique outcomes that they want in their lives, forming new stories for new outcomes, and acknowledging their progress. The counsellor builds a working relationship with the client as they work toward the client's goal. Part of this approach is acknowledging that the counsellor is not the absolute expert and that there may be several interpretations of people and their problems. Thus, the counsellor also does not present themselves as the authority but as a partner of the client who is rewriting their story. The client is the author of their own lives (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:496).

According to Levitt and Rennie (2011:7), Narrative Counselling has two intentions. The one intention is “emotional exploration and expressive symbolisation” (Levitt & Rennie 2011:7), which results from the yearning to understand yourself better. The other intention is to manage the anxiety that is caused by “intrapersonal exploration and interpersonal interaction and is manifested in defensive activities such as belief management, disengagement, interactional contemplation, and deference” (Levitt & Rennie 2011:7). Regardless of how Narrative Counselling is conducted, the objective is self-exploration.

The client is encouraged to celebrate any milestones in their lives, including memorialising victors over long-standing issues (Madigan 2019:14). One of the ways that counsellors urge their clients to tell their stories is through reflexive questions (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:496). These questions come about when a story is being told, and questions are asked that evoke other stories to be told. This assists the client in forming their narrative. However, in cases where families are being counselled, it is important to remember that each member will have their version of the story and that each account is valid.

As Narrative Counselling relies on the client telling their stories, there are occasions of silence (Levitt & Rennie 2011:5–6). Levitt (2011:6) found that during these silences, the clients were in touch with their internal experience and sometimes silence was needed for the client to focus on their internal dialogue. At these times, the client also

has the opportunity to refine their following narrative. These silences can be divided into several types of productive pauses. Firstly, emotional pauses are moments when clients experience intense or incipient emotions. Secondly, expressive pauses occur when clients need time to find the correct terms to express themselves. Thirdly, there are reflective pauses where clients spend time connecting and interpreting different thoughts. Levitt and Rennie (2011:6) found that “the silences helped them to identify, analyse, and communicate their internal experiences and to recognise new dimensions of their experience that they would use to transform the session discourse.” According to Levitt and Rennie (2011:6), despite the importance of these moments of silence, many clients feel pressured to fill the void, leading to a hasty return to the narrative. This is especially true when these pauses become extended. Despite this, Levitt and Rennie (2011:6) suggest that reflective silences may be the purpose of Narrative Counselling, as it is at this time that awareness develops because they allow time for introspection. The purpose of the narrative that the client shares is thus to provide a comfortable environment for self-examination, deeper self-awareness, and a more comprehensive narrative. Fourthly, obstructive silences are similar to emotional silence in that the client experiences strong emotions. However, unlike emotional pauses, where the person pauses to process their emotions before continuing, during obstructive pauses, the person becomes avoidant, not wanting to address their feelings. The client will avoid the narrative that caused these painful emotions in these cases. Finally, there are interactional pauses when the speaker shifts from the client to the counsellor. In these cases, the silence may be due to the counsellor giving the client an instruction that confuses the client or if the client is concerned about the counsellor’s experience. According to Levitt and Rennie (2011:6–7), these last two silences can cause issues for the client as they can interfere with the client’s inner exploration. This can be avoided if the silences and their reasons are discussed. Discussing the reason for the pauses can be part of the therapeutic process.

Julian Müller (1996) has been influential in the field of Narrative Counselling in South Africa, especially in the application of Narrative Counselling to the pastoral field. He even provides a new definition of practical theology, stating that practical theology is the systematic and continuous hermeneutic process which attempts to renew the human experience as it relates to the Christian community (Müller 1996:5). Narrative

Counselling has been adapted to treat many different issues (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:497). This includes issues that affect families. Richter and Müller (2005) suggest that Narrative Counselling can be used to assist children in the process of bereavement after the loss of their parents, especially in an African context. When these children were allowed to tell their stories, they could make meaning of their grief. Meaning-making is an important part of the narrative approach (Müller 1996:26–28).

According to Ghavibazou et al. (2021:2-3), Narrative therapy takes a postmodern approach, which means that there is no absolute truth, making each individual's story valid. They suggest the following techniques: externalising the problem and creating unique outcomes. Externalising the problem entails firstly, naming and personifying the problem. Secondly, it helps the client to identify their problem and how it affects them. During this phase, the client decides on their preferred narrative and gathers support for it. Unique outcomes require the reconceptualisation of the issue. This may involve the development of new stories that had previously been overlooked. It also includes a unique set of thoughts, actions, feelings and plans.

Ghavibazou et al. (2021:9) found that many studies on narrative therapy do not include guidelines for how to apply it. However, they did find that some narrative counsellors focus on helping the client to engage with their narratives while others focus on deconstructing problem-steeped narratives. Ghavibazou et al. (2021:9) also found that naming and renaming problems can be beneficial.

Gómez et al. (2020:289) found that in addition to unique outcomes and externalising, Narrative therapy can apply the constructs of remembering conversation, scaffolding conversations, and multi-storied beings. Remembering conversations allows the client to recount stories from the perspective of friends or family members. Scaffolding conversations is a slow process that allows the client to form alternative narratives about themselves. The concept of multi-storied beings refers to the fact that people are made of a collection of stories that make up their sense of self.

Narrative therapy has been found to be effective for intervention in cases of “depression, PTSD, anxiety, learning disability, disruptive communication patterns, anorexia/ bulimia, and intellectual disabilities” (Ghavibazou et al. 2021:10).

4.2.2 Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) was developed by Aaron T. Beck (1976, 2019:18). It focuses on how people think about events rather than the events themselves (Beck 2019:17). This means that how a person interprets events will govern the emotions that they will experience. As such, psychological issues are due to a faulty interpretation of events (Beck 2019:18). In turn, this misinterpretation of events causes behaviours that are reactions to their misinterpretation (Beck 2019:18; Fitch et al. 2020:47). The way CBT works is to allow the person to recognise these maladapted thoughts to improve the emotional state and behaviour and encourage positive thought processes. Davies and Bacon (2016:108) suggest that, in other words, if individuals can challenge their thoughts and belief systems, their actions will change for the better. As opposed to Freudian psychology, which holds all dysfunction to stem from childhood wounds, CBT works to find solutions by identifying faulty belief systems and modifying them to be in line with the evidence (Fitch et al. 2020:45–46). According to Fitch et al. (2020:48), CBT focuses on present problems without plunging into childhood issues.

In practice, CBT is focused on facilitating the learning of clients and assisting them with homework to make them active participants in their treatment (Fitch et al. 2020:46). CBT indicates that individuals add to their psychological issues, and as such, it is important that they contribute to their treatment. This can empower the client as it gives them control (Davies & Bacon 2016:109). The therapeutic process depends on the relationship between the client and the therapist much more than Freudian psychoanalysis (Fitch et al. 2020:47). In this therapeutic relationship, the goal is to ally with the client to help them readjust their thought processes. The method that is used involves assisting the client with coming to terms with the fact that “their beliefs and attitudes influence the way that they feel and act” (Fitch et al. 2020:47). After these views have been identified, the therapist will help the client to develop measurable goals. CBT also assists clients with acquiring skills to help them cope with stressful situations in which their faulty belief systems may resurface (Davies & Bacon 2016:109).

The basis of CBT has existed since the time of Epictetus, however, it was only developed into a psychological theory in recent years by scholars such as Albert Ellis (Ellis 1976) and Judith Beck (2009), Aaron Beck’s daughter. Aaron Beck (1976, 2019)

then added to this theory and developed it into CBT as it is known today. Beck was first a loyal supporter of Freud's psychoanalysis. However, he found some contradictions in psychoanalysis on a practical level (Beck 2019:16–17). As Beck (2019:17) conducted different studies, he developed the concept of *automatic thoughts*. Automatic thoughts can be described as an underlying stream of thoughts that influence the individual's attitude towards themselves, those around them and the future (Beck 2019:17). It is on this concept that Beck then bases the rest of his therapeutic model. He explained that these automatic thoughts affected emotions as they were often exaggerations or misconceptions of a situation (Beck 2019:17). While these thoughts could be helpful in cases where multitasking is required, at other times, they can become problematic (Beck 2019:18). These thoughts generally align with their diagnosed psychological issues. For example, someone with depression would experience thoughts of self-criticism and remorse, or someone with obsessive-compulsive disorder might have imperative thoughts such as “wash your hands” (Beck 2019:18). Realising this, Beck (2019:18) developed his theory that to mitigate the distortion that these thoughts bring, one needs to recognise these thoughts and address their misconceptions by “looking for the evidence, considering alternative explanations, or evaluating the logic of the conclusions”. He tested this theory on his patients and found that if they addressed their automatic thoughts in this way, their mental state would improve (Beck 2019:18). Beck (2019:18) then worked on constructing a theory of what normal thought should look like. He adopted the term *schema* from Piaget to describe a person's beliefs. These schemas could have the following attributes: “permeability/impermeability, magnitude, content, and charge” (Beck 2019:18).

Beck (2019:18) then started to implement this theory in various conditions, including depressive disorders, anger issues, and problems between couples. He identified the maladapted beliefs that were typically associated with each of these issues. For example, those suffering from depression who would experience maltreatment would feel that they deserve it, and people struggling with aggression would experience a preserved slight, but their anger would overshadow their hurt. This could be because the individual feels vulnerable and, as such, reacts aggressively toward anything they perceive as an attack (Beck 2019:19). Beck (2019:19) found that in couples that are experiencing issues with anger, there tended to be attentional and interpretative

biases in which the partners would observe exclusively negative behaviour and would interpret neutral behaviour as negative rather than positive. They would also often view themselves as vulnerable and their partner as the enemy (Beck 2019:19).

The most common distortions can be divided into the following categories: blank-and-white-thinking, overgeneralisation, mental filters, jumping to conclusions, mind reading, catastrophising or minimisation, emotional reasoning, should statements, labelling and personalisation (Beck 2008:970, 2016:779–780; Davies & Bacon 2016:70; Fitch et al. 2020:46). Black-and-white thinking displays an all-or-nothing attitude in which the person does not allow for compromise, for example, if it is not perfect, it is no good. Generalising singular experiences across all past and future experiences is considered overgeneralisation. Mental filters are similar to overgeneralisation, but in this case, only certain experiences are focused on, specifically, those that support the individual's flawed beliefs. If a person concludes without the necessary information, they are said to jump to conclusions. In mind reading, the person believes that they know what someone else is thinking, and these thoughts are usually negative. Catastrophising means that something is overemphasised, such as a small incident being considered detrimental, while minimisation shrinks actions down to insignificance. Emotional reason is when the individual uses their emotions as proof; for example, I feel like a failure, so I will never achieve anything. Finally, personalisation occurs when things are thought to be directed towards the individual or when self-blame occurs for events outside of the individual's control.

Once these maladapted schemas have been identified, one can work on reworking them into better-adapted beliefs. For this approach to work, a good relationship is needed between the client and therapist as then there is a feeling of comradeship and working towards a common goal (Beck 2019:19).

Because CBT is effective in the treatment of many different conditions, it is one of the most widely used forms of therapy (Fitch et al. 2020:45). Beck (2019:19) has found it to be especially useful for the treatment of depression. In the UK, the NHS has adopted CBT as the dominant therapeutic model which they use to treat around 500 000 people annually for conditions such as depression and anxiety (Beck 2019:19). While the focus of CBT was originally on psychological disorders, it has in recent years been used to even treat medical conditions such as diabetes, insomnia, skin diseases and

dementia (Beck 2019:19). The reason that CBT is effective in these cases is because these conditions cause emotional distress and as such, they suffer struggles to perform self-care tasks, even experiencing depressive symptoms (Fitch et al. 2020:47). As CBT assist the suffering in coping with emotional distress, they are better capable of observing their medical treatment and improving their prognosis.

Fordham et al. (2021:25-26) found that there are various conditions, both mental and physical, that can be treated with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. They found that CBT can improve the quality of life of an individual by a moderate amount despite pre-existing conditions. López-López et al. (2019:1942) also found CBT to improve quality of life in the short term. Furthermore, all improvements were long-lasting, still present a year after treatment was completed (Fordham et al. 2021:26).

Joyce-Beauleiu and Sulkowski (2015:10–12) suggest several techniques on how to apply CBT with a focus on school-age children. Some of these techniques include shaping, chaining, contingency contracting, replacement behaviour training, precorrection and prompting, self-monitoring, and differential reinforcement. Shaping encourages the individual to change their unwanted behaviour towards the desired behaviour. It does this by employing rewards for improved behaviour. Chaining is similar to shaping, but instead of encouraging one behaviour, it encourages a series of related behaviours. To do this, the cause of the behaviour needs to be identified. Contingency contracting encourages positive behaviours with a different kind of motivation. For example, a child may only be allowed to play computer games, which they use to do for hours if they complete their homework. Replacement behaviour training refers to replacing negative behaviour with positive. Precorrection and prompting are performed by someone close to the client who can gently remind them of the necessary behaviour. On the other hand, self-monitoring helps the client to become aware of their actions and encourages self-regulation. Finally, differential reinforcement is similar to replacement behaviour, as it trains the client in a behaviour that is contrary to the behaviour they want to remove.

Christner & Mennuti (2012:605–607) present several strategies for the application of CBT also in a school environment. Firstly, relaxation training can be beneficial in cases where anger and tension are an issue. This technique encourages the use of techniques such as breathing exercises to reduce tension. Replacement imagery uses

visualisation to promote positive behaviour. The client imagines themselves doing the preferred behaviour. The client can also be taught to question the evidence, which involves questioning whether the support they have for their argument is valid. For example, the client may believe that someone always ignores them. However, once they examine the evidence, they may find that the person could not hear them or did not see them. Positive self-talk is another useful technique. Negative thinking and negative automatic thoughts can often be damaging to self-esteem and self-restraint. Given conscious effort, positive self-talk can replace negative thoughts.

Beukes et al. (2020:7) also suggest some strategies for the application of CBT. Firstly, there is thought identification, which refers to identifying negative and distorted thought processes. Secondly, exposure therapy is used to assist the client in facing their fears or fearful situations. The counsellor will expose the client to what they fear slowly and in small doses. Thirdly, the client can behave in a manner that will encourage a positive outcome. The client and the counsellor will evaluate possible outcomes and decide on which one they want to accomplish before deciding the behaviour which will achieve it. Fourthly, imagery involves the use of all the senses to create an image of the ideal outcome. Fifthly, behaviour analysis maps out patterns of behaviour that have negative consequences, which helps to then identify passive behaviour and encourage it. Finally, changing the environment can improve behaviour.

Conti et al. (2017) present how CBT can be applied to older clients. Conti et al. (2017:223) suggest that to CBT to clients over the age of 50, slight alternations need to be made. These alterations may be as simple as printing worksheets in large font to improve readability or implementing written or verbal reminders of appointments or goals. However, there are some adjustments that are more complex.

López-López et al. (2019:1937) found CBT to be particularly effective in the treatment of clinical depression, and Laidlaw et al. (2008:848–849) found CBT to be just as effective in the treatment of depression in older adults as medication. When Conti et al. (2017:228) approach depression in older adults, they suggest that it is important to understand the influence that physical health can have on emotional health; as such, improved health can lead to a better mental state. Ensuring that the client can have pleasurable social experiences can also improve their mood.

CBT can be applied across generations and can be useful for families. Many of the techniques noted may be aimed at school-aged children; however, they can be applied to all ages. The counsellor may also assist the family with the necessary skills to support each other through the challenges they may face. Occasionally, the entire family may need assistance with different behavioural problems. The counsellor may also deem it necessary to bring the entire family together for therapy sessions.

4.2.3 Emotionally Focussed Therapy

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is based on the work of Leslie S. Greenberg, Cindy L Ford, Louise S. Alden and Susan M. Johnson (1993:78). It is a structured therapeutic method that was principally designed for couples; however, it can be used in other circumstances. It combines the perspectives of the individuals and interpersonal perspectives to assist couples in creating new, more fulfilling communication patterns (Greenberg et al. 1993:78). EFT provides a structure for addressing emotional distress, improving communication, and enhancing relationship satisfaction (Greenberg et al. 1993:84). EFT uses positive emotions to change negative emotions (Greenberg 2017:108).

Greenberg (2017:109) states that two major principles in EFT operate during different times, enabling and promoting a therapeutic relationship. To facilitate a therapeutic relationship, “presence and empathic attunement, bonding and task collaboration” (Greenberg 2017:109), are required. Empathic attunement speaks to the therapist’s constant attunement to the client’s changing emotions and experiences. To maintain the bonding principle, both the therapist and the client must work on communicating in a genuine and empathetic manner and conveying acceptance. Finally, task collaboration is about how the therapist and client work towards common goals and therapeutic tasks. There are also three principles to promote therapeutic work: “differential processing, growth and choice and task completion” (Greenberg 2017:109). Differential processing is the recognition that different types of processing and tasks that need to take place during the therapeutic process need to be prompted by the therapist. For example, the therapist may recommend internal focus at one stage and experiential search at another. For growth and choice to be effectively practised, the therapist needs to support the client to encourage them to reach their potential and motivate them to self-determination, responsible interdependence, and self-improvement. Finally, task completion thematically approaches tasks, but only if

these tasks are in line with the overall goals that the client has determined. If a task is not in line with the client's goal, the therapist will attempt to better understand the client's goal.

EFT therapists have to remain empathetic, positive and congruent throughout the therapeutic process (Greenberg 2017:108–110). Genuinely empathetic relationships are the basis of EFT. In this empathetic therapeutic relationship, the therapist may need to guide clients through their emotions in different methods. The relationship between the therapist and client is supposed to be a mutual effort of co-exploration. However, the client is seen as the authority of their own experiences. As such, the therapist's role is not to act as the authority but to offer interventions in a “non-imposing, tentative manner” (Greenberg 2017:110). Because of this view of the therapist, the relationship is prioritised above the task. Greenberg (2017:110) suggests that true compassion and empathy may be more beneficial to the client than the implementation of superior psychological techniques. According to Greenberg (2017:110), the therapist can be seen as an emotional coach who helps the client with acceptance and change at the appropriate times. The therapist should help the client to accept some emotions while introducing them to the possibility of and skills to change the situations that need to be changed.

A study conducted by Pascual-Leone, Cristoffanini and Sawashima (2024:1022–1023) found that to understand a client's needs and develop a personal treatment plan, the variables that influence the client's behaviour need to be understood. One of these variables is emotional processing, which signifies a collaboration between the client and the therapist. Pascual-Leone, Cristoffanini and Sawashima (2024:1022) state that how the client expresses themselves and their concerns during the sessions can influence the results of their sessions. The emotions that the client experiences during the sessions can either promote or impede the therapeutic process. “According to the sequential model of emotional processing, emotion states progress in a sequential pattern to predict positive change in therapy” (Pascual-Leone et al. 2024:1022). The pattern of emotions experienced by the client can be used as a tool to evaluate their needs.

Pascual et al. (2024:1022–1023) found that nine important emotional states were relevant to the process of therapeutic change. These emotional states can be used to

determine where the client is in the process of processing their emotional distress. This distress has three patterns. The first is global distress, in which the client is very emotionally stirred and has difficulty identifying their emotions. These clients often experience an unclear and constant feeling of distress that can sometimes become overwhelming and lead to a lack of direction. The second is shame or fear. The client may experience these emotions because they have developed a negative self-image due to them becoming aware that they have a constant source of emotional distress. Finally, clients may experience anger or rejection rather than shame. This anger is caused by the desire to create distance between the client and the cause of distress.

Pascual et al. (2024:1023) indicate two major steps in the method of treatment. The first is a negative self-evaluation. This occurs when the client has dysfunctional core beliefs about themselves. The second is unmet existential needs, which the client identifies. These needs usually revolve around attachment, personal agency and survival.

Throughout the sessions, the therapist oscillates between expounding on the understanding of the core meaning of the client's experience and exploring what the client has not yet but is close to uncovering (Greenberg 2017:108). In the first few sessions, the therapist learns what the client's style for processing emotions is, as well as how capable the client is of experiencing emotions. As the relationship between the client and therapist grows, the therapist's role expands to responding to markers for the client, indicating issues with processing and making suggestions for suitable interventions. While the client leads these sessions, it is recommended that the therapist suggests a new intervention in very few sessions (Greenberg 2017:108).

Two suggested interventions are the two-chair dialogue and the empty-chair dialogue (Greenberg 2017:108–109). Two-chair dialogue is used when there is self-criticism. The client is asked to express their negative and self-critical thoughts and then express the feelings that they experience when confronted with these thoughts. The therapist then assisted the client with transforming these negative emotions into positive ones. The Empty-chair dialogue is used when there are unresolved feelings between couples. This is sometimes necessary when there are unresolved issues within the relationship, such as unexpressed feelings, leading to the individuals feeling that their needs are not being met. In the empty-chair dialogue, the individuals will place

themselves in the other's point of view, which can lead to them viewing each other in a more positive light. When individuals place themselves in each other's shoes, they gain a better understanding of how their partner views them, which in turn increases the likelihood of forgiveness.

Emotion-focused therapy has been used in couples counselling as a tool in conflict resolution (Greenberg & Goldman 2008:279). When EFT was first applied to couples, it was deemed that when one of the members of the couple vulnerably expresses their need for closeness and recognition and their partner reacts empathically, their relationship will be strengthened (Greenberg & Goldman 2008:281).

Greenberg and Goldman (2008:281–282) found that EFT can be applied in other ways, suggesting that couples seek each other out to adjust their effects. According to Greenberg and Goldman (2008:281), if both attachment and influence are considered, there is a more holistic understanding of behaviour. This new approach includes aspects of individual therapy as part of the couple's sessions, which may include working on childhood pain caused by unmet needs. Along with this, Greenberg and Goldman (2008:281) indicate the importance of self-soothing in relationships. This is because self-regulating emotions assist in the prevention of conflicts. Because many interactions are driven by emotions, they are often a large factor in the success of a relationship.

There are many ways to apply emotion-focused therapy. Beutel et al. (2019:5) suggest different approaches, including exploring symptoms, identifying needs, and working through transference. Before these approaches can be applied, a safe therapeutic alliance needs to be established, which involves remaining empathetic and addressing issues in the therapeutic relationship should they occur. In some therapeutic relationships, transference occurs. Beutel et al. (2019:5) suggest that the client should work with this transference and address it if it interferes with the therapeutic process. Beutel et al. (2019) state that there should not only be a focus on explicit emotions but on implicit emotions as well. The clients should become aware of all their emotions. During EFT, clients are taught to experience their emotions, which Beutel et al. (2019:5) divide into three parts. Firstly, clients should confront their anxiety. This allows the client to claim ownership of their emotions. Secondly, Beutel et al. (2019:5) suggest that the next step is to face the emotions caused by interpersonal struggles

that had previously been ignored and should address the self-criticism which arises from this. Lastly, the client should acknowledge the emotions that this conflict has caused in others. Besides this, it is important for the client to identify their needs and learn how to express them.

Bodenmann et al. (2020:5) suggest that EFT can be useful in couples counselling as it assists the couple with communicating their emotions. These emotions should be communicated in a mutually respectful way, which emphasises the importance of forgiveness. This is especially important because the individual may often express not primary emotions but secondary ones, such as nagging or attacking. The counsellor can help the individuals to discover their primary emotions. Once these emotions have been identified, the couple can work through these emotions together. The clients are encouraged to remain focused on the present. This helps them to increase self-awareness. Bodenmann et al. (2020:5) suggest that there are two main components to EFT couple therapy, bonding and enactments. Bonding is when one partner gains a deeper understanding of the other's emotions, which leads to more empathy between the partners. Enactments use role-play to allow the couple to express their deeper emotions.

Allan et al. (2023:52–56) also suggest strategies for the counsellor in the application of EFT with an emphasis on cultural differences. They suggest that EFT may need to be adapted when there are cultural differences. Firstly, there is the need to move away from the concept that the counsellor is the expert. Secondly, the counsellor must remember to move slower. Thirdly, it is important for cultural differences to be identified and named. Finally, some approaches need to be modified for cultural differences.

4.2.4 Attachment-Based Therapy

Attachment-based therapy is based on the work of John Bowlby (1970). This theory revolves around human relationships and the importance of secure emotional bonds (Bowlby 1982:675). Attachment-based therapy focuses on the inherent need of humans to form close bonds with caregivers (Bowlby 1970:76). The techniques used in attachment-based therapy include exploring attachment history, identifying attachment patterns and promoting secure bonds (Bowlby 1970:76).

Bowlby (1984) had originally been a student of psychoanalysis. However, he realised that there was a gulf between the client and therapist, which he sought to bridge. This was not the only reason that he moved away from psychoanalysis. Bowlby (1982:666) did not agree with psychoanalysis's concentration on the inner imagination world of the youngster rather than real-life experience.

Bowlby (1979:129) studied primates, noting that the young primate would keep within the vicinity of a favoured adult. This led Bowlby (1979:129) to conclude that this attachment behaviour had value for survival, as it would provide protection from predators. He then applied this to the relationship between parent and child. He suggests that the child, from birth, has the need to develop a strong attachment to a caregiver. He deems this needs to be as primary as food or reproduction. When this attachment is threatened, the young will often experience anxiety and anger. If there is an actual loss of the attachment, the young will generally experience anger and sorrow. If the attachment bond remains broken, the child the behaviour surrounding attachment will slowly fade, but these behaviours can be reignited.

Bowlby (1979:viii) first started his work on attachment-based therapy when he was working with children who had been displaced by war or institutionalisation, from which he concluded that parental loss and separation were the main cause of trauma. As such, the beginning of emotional instability and delinquent behaviour is during infancy and is caused by a relationship with the caregiver (Steelman 2018:72). Bowlby (1979:71) further developed the theory that environmental trauma is the primary cause of negative child development. These negative or insecure attachments are often caused by unmet needs, leading the child to develop defensive strategies and experience anxiety and distrust. This can also lead to insecure attachment styles in future relationships. On the other hand, when secure attachments are formed, healthy scripts are developed, which leads to wholesome behavioural patterns and relationships (Steelman 2018:72). It is also through the framework of this script that the needs of the individual are met. These healthy relationships are formed when the infant signals a need, and the caregiver repeatedly and consistently fulfils these needs. As the child grows, their secure bonds mean that he or she will feel that they, themselves and people can be trustworthy in fulfilling their needs.

Children thus have a strong desire to be near their primary caregiver, especially during times of stress (Howard Steele & Miriam Steele 2018:72). While children need proximity to their caregiver, they have just as strong a need to explore the world around them (Yellin & White 2012:3–4). The child feels safe to explore when they have a safe place to return to, being their caregiver. When this is available to the child, they are empowered to acquire self-reliance and autonomy. The attachment pattern of the child is thus largely determined by the availability and responsiveness of the caregiver.

According to Steelman (2018:72–73), there are three levels of the attachment theory that each add depth and different descriptions. The first level functions under the assumption that adults follow a script based on their attachment style. When a secure script and attachment are present, the person will expect a caregiver to act as they did towards them, caring for needs and emotional upset and feel safe and secure. The second level is how information about attachments is interpreted. This means that when secure attachments are formed during childhood, they feel more secure in their relationships later in life. On the other hand, insecure attachments mean that the person struggles during periods of stress and becomes dismissive and preoccupied. Finally, there is the reflexive level. At this level, the person reflects on new attachments in the context of historical attachments. This helps the individual to introduce “alternative viewpoints and paths for what would otherwise be unhealthy expectancies” (Stelman 2018:73).

Ainsworth et al. (1978:22-29) classified attachment styles into different groups. Firstly, there are secure attachments, which make up the majority of infant attachments. These infants desire comfort and become distressed when their caregiver leaves. Secondly, there are anxious-avoidant attachments and anxious-resistant attachments. Anxious-avoidant babies are unfazed when their primary caregiver leaves the room and do not react when they return. Anxious-resistant attached infants become very distressed without their caregiver; however, when they return, the infant struggles to accept comfort. Finally, there are disorganised-disoriented infants who do not act in a predictable way

Pearce (2016:22–25) states that these attachments can have an effect on the way in which the infant interacts with strangers. Securely attached children may be shy towards strangers at first but will engage with them and ever explore unfamiliar areas

without anxiety. Anxious-avoidant or insecure-avoidant attached children may become aloof with others and may even appear as self-absorbed. Anxious-resistant or insecure-ambivalent children will become very distressed when they are separated from their caregiver and become inconsolable. This means that they will avoid interaction with strangers and strange environments. Lastly, disorganised-disorientated children display inconsistent behaviour. When frightened, the child may even seek out a stranger rather than their primary caregiver.

Moretti et al. (2018) suggest that the relationship between parent and adolescent is completed and that the attachment is a strong indication of success later on in life. However, according to Moretti et al. (2018:377), there is not much information about ensuring secure attachments are maintained throughout adolescence. During adolescence, the attachments that were formed during early childhood become malleable. This means that insecure attachments can be repaired during this stage.

This is important as unhealthy attachments can cause issues in adulthood. Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to suggest that attachment theory could be applied outside of early childhood. They applied attachment theory to romantic relationships and found that the attachment style that a person developed during infancy would affect their attachment to their romantic partner (Hazan & Shaver 1987:512).

4.2.5 Family Systems Therapy

Family Systems Therapy was developed by Murray Bowen (1966) and it provides an insight into the forces at work in family relationships and how they impact each family member's life. The theory stresses personal autonomy and balance (Bowen 1966:371–372). It proposes that experiences in the family of origin notably impact current, working relationships (Bowen 1966:346).

Bowen (2013:11) was trained initially by the Menninger Institute, and it was here that he acquired his interest in family systems (Rambo, West, Schooley & Boyd 2012:65). A while later, he became the director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Unfortunately, he developed political issues as he was hospitalising entire families because of his belief that the entire family was responsible for the pathology of the unit and not simply an individual. Bowen (2013), however, did not only apply this model to families but to organisations as well. He tested this by applying his model to the staff at the NIMH and found this to be a fruitful endeavour. After these discoveries, Bowen

(2013:6) went on to found what is now known as the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family.

According to Butler (2016:54), the Family Study Project, which was first reported in December 1954, was first meant to study the symbiosis between mother and daughter. However, the researchers who were conducting the studies found that difficulties developed between them as a result of the mothers and daughters shifting conflicts from themselves to the researcher (Bowen 1956; Butler 2016:54). As a result, a report was developed explaining the difficulties of limiting transference when working with families. However, Bowen (2013:47) found that there were different types of transference depending on the patient's condition. As such, the researcher and therapist must strive to keep this transference to a manageable level by keeping calm (Butler 2016:54). When the construct of the family unit is implemented properly, transference is also minimised.

Family systems focus on restoring balance to families among the generations (Rambo, West, Schooley & Boyd 2012:65). It does this by focusing on the interconnectedness of the relationships between the family members (Rambo et al. 2012:266-267). This theory considers the family to be a single emotional unit (Butler 2016:53). It recognises that each member influences the others. When these relationships are positive, the unit can be stronger as different perspectives are utilised and the different strengths and expertise of the members of the family. In this way, the family can influence each other for the best.

According to Butler (2016:56), the shift from individual therapy to family-centred therapy contained three stages. The first step was to change the researchers' mindset from concentrating on individuals to concentrating on families. Secondly, the researchers needed to relate to the family unit as a whole. Finally, the last step involved treating the family as a singular unit in terms of their psychotherapeutic treatment.

While the original study examined the relationship between mother and daughter, as Bowen's theory developed, the father's influence was understood (Butler 2016:55–56). As such, there was a shift towards understanding the influence of the parents on the patient, with the idea being that if the parents were to change, the patient would as well. To maintain symbiosis within the family, there should be a focus on “reducing

instances of patients getting into intense one-to-one relationships with staff, helping family members be more mature, and assisting with staff overinvolvement” (Butler 2016:57).

According to Becvar and Becvar (2018:59-60) to do family therapy, it is important to understand what a family is. Within families, there are also subsystems which have to do with the relationships between the members of the family; there are also subsystems which have to do with the relationships between the members of the family, which include predictable processes that present security for the individuals. Subsystem can also refer to how a family is a small subset of the larger family or supra system. However, the borders of the family are defined differently by each family and occasionally differently by each family member. Usually, families have a certain level of stability and integrity. No matter the definition, there are influences from inside and outside the unit. Internal influences are the communication patterns that develop between individual family members. These patterns are what make each relationship unique. As these relationships are unique, each family has a set of values, beliefs, manners of thinking and reacting, and traditions that are unique to them. However, this does not mean these practices will not change over time. Families can be characterised by the degree of properties such as flexibility, openness, honesty, and excitement about experiences. It is through all of this that the family interprets experiences. If these experiences are not in line with their values, processes are set in motion to “temper, adapt, minimise or preclude” (Becvar & Becvar 2018:60) this experience. When the family cannot reconcile their experience with their norms and values, they can have a variety of reactions. Some of these reactions may lead to the need for external assistance.

Unlike couples therapy, there are not only two influences in the relationship but three or more. However, this should not be seen as group therapy. Still, the therapist should understand the family therapeutic dynamic of the family (Butler 2016:57). The therapist is not considered an expert but rather the client (Butler 2016:53). Butler (2016:57) suggests that the therapist can occasionally take the place of the parent, but in family systems therapy, the therapist needs to adopt a position of objectivity and limit involvement. Becvar and Becvar (2018:61) propose two ways to approach the family as a system. The first approach is for the therapist to act as an observer outside of the family. From this position, the therapist seeks to understand the family and acts more

as an expert. It also minimises the influence that the therapist may have on the family. The second approach sees the therapist as part of the system they try to observe. It also acknowledges that each family member has a unique perspective; thus, the therapist is not viewed as the expert. Becvar and Becvar (2018:62) do not have a preference for either method but state they deem the second method to be more accommodating of each family's uniqueness. No matter the approach, the therapist also needs to view the client with unconditional positive regard (Butler 2016:57). This attitude emphasises compassion and hope for the future while maintaining a focus on the present as well.

Family Systems Therapy should be inclusive of all different family structures including divorced and single parents. Huff and Hartenstein (2020:523–530) suggest that therapy for divorced families should not only focus on the treatment of the children involved but also the parents. They suggest two focuses, which are child-focused interventions and parenting interventions. For child-focused interventions, Huff and Hartenstein (2020) suggest group therapy, rebuilding connections, as well as personal interventions. For parenting interventions, they provide suggestions on how to maintain parental effectiveness, extra education for the parents involved, and finally, they suggest interventions for effective co-parenting.

4.2.6 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

A study conducted by Motamedi, Samavi and Fallahchai (2020:393) compared group acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to determine which was more effective for single mothers. It did this by measuring the hardiness of each single mother before and after they were sent into either ACT or CBT group therapy (Motamedi, Samavi & Fallahchai 2020:393). There are many reasons why a mother may be single, including divorce, death, and imprisonment (Motamedi et al. 2020:394). These result in the mother taking on new roles and responsibilities as she often acts in a dual parental role (Motamedi et al. 2020:394). These new roles can harm the mother as they take on a new physical and mental load with these effects, including low life satisfaction and mental health problems (Motamedi et al. 2020:394). These, in turn, can cause a reduction in the effectiveness of the single mother's parenting (Motamedi et al. 2020:394).

However, Kobasa (1979:3) has identified a personality trait called hardiness, and those who have high levels of hardiness are better able to cope with stressful events as they do not experience mental health problems while under this stress. Hardiness shares some similarities with resilience and coping strategies. However, hardiness is formed by a combination of beliefs that consist of commitment, control and challenge (Motamedi et al. 2020:394). This hardiness can increase resilience but differs from coping strategies in that it is more a way of life than simply a strategy that comes into play when stressful circumstances are encountered (Motamedi et al. 2020:394). The development of hardiness seems to take place during childhood but can be acquired later on in life (Motamedi et al. 2020:394). Both ACT and CBT can be effective in developing hardiness (Motamedi et al. 2020:394).

CBT has been proven to be effective in increasing hardiness, with studies showing its efficiency in cases of infertility, improving the self-esteem of adolescents suffering from depression, reducing anxiety levels of menopausal women, as well as improving the quality of life of some women and generally improving psychological hardiness (Motamedi et al. 2020:394–395). However, most of these studies have focused on using hardiness as a coping strategy for dealing with specific stressors rather than as a general living strategy (Motamedi et al. 2020:395).

ACT is based on the theory that suffering is caused by psychological inflexibility and is strengthened when experiences are avoided and when cognitive merging takes place (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). The ACT model aims to improve individuals' psychological flexibility by using six methods: "acceptance, diffusion, self as a context, contact with the present moment, values, and committed action" (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). ACT is effective in improving self-efficacy, resilience, and coping styles (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). It has also helped to empower women, improve the quality of life of diabetics and assist people in the sustaining of self-care behaviours (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). As such, ACT is effective in a variety of circumstances and, in this study, was applied to single mothers (Motamedi et al. 2020:395).

CBT and ACT have some similarities as both concentrate on cognition; however, they differ in execution (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). In ACT, the therapist tries to change the negative thought process of the client, but rather to accept their negative emotions and to identify and embrace their values (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). As such, the

emphasis of ACT is on acknowledging problems rather than trying to change them (Motamedi et al. 2020:395). It focuses on addressing problems from a non-judgement standpoint (Motamedi et al. 2020:395).

The study conducted by Motamedi et al. took place in Tehran, a region of Iran (Motamedi et al. 2020:397). Here, they selected 45 women who were divided into three groups: one received ACT group therapy, the second received CBT group therapy, and the final group served as a control (Motamedi et al. 2020:397). The two therapy groups did nine sessions of group counselling (Motamedi et al. 2020:397). Before and after the sessions were completed the participants were given questionnaires to determine their hardiness (Motamedi et al. 2020:397).

The study found that ACT was successful in improving hardiness in single mothers (Motamedi et al. 2020:399). It does this in two ways, the first being that it changes the psychological lens through which thoughts and feelings are viewed rather than focusing on the challenge itself (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). Secondly, it improved the flexibility of the participants (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). This flexibility helps the participants to better cope with stressful events and build hardiness (Motamedi et al. 2020:400).

CBT was found to be just as effective in building hardiness. This approach focuses on changing faulty or illogical beliefs and thoughts (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). It introduces coping techniques such as problem-solving skills so that those involved can deal with the problem rather than avoid it (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). This approach has been shown to decrease psychological distress (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). CBT generally focuses on treating symptoms; however, it does seem to have longer-lasting effects such as increased hardiness (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). However, ACT is more effective in the long term (Motamedi et al. 2020:400). As such, ACT can be a useful tool in assisting single mothers who are undergoing the stress of transition to single parenthood and other stresses that accompany it (Motamedi et al. 2020:400).

4.2.7 Behavioural Family Therapy

Behavioural Family Therapy (BFT) has been used in these situations as it aims to support the entire family (Jhadray et al. 2015:2). This approach focuses on consistent and positive communication, providing problem-resolution skills and managing stress

(Jhadray et al. 2015:2). As part of the positive communication skills, active listening and expressing pleasant feelings are taught (Jhadray et al. 2015:2). The model focuses on day-to-day issues and addressing them on a day-to-day basis (Jhadray et al. 2015:8). It encourages the entire family to work together towards a common goal and it can be adjusted to suit each family's unique needs (Jhadray et al. 2015:8). When all the family members are involved and practice the skills taught, there is a reduction in relapses, and stress, and an improvement in quality of life for the whole family (Jhadray et al. 2015:2).

The study conducted by Jhadray et al. examined how effective BFT training was in three different situations: a mother and baby unit, an eating disorder service, and a troubled families team (Jhadray et al. 2015:2–8). The mother and baby unit conducted 20-minute sessions with the family of and the mother of the baby in which they shared information, taught participants how to identify early warning signs, as well as how to develop a plan to stay well in the long term (Jhadray et al. 2015:2–3). The family received information on the mother's mental health state to increase the family's understanding of the mother's experience (Jhadray et al. 2015:4). This understanding, in turn, gave the mothers more confidence to express their needs and experiences (Jhadray et al. 2015:4). Staff members were also taught to be sensitive to the fact that not all family relationships may be beneficial to the mental state of the mother (Jhadray et al. 2015:3). As such they discussed with the mother ways to improve these relationships, especially in the context of adjusting communication regarding needs (Jhadray et al. 2015:3). After these sessions with the staff members, the families felt that they could better care for the mother as they had a better understanding of their symptoms and emotions (Jhadray et al. 2015:4). They also felt communication was better and that their coping skills had improved (Jhadray et al. 2015:4).

Staff at the eating disorder service received training about the experience of families with members who are suffering from eating disorders, helping families to develop stay-well plans, and the role of the carer in these cases (Jhadray et al. 2015:4). Many staff reported that people suffering from eating disorder did not want to involve their family in their treatment (Jhadray et al. 2015:4–5). However, the staff encouraged the participants to share some of their information with their families as their families can be instrumental in their recovery (Jhadray et al. 2015:5). Eating disorders create a fundamental change in the sufferer's value system which can cause conflict among

the family members especially when they do not understand the condition (Jhadray et al. 2015:5). This change in values can make is very difficult for the sufferer to cooperate with their family of ever health care professionals (Jhadray et al. 2015:5). Sharing information with the family as BFT suggests can improve the family's understanding of the affected family member's actions and as such have a positive influence on the sufferer (Jhadray et al. 2015:6). Once the families have been informed, the can become practically involved in the treatment (Jhadray et al. 2015:6). This also allows the sufferer to express their needs to the family as well as address the behaviours of the family that influence them negatively (Jhadray et al. 2015:6). This in turn helps with the development of a stay well plan (Jhadray et al. 2015:6).

Finally, the study looked at a team who were involved with troubled families in the UK (Jhadray et al. 2015:6). The purpose of this team was to assist with “getting children into school, cutting crime and anti-social behaviour and putting adults on the path to work” (Jhadray et al. 2015:6). This team found that while each family had slightly different needs and challenges, in these troubled families there was often an undiagnosed mental health issue and drug problems (Jhadray et al. 2015:7). In these families, the aspects of the team used “goal-setting, psychoeducation and communication and problem-solving skills training” (Jhadray et al. 2015:7), as well as aspects of BFT such as the importance of family, sharing information, improving communication, staying well plans and problem resolution (Jhadray et al. 2015:7). While the team was initially apprehensive about using this approach they found that families were receptive to it and deemed it to be a useful way to deal with their situation (Jhadray et al. 2015:7).

Overall Jhadray et al. found that BFT was a flexible model that is useful in many different situations as displayed by the three case studies (2015:8). As such this model can also be used in families that an undergoing transition.

4.3 Summary

This chapter, in broad terms, examined some common counselling approaches that can be used to assist alternative family structures. While there are many other approaches available, it would not be possible to examine them all. Each of these methods has its strong points and unique applications, and each of the ones discussed has applications for alternative family structures.

Narrative Counselling is a theory that emphasises the importance of stories in shaping individuals' lives and understanding their experiences (White & Epston 1990:143; Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:495). It uses metaphors and literature to understand challenges and problems faced by individuals, with language being the primary way people express themselves. However, it is crucial to recognise that language and metaphors are interpreted within the cultural context in which an individual finds themselves (Capuzzi & Stauffer 2016:494–497; Fitch et al. 2020:49–50)

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), established by Aaron T. Beck (1976, 2019:18), emphasises individuals' perceptions of events rather than the events themselves. Psychological difficulties arise from erroneous interpretations of events, resulting in misperceptions and subsequent behaviours. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) facilitates the identification of maladaptive thinking to enhance emotional well-being and conduct, promoting constructive thought patterns. Davies and Bacon (2016:108) propose that if an individual can critically examine their thoughts and belief systems, their actions will improve. In contrast to Freudian psychology, which posits that all dysfunction originates from childhood traumas, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) seeks answers by recognising and altering erroneous belief systems to align with empirical data (Fitch et al. 2020:45–46). This method emphasises current challenges without delving into childhood matters.

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is a structured therapeutic method that combines individual and interpersonal perspectives to assist couples in creating new communication patterns; that is founded on the work of Leslie S. Greenberg, Cindy L Ford, Louise S. Alden and Susan M. Johnson (1993:78). EFT uses positive emotion to change negative emotions and has two major principles: enabling and promoting a therapeutic relationship (Greenberg 2017:108-109). These principles include presence and empathic attunement, bonding, and task collaboration. Empathic attunement involves the therapist's constant attunement to the client's changing emotions and experiences, while bonding involves genuine, empathetic communication and acceptance. Task collaboration involves the therapist and client working towards common goals and therapeutic tasks.

Attachment-based therapy, based on John Bowlby's (1970;1982:675) work, focuses on human relationships and the importance of secure emotional bonds. Procedures

used in attachment-based therapy include exploring attachment history, identifying attachment patterns, and promoting secure bonds (Bowlby 1970:76). Bowlby's (1979:viii) attachment-based therapy theory emerged from his work with children who had experienced war or institutionalisation. He concluded that parental loss and separation were the main causes of trauma, leading to emotional instability and delinquent behaviour in infancy (Steelman 2018:72). Environmental trauma was also identified as the primary cause of negative child development. Negative attachments are often caused by unmet needs, leading to defensive strategies, anxiety, and distrust.

Family Systems Therapy, developed by Murray Bowen (1966:371–372), provides insight into the forces at work in family relationships and how they impact each family member's life. The theory emphasises personal autonomy and balance and proposes that experiences in the family of origin significantly impact current working relationships. Family systems focus on restoring balance to families among generations by focusing on the interconnectedness of the relationships between family members (Rambo et al. 2012:65). This theory considers the family as a single emotional unit, with each member influencing the others (Butler 2016:53). When positive relationships are formed, the unit can be stronger as different perspectives and strengths are utilized.

A study by Motamedi, Samavi, and Fallahchai (2020:393–394) compared group acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to determine which was more effective for single mothers (Motamedi, Samavi and Fallahchai 2020:393). The study measured the hardiness of each single mother before and after they were sent into either ACT or CBT group therapy. (Motamedi et al. 2020:393). Single mothers often face new roles and responsibilities, such as divorce, death, and imprisonment, which can have negative effects on them, including low life satisfaction and mental health problems (Motamedi et al. 2020:394).

Chapter 5

Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider all the research that was performed throughout the study. It will endeavour to answer the research question and determine whether the question has been adequately answered. This study addresses the question: How can Seventh Day Adventist counsellors support blended families, single parents, and other non-traditional family structures from a pastoral perspective through the unique challenges these families face? It answered this question in three parts. The study first considered families in the Bible to gain a deeper understanding of how families functioned at the time and how marriage is interpreted by different scholars. It then examined how the family structure has changed in the last few years, focusing on single parents, artificial reproduction, stepfamilies, foster families and adoption. Lastly, it discussed the history and important features of various approaches to counselling that a pastor or counsellor may use.

This study was conducted to investigate the existing research on blended families, single-parent households, and other alternative family configurations, in order to inform the way pastoral therapy within the SDA church is done with these families. Although there exists some information regarding alternative family structures within the SDA Church, there is an inadequate pastoral strategy to assist these families in navigating the distinct obstacles they encounter. This is particularly challenging as these families are common inside the SDA Church.

5.2 Findings

Non-nuclear families are not a new occurrence. In Chapter 2, the different structures of families were discussed, and in Chapter 3, the different types of families were indicated. Chapter 2 includes a discussion on marriages throughout the Bible with a specific focus on polygamy in Ancient Israel and the concept of the Levirate marriage. It also considered the teachings of Jesus and Paul on divorce and remarriage. It is important to consider these perspectives when comparing them to the views on marriage held by the SDA church. From an SDA perspective, marriage was instituted

by God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2). This is monogamous, and heterosexual marriage is considered the ideal for what marriage should be. This is the model that the pastor and counsellor would encourage. Due to the SDA church's interpretation of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19, the pastor or counsellor would discourage divorce where and whenever possible. However, this does not mean that abuse should be tolerated. As such, the pastor and counsellor cannot in good conscience encourage a woman to stay with her husband if he is abusive.

Despite the long-term existence of alternative families, counsellors within the SDA church are not well-trained to assist them with their grievances. While the pastor or counsellor encourages the ideal marriage model, it can strain the family that does not fit the perfect mould. Thus, the question is, how can counsellors support alternative families?

Firstly, for the pastor or counsellor to support these families, they need to have a broad understanding of what these different family structures entail. Single parents, stepfamilies, adoptive families, and even families formed by artificial reproduction are all increasing. It is also not strange for families to contain multiple elements, such as a single mother who marries a man who has his own children or a woman who becomes a single mother by choice by use of artificial reproduction. It is important for the pastor to have at least a general understanding of the most common family structures to understand their individual needs. Many of these needs overlap, however. These groups require a strong support network, especially to strengthen the child. This support network is not only for the child but also for the parents, as they are often under enormous pressure.

Blended families and adoptive parents both struggle with bonding with a non-biological child. Adoptive parents and families formed by artificial reproduction often both struggle with the consequence of infertility and the emotional toll that it takes on the relationship. While these families fall outside the norm of the nuclear family, they still share many of the needs of a nuclear family.

Knowing how these different families develop enables the pastor or counsellor to anticipate the needs of the family and individuals, which in turn enables them to be proactive in their counselling.

As part of the counselling process, the counselling will likely need to address the issue of the marriage ideal upheld by the SDA church. It is important for the pastor or counsellor to help these families understand that marriages have never been perfect. In the Bible, many different models of marriage emerge. The SDA church states that while these different models were acceptable at the time and within the culture, they were not in line with the model presented in Genesis 2. The cultural norms of the day can have a significant impact on how marriage is practised in day-to-day life. Culture, today, also impacts the way in which marriages are perceived and practised. The counsellor should take some time during the counselling process to discuss the family's understanding of the theology of marriage. Many Adventists have not been Adventists for the entire duration of their life. This means that their understanding of the concept of marriage would be influenced by their previous beliefs. For example, an ex-Catholic may still regard marriage to be sacramental, which is not in line with the teachings of the SDA church.

Chapter 4 contains a discussion on many of the different counselling approaches that can be applied to families. Each of these approaches has its own strengths and weaknesses and may be better applied to certain situations. Choosing a counselling approach is something which is rather personal. Each pastor and counsellor develop their own unique style of counselling around a chosen therapeutic approach. This chapter provides several approaches for the pastor or counsellor to choose from. While each counsellor should decide for themselves which approach works best for them, I suggest the use of either Attachment-based therapy or Family systems therapy.

Attachment-Based Therapy, originally developed by John Bowlby (1970;1982:675), concentrates on human relationships and the significance of stable emotional bonds. Procedures used in attachment-based therapy include exploring attachment history, identifying attachment patterns, and promoting secure bonds (Bowlby 1970:76). It can be very beneficial in families who are restructuring due to divorce, remarriage or new additions, which is why I recommend it.

Attachment Therapy states that from birth, children need a secure attachment with their primary caregiver. However, if this attachment is broken, it can lead to an insecure attachment style (Bowlby 1979). Many alternative family structures can lead to the

break of these attachments, including divorce and stepfamilies, single-parent households and adoptive families. Knowing this, the counsellor can use attachment therapy to gain a better understanding of the attachments within the family and how each member of the family relates to the other. They can assist in the repair and development of secure attachments between the children and parents.

Family Systems Therapy, developed by Murray Bowen (1956, 1966; 1988; 2013, n.d.), offers insight into the forces at work in family relationships and how they impact each family member's life. The theory emphasises personal autonomy and balance and proposes that experiences in the family of origin significantly impact current working relationships. Because Family Systems Therapy is focused on the family unit as a whole, it can be very beneficial for alternative family structures.

Family Systems Therapy considers the family to be a singular unit, meaning that if there is an issue with one family member, there is an issue with the entire unit. It also recognises that each family is unique in its own beliefs and values, manners of thinking, and traditions. This is especially true for alternative families such as stepfamilies that build their own identity outside of the large family. For this approach, the counsellor needs to understand the dynamics of the family unit.

In both approaches, the pastor or counsellor should not view themselves as the expert but rather work alongside the family in order to resolve whatever they may be facing. They should also remain compassionate and positive throughout. While the pastor or counsellor may be approached for assistance for one member of the family, the family unit must be considered as a whole. This may constitute having both private sessions with the needy individual and also with the family as a whole or groups of family members. The pastor or counsellor should be genuine and form a real relationship with the family for growth to take place. As is part of most therapeutic relationships, the pastor or counsellor needs to be an active listener who asks open-ended questions, which will facilitate productive discourse. The pastor or counsellor should represent a safe space in which the family feels comfortable sharing their grievance. This would also mean that it is important for the counsellor to remain impartial, as picking sides can lead to a breakdown of trust between the counsellor and the family.

While Attachment Therapy and Family Systems Therapy are similar in their understanding of the influence of family members on each other, they are somewhat

different in application. Family Systems Therapy focuses on the current family dynamics and relationships and how each member of the family influences each other. Attachment Therapy focuses on the past relationship between the parent and child, with a particular focus on the period of infancy. While there is some overlap between the uses of these approaches, the use of each will depend on the situation in which the family finds itself.

For example, a parent might approach a pastor or counsellor seeking help for their child who is struggling after their parent remarried. The pastor would then have sessions with the child and parent, if need be, individually, as well as with the child, parent and stepparent to properly understand the family dynamics. During these sessions, the pastor can then gain an understanding of the family's unique beliefs and values which will assist him in his approach.

If using Attachment therapy, the pastor would examine the relationship between the child and parent in the present, as well as in the past, in order to determine the child and parent's attachment style. If the attachment is insecure or anxious, the pastor may need to assist the parent and child in the repair of this bond. Attachment therapy can also be used to examine the relationships between spouses as attachment theory can be applied to romantic relationships as well.

If using Family Systems Therapy, the pastor would examine the relationships between the child and parent, child and stepparent, and the parent and stepparent. They will then determine if one of these relationships is the cause of the problem. It may even be necessary for the pastor to include siblings depending on the family dynamics. Huff and Hartenstein (2020:523–530) suggest that therapy for divorced families should not only focus on the treatment of the children involved but also the parents.

Unfortunately, not all non-nuclear families, who are experiencing difficulties, will approach the pastor or counsellor for assistance. It is then the pastor or counsellor's responsibility to approach the family and offer support, if possible. The pastor or counsellor may also present discussions on the topic of family or on counselling techniques used in Attachment-Based Therapy and Family Systems Therapy.

5.3 Summary

Based on the research conducted in this study, the following approach is suggested. Firstly, the pastor or counsellor needs to have an adequate understanding of marriage in the Bible, the intention of Genesis 2 and how this model was not always applied throughout Scripture, as well as how the couple understand the theology of marriage, as this will influence how the couple view themselves and their family that does not fit the SDA ideal. Secondly, they need to understand the family structure of the family they are dealing with and may require them to examine their knowledge of this family structure. This may include a study of the family and requires an understanding of their dynamics. Finally, the pastor or counsellor needs to decide on a therapeutic approach, however, this study recommends the use of either Attachment Therapy or Family Systems Therapy. Both of these therapies can effectively be applied to alternative families in a similar manner as they would be applied to a nuclear family. Once these steps have been completed, the pastor or counsellor can assist alternative families more effectively.

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