

Parenting adjustment through the process of parental divorce during the COVID-19 pandemic

by

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Abstract

Using a Multi-System Model of Resilience framework (Liu et al., 2017, 2020), this study sought to synthesize the parenting adjustments divorced parents made and the resources they found helpful in fostering their children's resilience. Interviews from 11 participants in the Coparenting Through a Pandemic project were used for this study. Participants were divorced parents who had completed a divorce education program and associated surveys between January 2020 and December 2021. Findings from this study were reported using three major identified themes: (a) parental adjustment and well-being, (b) parenting strategies, and (c) external sources of support for parents. Participants' responses revealed their own adjustment to the divorce process and pandemic. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated the stressors from the divorce process, parents described efforts taken toward helping their children simultaneously adjust to these multiple contexts and their inherent transitions. Participants elaborated on the different strategies they adopted and resources they found helpful in supporting their children. The findings of this study shed light on strategies to enhance the support provided by professionals working with divorced parents and divorce education programs, aiming to better serve families going through divorce in this 'new normal.'

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, divorce, child adjustment, resilience

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late guardian, Lawrence Adjei – who told me to never give up when things get tough.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Coronavirus of 2019 (COVID-19) was declared a global pandemic and health crisis in March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020a) that affected different areas of family life, including impacting the social and economic welfare of families (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020; Pietromonaco & Overall, 2022; Prime et al., 2020). Divorced and separated families were no exception, and for families with minor children, the impacts of the pandemic may have been further exacerbated by distinctive and unique challenges that occurred during this time (Goldberg et al., 2021).

Some changes experienced by families, in general, were in the form of multiple, simultaneous stressors and uncertainties taking place at the same time (Pietromonaco & Overall, 2022). For instance, parents indicated experiencing worsening mental health, increased behavioral problems in children, and a reduction in positive social interactions for children (Eales et al., 2021; Kanewischer et al., 2022; Prime et al., 2020). These experiences were further exacerbated by stay-at-home orders, remote working, and school transitions to online, which have been found to be negatively tied to parental stress and reduced parent-adolescent relationship quality and adolescent adjustment (Low & Mounts, 2022; Scrimin et al., 2022).

Early research on the experiences of families navigating COVID-19 has focused on two-parent households, with findings indicating that these families faced stressful changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Low & Mounts, 2022; McRae et al., 2021; Prime et al., 2020). They reported changes relating to employment, parenting, social support systems, and child well-being (Antunes et al., 2021; Eales et al., 2021; Kerr et al., 2021; McRae et al., 2021). Many of such issues would be present for divorcing parents, yet exacerbated by additional strains, such as court closures, legal delays, inability to connect with attorneys or move forward with the divorce,

inability to have some form of parenting agreement to fall on during the pandemic, handling remote school, and differing views on COVID-19 safety protocols with their ex-partners (Goldberg et al., 2021; Lebow, 2020). The initial phase of divorce can be stressful, and often divorced or divorcing parents rely on the legal, family, school, and other external support systems to help. Considering the pandemic impacts on these systems, and the additional strains divorced, and divorcing families encountered, it would be useful to explore how parents navigated the change to support their children.

Even with the stressful changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and children discovered creative ways to cope and support themselves and their families (Eales et al., 2021; Kanewischer et al., 2022). Some families committed to being physically active, staying in touch with friends and other family members, cooking and baking together (Eales et al., 2021), prioritizing their mental health, and spending more time outside (Kanewischer et al., 2022). Researchers continue to observe ways families adapted and built resilience during the pandemic; however, little is known about how divorced parents specifically supported their children's adjustment to divorce and the COVID-19 pandemic while navigating systems that were simultaneously being impacted by the pandemic. Therefore, this study aimed to delve deeper into the experiences of divorced parents during the COVID-19 pandemic and identify the various sources of resilience that helped facilitate their children's adjustment.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Divorce/Separation Processes and its Outcomes for Children

The process of divorce often results in couples no longer living together, which tends to affect parental functioning as a unit (Oren & Hadomi, 2020). Symoens et al. (2013) described the divorce process as one that involves initiation, division of goods, moving out, conflicts, and handling of custody arrangements. Researchers have also argued that a new process starts after separation because parents begin to reorganize their lives in relation to their new family structure (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, parents were faced with several constraints on the pathways to divorce (Lebow, 2020). This made it difficult for divorcing parents to have clear communication around parenting and further made discussions around child custody, parenting schedules, safety protocols, vaccination, and managing children's adjustment to divorce more difficult (Lebow, 2020). Divorcing parents had to learn how to establish new arrangements, such as those around housing and parenting time, often with added financial strains due to the pandemic (Allen & Goldberg, 2021; Tomlinson et al., 2022).

This process of reorganization after divorce may sometimes cause children to experience a diminished sense of belonging to either one or multiple social contexts (Anderson, 2014), thereby affecting their post-divorce adjustment. Parental divorce is among the significant childhood adversities that tend to have long-term impacts on an individual's mental health, family relationships, and education (Demir-Dagdas et al., 2018). The stressors associated with children's adjustment to divorce or separation are frequently dependent on several factors, such as their relationships with the nonresidential parents, the pre-divorce environment, and parental conflict (Beckmeyer et al., 2014). Over time, the stressors that come with the divorce process

increase children's risk for negative behavioral outcomes (Amato et al., 2011) and psychological and health impacts (Auersperg et al., 2019; Bayaz-Öztürk, 2022). For instance, divorce and family instability are linked to reduced well-being in children (Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Retrospective accounts of young adults who experienced the divorce of their parents during childhood reported increased rejection sensitivity and reduced resiliency (Schaan & Vögele, 2016). Gustavsen et al. (2016) also found a negative association between divorce and depression, suicide, and engagement in risky behaviors like alcohol consumption and drug use among children whose parents had divorced.

The quality of the family environment before separation is one factor predicting how well children adjust to divorce (Masten, 2018). Even though divorce can be stressful, female children from divorced homes highlighted the opportunity of developing stronger bonds with their mothers after the divorce (Halligan et al., 2014). Hence, knowledge about the divorce process during the pandemic and the varied factors that affect the outcomes of divorce for children could help us discover the measures we can take to ensure that children thrive before, during, and after the transition into the *new normal*.

Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives and well-being of individuals and families in unusual ways, and they are currently in a state of finding ways of adjusting to the *new normal* (Allen & Goldberg, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a cumulative impact on families, with parents reporting multiple physiological and/or mental health factors simultaneously (that is, depression, anxiety, and poor sleep at the same time). In a study of Argentinian families, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns impacted individuals, especially couples, due to the stress that came along with the increasing loads of housework, childcare, and educational

support for their children (Costoya et al., 2022). Another study of Norwegian parents presented findings on parents experiencing deteriorating mental health due to multiple stressors, anxiety, and depression that are linked to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Johnson et al., 2022).

In addition, the daily disruptions that families encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in emotional and physical tensions and have been described as pandemic-related stress (Low & Mounts, 2022). These disruptions during the pandemic have been associated with increased parent and child stress and mental health challenges (Feinberg et al., 2022). For example, Patrick et al. (2020) reported that 1 in 4 parents indicated worsening mental health, and 1 in 7 parents reported increasing behavioral health problems for the children since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, Eales et al. (2021) indicated that 10.4% of parents experienced worsened family relationships, 45% experienced no change in their relationships, and 44.5% reported improved relationships. This points out that even with the significant changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, some families used resilience strategies to improve their relationships. Researchers documented that parent-reported adhering to COVID-19 restrictions benefitted their children's physical safety but had a profound negative impact on their socialization (Kanewischer et al., 2022). Also, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty that came with it also contributed to parental stress (Scrimin et al., 2022). Some COVID-19 pandemic safety measures, like stay-at-home restrictions and physical distancing, affected the levels of family support available to parents (Brown et al., 2020). Schools and daycare facilities closures also increased parents' responsibilities around childcare and homeschooling (Fisher et al., 2020). Hence, it is not surprising that parental stress increased during the pandemic, following the impacts it had on parenting and the systems that support parents. However, some researchers have found that not all parents and families experienced the

negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents expressed positive benefits of some COVID-19 pandemic safety measures like stay-at-home restrictions (Brown et al., 2020) and a high degree of stability around the family's daily routines, coparenting responsibilities, and interactions with different family support systems (Antunes et al., 2021). Others reported a reduction in their expenses and experienced minimal financial stress (Kelley et al., 2022). In addition, some parents describe positive changes in their child's life during the pandemic. In one study, 79.3% of children experienced some positive changes, and 20.7% of them experienced no positive changes (Eales et al., 2021). Consequently, these families found new ways to adjust to the 'new normal,' such as spending more time with their children (Eales et al., 2021) and engaging in fun and meaningful activities together as a family, such as cooking, exercising, or being outdoors (Eales et al., 2021; Kanewischer et al., 2022).

Parenting Processes after Divorce

Recently divorced parents are confronted with new challenges with parenting; however, most of these parents can reorganize their situation in many ways and adapt structures and networks in their lives for their new family to function well (Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). Also, parenting by both parents strongly contributes to children's well-being (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2016; Sandler et al., 2008; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Smith-Etxeberria et al. (2022) demonstrated that positive relationships between separated or divorced parents and both parents' post-divorce emotional stability predicts secure affective relationships in emerging adults. This positive relationship between separated or divorced parents often centers on parents maintaining a co-parenting relationship based on mutual respect and cooperation (Smith-Etxeberria, 2022).

Although Giannotti et al. (2022) highlighted that coparenting was observed as a key factor that attenuated the effects of parental stress and perception of child behaviors during the

COVID-19 pandemic, coparenting relationships for divorced families continued to look different. This was due to the constraints on the pathways to divorce, spillover of stressors from school closures and work-related changes increased parental responsibilities, and fewer social interactions and support for parents (Lebow, 2020). These constraints made post-divorce coparenting and parent-child relationships more challenging and difficult (Lebow, 2020). Additionally, it is known that usually coparents who work together in creating some form of informal arrangement either at the time of the divorce or post-divorce report more frequent and positive communication than those with strict court-ordered agreements (Markham et al., 2017). Divorced and separated parents had several disagreements with their ex-partners on safety protocols and other COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (Goldberg et al., 2021), which hindered communication and the establishment of an informal agreement around parenting. The pandemic also necessitated the use of online platforms like Zoom for court proceedings; however, some divorcing parents mentioned the option felt slower, and several barriers came along with utilizing it (Tomlinson et al., 2022).

Fostering Resilience in Children's Adjustment

Children's Adjustment to the COVID-19 pandemic

Walsh (1996) described family resilience as the ability of the family, as a functional unit, to withstand and rebound from life challenges and come out more strengthened and resourceful. Challenges in families may include but are not limited to, normative-life cycle events like divorce, retirement, loss of a job, remarriage, or sudden death of a family member. It is important to understand that some families may be more vulnerable than others; however, a family resilience perspective is founded on the belief in the ability of families to be strengthened by overcoming their challenges (Walsh, 2016). Pietromonaco and Overall (2022) found that

resilience in couples' relationships differed based on their pandemic-related losses, isolation and separation, personal vulnerabilities, and their ability to develop adaptive relationship strategies against pandemic-related stressors. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed families to devise strategies to adjust to the challenges it presented (Kanewischer et al., 2022). Routines as part of family relational processes that are useful for navigating post-divorce adjustment were impacted by the pandemic (Kanewischer et al., 2022). Travel restrictions and changes in school and work schedules also disrupted established family routines for divorced families during the pandemic (Lebow, 2020). For some parents, they emphasized that having community support, such as extended family and friends who lived close to them, served as a great resource in their adjustment to the *new normal* (Kanewischer et al., 2022). Children also mentioned that forming positive relations with household members served as a coping strategy during the pandemic (Cauberghe et al., 2022).

According to Buehler (2020), “resilience in families includes positive experiences shared among family members such as expressing of positive emotions, positive behaviors, expressed warmth, perceived closeness, and cohesion, supportiveness, responsiveness, attachment security, and perceived acceptance” (p.156). For example, Kanewischer et al. (2022) showed that families increased their resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by nurturing closeness in relationships, maintaining positive attitudes, and acknowledging privileges. Hence, it would be interesting to learn more about how resilience looked in divorced families during the pandemic, especially in terms of how parents contributed to their children's adjustment.

Children's Adjustment to Divorce and Separation

Researchers identified multiple risk and protective factors that affect young children's adjustment to parental divorce, such as maternal emotional well-being and quality, interparental

conflicts, social support, child characteristics, and contact with the nonresidential parent (Leon, 2003). Additionally, the severity and length of negative effects of divorce differ in many ways depending on the existence of protective factors in children's lives (Booth & Amato, 2001). These protective factors include the child's intrapersonal resources (e.g., self-efficacy and coping skills), interpersonal resources (social support, positive parenting practices), and community resources (community services, supportive government policies; Leon, 2003). Researchers have found that parents' attentiveness, even in the simplest tasks like a cuddle on a couch, walking the dog, and having conversations over a meal, helped reduce the impacts of the tension that came with their parents' divorce and separation (Campo et al., 2020). Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1999) found that the individual traits of a child and marital quality can serve as either a risk or protective factor in a child's adjustment to divorce, but other areas of family relations, such as parenting and coparenting are equally important in a child's coping and adjustment. Family support has been found to also be a protective factor for families adjusting to the dynamics of pandemic-related stress (Scrimin et al., 2022). Hence, divorced, or separated families who had minimal support from their families were more likely to feel overwhelmed. Current studies on resilience have established that parenting and parent-child relationships are essential processes that connect child and family resilience (Masten, 2018).

Sandler et al. (2008) found that a child's relationships with both custodial mother and noncustodial father affect their adjustment following divorce. There is growing evidence of the key benefits of the quality of the parent-child relationship on children's post-divorce adjustment (Sandler et al., 2008). Rogers (2004) emphasized that positive child adjustment after divorce is most likely to happen when each parent provides a stable home environment (e.g., maintains a sense of routine; utilizes authoritative, consistent, and warm parenting practices). Batool (2020)

also shared that practices like parenting are usually refined after divorce. Therefore, parents' appreciation, compliments, love, compassion, empathy, mutual trust, and support during the day-to-day challenges of their children play positive roles in improving their socio-emotional development (Batool, 2020).

Theoretical Sensitivity

Divorce or separation is characterized by changes in the home and social environments in which children live daily (Cao et al., 2022). Most divorced families undergo several changes following family dissolution, which can be stressful for both parents and children (Chen & George, 2005). Divorcing and divorced families during the pandemic were faced with constraints associated with pandemic-related restrictions on the systems they rely on, and parents had to navigate multiple simultaneous stressors (Goldberg et al., 2021; Lebow, 2020). Studies on resilience emphasize the link between positive parenting and parent-child relationships and how that affects child and family resilience (Masten, 2018), which also applies to children's adjustment to parental divorce (Campo et al., 2003; Leon, 2003).

This study is guided by the Multi-System Model of Resilience (MSMR). Resilience is defined as the capacity to withstand and rebound adversity (Walsh, 2021). With MSMR, resilience is viewed as an evolving capacity or process to respond to challenges over time (Liu et al., 2020). An individual's resilience may be sourced from a combination of factors depending on varying needs, situational demands, and availability of resources (Liu et al., 2020). The Multi-System Model of Resilience (MSMR) also provides insights into how systems may work together to facilitate various pathways in response to challenges (Liu et al., 2020).

In the current study's context, divorced parents may be able to draw resilience from multiple sources to navigate parenting while adjusting to the process of divorce and the COVID-

19 pandemic. Parents' ability to facilitate their children's adjustment could be assessed in how they utilized their various sources of resilience. The model used in this study is comprised of three different systems (internal resilience, coping and pursuits, and external resilience) that act as the source of resilience (Liu et al., 2017, 2020).

The first system in the model is *internal resilience* (Liu et al., 2020). Internal resilience is conceptualized as the innermost system, which is trait-like in nature and usually serves as a stable foundation of resilience throughout life (Liu et al., 2017, 2020). This system emphasizes the traits or sources within an individual that inherently facilitate resilience (Liu et al., 2020). These intra-individual factors include physiology or stress-reactive systems that respond to trauma and adversity, health behaviors, and other biological indicators that make one's core resilience (Liu et al., 2017). In this study, it can be assumed that there may be factors that might positively or negatively affect divorced parents' internal resilience. These factors may be related to parents' physical health or stressors that could potentially affect their capacity to support children. The knowledge of divorced parents' internal resilience will also help develop an understanding of whether divorced parents utilized the other sources of resilience in this model.

The next layered system, which is now termed *coping and pursuits*, serves as a bridge between internal resilience and external resilience (Liu et al., 2020). This system reflects an individual's orientation and response toward life and their external environment and circumstances (Liu et al., 2020). According to Liu and colleagues (2020), the name reflects the dynamic and changing nature of the system, which is inclusive of coping-related skills, knowledge, and goals that allow the individual to respond to challenges and needs. In relation to "coping & pursuits," this study will consider both existing and creative strategies that divorcing parents discuss based on their interest in managing their and their children's adjustment. For this

study, this level will shed light on parenting adjustments that were made by parents in this study as part of facilitating their children's adjustment to divorce during the pandemic. This will also contribute to a better understanding of how the MSMR explains the different coping strategies parents can develop or foster by drawing from multiple sources to facilitate their children's resilience.

The outermost system is the *external resilience* system. This system consists of the socio-ecological sources of resilience (Liu et al., 2020). This system, according to Liu and colleagues (2020), acts as the structural determinant of resilience and includes access to services, healthcare, and community-level social infrastructures that individuals have available to them. The "external resilience" lens will examine the different external resources and support systems that were helpful to divorcing parents in making parenting adjustments. Examples of external resilience sources could be employment, parents' social support networks, and access to community facilities that parents found helpful in supporting their children.

MSMR accounts for the interconnectedness of the different systems that impact resilience and provides a holistic understanding of resilience development (Liu et al., 2020). Within the model, adverse events act as triggers or exacerbators, depleting sources of internal and external resilience (Liu et al., 2020). An individual's resilience is determined by their ability to match needs based on the resources they have. For example, an individual with fewer internal resources may be able to draw on their external resources (Liu et al., 2020). Also, one can meet their needs using appropriate coping skills and strategies to make up for any deficits in internal or external resilience (Liu et al., 2020). This study, using the MSMR model, provides insights into how divorced and divorcing parents draw from their sources of resilience to facilitate their children's adjustment.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to explore divorced parents' adjustment and ways they supported their children's resilience. Several researchers have examined how continuously married families navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (Low & Mounts, 2022; McRae et al., 2021; Prime et al., 2020). Additionally, some researchers have studied how other family types, like divorced and separated families, handled both pandemic-related changes and their divorces (Allen & Goldberg, 2021; Goldberg et al., 2021; Lebow, 2020; Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Although studies have examined divorce in the context of COVID-19, little is known about how parents in the process of getting divorced and those already divorced adjusted to their new state and how they fostered resilience in their children through such adjustment. Using the Multi-System Model of Resilience (MSMR), this study sought to explore the experiences of divorced and divorcing parents during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as identify the various sources of resilience that helped facilitate their children's adjustment. In addition, this study examined the challenges divorced parents faced navigating divorce and the pandemic. This study sought to answer three research questions: (a) What specific challenges or concerns did divorcing parents express while navigating parenting responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, (b) What parenting strategies were used by divorcing parents to nurture resilience in their children, and (c) What resources and support systems did divorcing parents find helpful in navigating parenting focused on fostering their children's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Chapter 3 - Methods

Patterson (2002) asserted that family meaning-making is important when we want to understand family resilience; hence, the need for more qualitative approaches to explore the context and different meanings families have about being resilient. This approach is instrumental in helping researchers explore processes and meaning in family life; that is, it allows the researcher to fully describe a phenomenon.

Sample

This study draws data from 11 parents drawn from a participant pool of 475 divorcing or divorced parents in the United States who completed the Successful Co-parenting After Divorce (SCAD) program between January 2020 to December 2021 and were willing to participate in follow-up research. The individuals in the sampling frame were between the ages of 18- and 62 years old, with most of them being White (74.3%) followed by Black (19.16%), and the remaining 6.53% representing American Indian, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and others. Most parents reported currently living in the state of Florida (84%), 6.94% of parents represented 15 other states, and 9.06% gave no responses about their current state, but this was not an inclusion criterion for the study.

Participants were between the ages of 18 and 56, with six identifying as females, four as males, and one as non-binary. Out of the 11 participants, nine were White, and the remaining two were Black or African American. In terms of education, eight of the participants had more than a bachelor's degree, one had a bachelor's degree, one had some college education, and the other one had less than a high school diploma. Only one participant mentioned being unemployed, nine had a full-time job, and one had a part-time job. The income of the participants ranged from no income to \$175,000. All 11 participants reported having at least one minor child. A detailed

description of the sample is included in Table 1. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to disguise their real names, consistent with suggestions from the literature (Heaton, 2022).

Table 1. Description of sample

Pseudonym	Gender/Age	Race	Income	Age of child(ren)	Custody arrangement
Anna	Female (35)	Black or African American	\$105,000	4 and 2	Resident
Bent	Male (36)	White	\$130,000	9 and 6	Shared/Joint
Rose	Female (30)	White	\$51,000	4	Shared/Joint
Jamie	Female (46)	Black or African American	\$40,000	15	Resident
Janet	Female (37)	White	\$50,000	12	Resident
Grace	Female (39)	White	\$45,000	7	Resident
John	Male (30)	White	\$48,000	5 and 7	Shared/Joint
Robert	Male (56)	White	\$23,000	13 and 19	Non-resident
Ashley	Female (31)	White	\$175,000	2	Shared/Joint
Andrew	Male (42)	White	\$91,000	5	Shared/Joint
Skylar	Non-binary (18)	White	\$0	< 1	Shared/Joint

Procedures

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, email invitations were sent to program participants who had indicated an interest in future research or follow-up surveys to make the program better. The email included an informed consent form, date and time preferences for the interview, and a link to a brief survey asking questions about the participants and their family’s well-being. In the intake survey, parents responded to questions about their

employment, family financial situation, number of days or nights the child spends with them at their homes, number of days they have seen the child in person, how they or their children are adjusting to the divorce/separation, satisfaction with custody arrangement, parenting time, and child support. Parents also reported their experiences interacting with their former partners.

After completion of the informed consent and the intake survey, participants were asked to schedule a time for the Zoom interview. Participants were assured to receive a \$50 gift card after the interview. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, as participants were recruited through an online divorce education program and resided across the United States. A semi-structured interview guide was utilized, with interviews lasting between 37 minutes to 2 hours and 3 minutes. Although the larger study is focused on examining communication between divorcing or divorced parents of minor children, this study focuses on participant responses to how their children were faring during the COVID-19 pandemic and ways they fostered resilience in their children. The first eight participants' responses about how COVID-19 altered their family life provided details about children's adjustment and well-being and their concerns about overall child-related things. Questions were also asked about the experiences of children and their families navigating parental divorce and the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the interview guide also covered parents' recommendations based on their experiences navigating coparenting during the pandemic (see Appendix A for the full interview guide).

In research, it is critical to understand our positionality and, therefore, our lens on the data (Holmes, 2020). Before I present the coding process and results of this study, and in the spirit of self-reflexivity, I want to acknowledge my standpoint as an educated Ghanaian woman who is studying in the United States. My two major advisors are White American professors who have expertise in divorce research. I do not have children, and neither do I have any experience

with navigating a divorce process here in the United States or my home country, Ghana, whether in the past or during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have, though, studied the literature about divorced and separated parents and their families, both in the United States and other countries, extensively. I acknowledge that my positionality influenced this study to some degree; my theoretical and research knowledge about the experiences of divorced families shaped how I made meanings of the data.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using techniques consistent with thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used for “identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found in a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The use of thematic analysis is meant to identify overarching themes or codes that emerge from the interviews that have been conducted. The method is a repetitive and reflective process that develops over time and entails continual moving back and forth between different steps (Nowell et al., 2017).

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) discussed that researchers using thematic analysis need to note that they cannot do away with their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data cannot be coded in an epistemological vacuum. For this analysis, I adopted constructivist epistemology (Ward et al., 2015), where I acknowledge the importance of each divorced parent’s experiences while still appreciating meaning and meaningfulness as a benchmark in the coding process. I understand that every divorced or separated family has a unique experience and needs, but I also believe that there may be some patterns common to all these families. In addition to this epistemological commitment, I employed an experiential orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2022) as a way of showing appreciation for participants’ thoughts, feelings, and experiences as those held internally by them. This orientation was most appropriate as the goal of this study was to

prioritize divorced or separated parents' own accounts of their children's adjustment to the pandemic, strategies they used, and challenges they faced. Reflexive thematic analysis is useful in embracing qualitative research values and the subjective skills the researcher brings to the process (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Clarke and Braun (2017) also emphasized that a researcher using a thematic analysis plays an active role in interpreting codes and themes, and identifying which ones are relevant to the research questions.

In using reflexive thematic analysis, codes served as building blocks for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Further analytic work was conducted to ensure that underlying patterns of shared meaning were identified to draw together several of the developed 'themes' into richer, more complex themes that will tell a story of multiple facets of experiences shared by parents. Both semantic coding and latent coding were utilized. For semantic coding, I was able to identify all the common patterns shared by divorced parents in a broader context which was data driven but I later used latent coding in narrowing down on the uniqueness in each family's experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Coding was later shared with two experienced faculty members as an opportunity to reflect on how data has been coded, assumptions made during coding the data, and ensuring meanings useful for the study were not overlooked.

Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a six-phase process, which can help the researcher identify and attend to the important aspects of a thematic analysis. Although, I followed the logical sequential order in doing a thematic analysis using the six phases, it was not a linear process. There were times where I had to move back and forth through the data, listening to recordings, reviewing transcripts, and sharing with a research team made up of two faculty. For the first phase, I set up time to familiarize myself with the data by listening to all 11 of the interview recordings before checking it against the already transcribed data. I did take some

initial notes while listening to the recordings as part of helping me develop a deeper understanding and connection to the data. I read each interview transcript twice immediately after listening to all of them. Transcripts were imported into MAXQDA 2022 analytic software for the rest of the analysis. During the second phase, I created a word document specifically for tracking the evolution of my coding process. I started off with a list of common patterns arising from participants' responses. Then I proceeded to using the Coparenting Through a Pandemic project's codebook in coding interviews. Additional codes were generated in response to the research questions for this study, and all 11 interviews were coded before I moved onto the next phase. See Appendix B for the full codebook.

After all, 11 interviews were fully coded, I utilized both the Multi-System Model of Resilience as a lens and participants' data to identify the initial themes as part of the third phase. Subthemes were developed inductively to highlight the unique experiences shared by participants. Detailed notes of the development of subthemes were documented in a worksheet in MAXQDA. An initial thematic map with the main themes was developed, which was later refined to include subthemes. After a set of candidate themes were devised, I proceeded to the fourth stage where I refined those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I assessed the identified themes by looking at how well they provided a better understanding of the data in relation to the research question. The outcome of this process led to the removal and restructuring of some of the initial codes that were identified. I shared themes and subthemes with my advisors, and they reviewed the identified themes in relation to my research questions while ensuring that it was consistent with the data.

During the fifth phase, I wrote detailed definitions for each individual theme, while paying attention to how each theme fit into the overall story about the larger data set in relation

to the research questions. I went back to phase three and four multiple times as part of refining the themes for the study. The final themes that I settled on with feedback from my supervisory committee were (a) parental well-being and adjustment, (b) parenting strategies, and (c) external sources of support for parents. The themes were reviewed several times in the process of finding data items to use as extracts in writing up the results. To ensure that each theme conveys a diversity of meanings shared by participants, multiple extracts that convey a compelling and vivid account of each participants' story were chosen to describe the themes. I did not only interpret chosen extracts in relation to their respective theme but to the broader context of my research questions as well. This helps to create an analytic narrative that tells readers what is interesting about the extract and why (Byrne, 2022). I also provided a brief description of each theme before reporting what participants shared in relation to the theme.

Once final themes were established, I started the process of writing the analysis report. I referred to Goldberg and Allen's (2015) article as a guide in producing my analysis report. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym during writing. The arrangement of the themes in the final report was sensitized using the MSMR and the research questions. I reported the theme "parental well-being and concerns" first, as it provides some context to the subsequent themes. It provides a foundational understanding of how parents were doing and followed by the adjustment they made toward supporting their children. I saw this as an easily digestible first theme to ease the reader into the wider analysis. It made sense to report "parenting strategies" next since it reported all the strategies parents used to help their children adapt to the changes they were experiencing.

Data Saturation. The decision to stop data analysis after 11 interviews was based on several considerations. First, I reached code and meaning saturation (Hennink et al., 2017). In this study, I used thematic analysis as the instrument to examine saturation. The codebook used

in analyzing interviews was developed in the initial stage of the analysis. Having analyzed 10 interviews, I found central codes that were repeated in each interview and few new codes come up. After I found the central codes, I reached code saturation, I went through all interviews and analyzed what participants mean by each code. Meaning saturation was also reached because of the richness of the data in addressing the research questions and no further insights could be found (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Hennink et al., 2017). Secondly, there was enough data to report on the diverse experiences of divorced and divorcing parents during the pandemic and the ways they intervened to help children adapt.

Chapter 4 - Results

The participants in this study shared their experiences relating to how they supported their children in navigating parental divorce and the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents also described the challenges they encountered in navigating the process. Upon achieving consensus on the most salient and shared components of these participants' experiences, I arrived at three major themes: (a) parental well-being and adjustment, (b) parenting strategies, and (c) external sources of support for parents. These themes also had subthemes that helped highlight the unique experiences of parents while contributing to a better understanding of the major themes.

Parental Well-being and Adjustment

This theme describes parents' adjustment navigating divorce and the COVID-19 pandemic as well as things that point to their well-being. Some parents described having had COVID, but they recovered and were doing well. Others shared how they managed to be sick with COVID and taking care of their children. Parents also experienced an increase in their responsibilities, which for some amplified the stressors they were already facing. These responses help capture some situations impacting parents' internal resilience like their physical and psychological well-being. Additionally, parents shared some ways they were managing their own adjustment along with their selfcare activities. To help capture the diversity in experiences among these parents, three subthemes were identified: (a) parents' well-being, (b) amplification of stressors for parents, and (c) parents' adjustment and self-care.

Parents' Well-being

This subtheme captures some aspects of parents' well-being related to their physical health. Some parents described having had COVID but recovered and did not experience any major change from it. For example, Janet shared,

There was a weekend that [my ex-partner] was supposed to have the kids and we all had covid, the kids and I did, and you know, obviously they did not go, but other than that I do not think it has really affected us that much.

Although parents had COVID, and it was thus expected to hinder their ability to support children because of the symptoms that come with it, it did not happen. These parents were still able to navigate the experience and support their children. For instance, Jamie, who had COVID at some point, said:

That was horrible. I called my brother, to tell him to get my mother. And as far as the kids, I was sick that Tuesday, that Monday I was ill, but not too bad. And by the Wednesday, I was toast. I mean, I kept getting tested for covid, but I kept showing up negative, but my doctor was like you have it. So, I did a test that Wednesday, the PCR and on Friday that is when I had covid, so by the Friday I was halfway through the struggle. But I was still taking my kids to school and getting them. Friday when I found out I tested positive, my results came in early that morning. And that is when I told [my ex-partner], you need to take the kids to school and get them home. And then, it was the weekend, and my kids are 6 and 7, so they are always in the kitchen with me, so they know how to fix things and do things. You know they say, "I'm hungry" and I would say, "Go in there and do that." They know how to do things and we have simple meals you just put in the microwave, so I am glad I had the ability to manage things that way.

Parents responded that changes to parents' physical well-being alone were not enough to say that their capacity to support their children was hindered.

Amplification of Stressors for Parents

Parents faced multiple stressors due to changes the COVID-19 pandemic had on the family system and society. These multiple stressors were increased responsibilities around parenting, employment, taking care of other family members, and managing their own adjustment. For example, Ashley shared her experience with work and taking care of her child:

I did not have any help. I was working remote [child's name] was only a year old and I was working remote from home, and I have an executive-level position. And I am having to host meetings or multiple facilities, then all this with [child's name] crying in the background. So, I would have to put them into play pen in front of the TV turn on a movie and, like the tv's raising my son.

Jamie had to deal with multiple stressors along with navigating divorce and managing her children's adjustment. She said, "So my father died during that time frame, I had to homeschool during that timeframe, and here, for my mother who had a stroke type right." Other parents, like John, navigating multiple stressors mentioned that it affected their relationships with the ex-partner at some point in time. Here is how John described his situation:

She [my ex-partner] had them every single day, where she would have that time away, while she was working now, she had the kids and she was watching the kids, while she was also trying to teach so there were days where I would bring the kids to work with the same thing. I am trying to get the kids to work in the virtual classroom while I am also trying to do my job, so there were stressors there, and it hit ahead between us. You know, taking our frustrations out on each other absolutely, but I think at the end of the day we tried to circle back and adapt to make sure that co-parenting relationship did not spiral out of control.

In this study, parents had to deal with multiple, simultaneous stressors which may have impacted them negatively. However, these parents were observed to be managing their adjustments and that of their children.

Parents' Adjustment and Self-care

Parents talked about diverse ways they manage their adjustment to the changes from the pandemic. Most parents mentioned engaging in self-care. Parental self-care helps improve parents' well-being; thus, parents can give their best and feel confident in their parenting strategies. Children also learn from the people close to them, so parents taking care of themselves have the potential to indirectly influence their children's adjustment too. Some parents also described how their relationship with their ex-partners looked like and ways they took care of themselves. Jamie described how she navigated her divorce experience and ways she was available to take care of herself:

So, I learned to take breaks. I learned how to just stop and take breaks and spend time with friends, whether they come to the House, or we meet for lunch, those are usually like my getaways like I meet my friends for lunch, or they come to my house. So that has helped a lot. I got a great church community, good small group of friends.

Andrew also shared that counseling helped in navigating his relationship with the ex-partner:

In the beginning, it was tough I reacted poorly to my wife, leaving first, and then she reacted poorly to me after that. And we have gone back and forth, tried counseling with a child therapist and things like that, and reaffirmed that, continue the family stuff. But it seems like from my ex at least, she is more involved, living her own life, and she has taken more of family daytime, as you know, time for her to do her thing.

Rose also shared that:

I've listened to a lot of podcasts I've talked to several of my own therapists and psychiatrists about this and they're like yeah he needs to go get help because he meets this this this this this right and so I'm 99% sure he has actual NPD you know and therefore he's manipulative and held me under his thumb and I am not proud of it but I've learned and I've moved on right.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have provided some divorced parents the opportunity to reassess their life and prioritize taking care of themselves.

Parenting Strategies

Young children mostly rely on their parents for support when navigating difficult transitions. This was evident for children in this study where parents were taking initiative and implementing various strategies to help their children navigate divorce experience and the COVID-19 pandemic. To better capture the different parenting strategies participants described, three subthemes were identified: (a) managing child adjustment to divorce, (b) navigating the divorce experience using technology, and (c) working with coparent to meet the child's best interests.

Managing Child Adjustment to Divorce

Most of the participants had the best interests of their children at heart and were keen on making those needs a priority. This influenced their decisions around parenting time, managing schedules, and establishing and maintaining routines. Another important thing common to most of the participants was acknowledging the importance of having both parents in their child's life and not interfering in the coparent-child relationship. There were diverse ways parents worked towards meeting their children's needs and managing their adjustment to divorce. These ranged

from parents establishing routines and consistent contact to devising creative strategies to help with transitions between two households.

Routine and Consistent Contact. Participants emphasized the importance of routines and how helpful it was in managing their children's adjustment. Routines and consistent contact help create some form of structure and stability for children, especially during a time of uncertainty as they adjust to parental divorce. Some parents invested in establishing routines for their children because they had concerns with screen time, children's socialization, and educational needs. For example, Jamie said:

I see that routine works great for us. So even in the pandemic when everything was shut down, we still try to keep the activity times. We did online church, online activities, and we went outside. You know, those things are still available.

Some parents were keen on keeping the routines consistent in both homes as part of helping children manage the divorce experience while major changes from the pandemic were taking place. There were situations where participants shared their interest in providing some consistency in schedules for their children and had to advocate for that to get the coparent to prioritize it. Here is how Rose described her children's experience:

Consistency is key. And for any child, consistency is key and that is by having that conversation with [Participant's Former Partner] is how I got him to get on a schedule of [Participant's Child's Name] so he does so much better when he knows that every Taco Tuesdays at daddy's house right? And he has done a lot better. So, let us try it and you will see, you know, and that is how we got on the schedule.

Some parents were creative with incorporating activities into children's daily routines. Some parents were also concerned with ensuring that children had some sort of schedule where

they had balance between educational time and screen time at home. For instance, Anna described this concern:

I just had to be more intentional about not having so much TV time and more education time, and that caused friction between my ex and I because he is, that is just not the way he is. It is just like you know, TV time to TV time. You know, on the weekend, they can watch whatever they want. But this is their only opportunity, you know, especially since it is school then home. They are not going out. They are not exploring.

Most of the parents in this study also expressed worry about the social aspect of their children's development not been addressed, especially during the time when most things shut down due to the pandemic. Parents believed that the 'new normal' interrupted children's routines, making it difficult for children to go outside and explore. Therefore, they had to be intentional in ensuring that their children have those social needs met. For instance, Bent shared:

The pandemic makes weird situations where it is forcing a lot more people to have to think. I cannot send my kids to school, well now they are going to be home 24/7. So, what do they need? They need to get outside. They need to have some friends that they can somehow stay connected with. They need to see their family sometimes. How do we make that happen? And then you work around.

Parents incorporated extra-curricular activities in children's schedules for the weekend to ensure that children have some time outside. Anna and Jamie dedicated weekends to extra-curricular activities. Anna said, "On the weekends it is different because I have a full two days to get other things in. That is when we go outside. We will get you know; whatever wildlife is out there. You know so those kinds of things." Here is how Jamie also explained her children's experience:

Sundays, we get up, I cook breakfast, get the kids to church, we go to church, socialize with friends, take them to the park, come home and we spend the evening together, whether they're inside, in my room with me, in the living area, or going into dad's room to see what he's up to.

Creative Strategies to Help with Transitions Between Homes. During parental divorce, children are faced with learning how to transition from one house to two houses and ways to communicate how they feel about the change. For this study, parents described using specific strategies in supporting children as they navigate the transition between two households. For example, Andrew said,

I bought a feelings flipbook. It is like a stand-up thing, which talks about various feelings and instead of having her verbalize her feelings um I, you know, be like, “Well, use your feelings chart or your feelings book.” And sometimes, she will use it and flip to a feeling she has, and where we think she might be angry, she is scared or something of that nature. So that helped us navigate things a little bit better.

Here is what Skyler shared:

So, she was about 6months old, and we would do things like I would tell her “Your daddy’s going to come see you today.” And I mean she is 6 months old. She understands I am talking to her, which I do not think she understands a lot, but I am telling, “Oh you're going to see daddy today.” And then I would call her dad be like, “Oh, there's Daddy he's on his way to come get you.” And she would recognize that it was her dad on the phone. And as she got bigger, I would do things like send her in shoes. I would buy specific shoes and she would wear those shoes most of the time she has her dad, or he will do the same thing, like send her in his shoes and we will do that. Since I am away,

she has a Build-a-Bear with my voice that she can take wherever she wants. And she is obsessed with it. She sleeps with that thing every single night.

Navigating the Divorce Experience Using Technology

In this study, technology was found to be a useful tool to parents in supporting their children as they navigate the divorce experience. Parents' responses were centered around two primary areas when it came to technology: parent-child communication and independently seeking resources and information to support their child(ren).

Parent-child Communication. Participants described different methods they used in communicating with their children, especially when they are away with the other parent. Although these methods of communication varied from one family to the other, they all had one thing in common – the use of technology. All the participants mentioned using technology in some way as part of communicating with their child during the COVID-19 pandemic. The methods used in parent-child communication included Facetime, phone calls, texts, and video calls, among others. For instance, Bent described two different methods of communication he used with his daughters:

From time to time, I have noticed that, if everything is going fine and they are on their way home from dance and stuff like that, I will usually just check with them on the phone...When I was in [State 1] that was as about 150 miles in southern [State 1]. So, it is close to the border, but it is about 150 miles away. So, on the weekends, and I would come down to see them, that is all I had on the weekends. I did not have the Tuesday; I can just go or “Hey if there's an emergency, I'm, you know, half hour away I can come help out.” So, I sent a lot more like cards just “thinking to you,” you know goofy stuff

just make them laugh, that, remind them to be good. And now that I am a lot closer and our contacts more frequent, I do not do that as often.

The reasons for using these methods also differed among participants. Some of the reasons expressed by participants for using a specific method were the need to establish routines and maintain consistent contact. Parents relied on some methods of communication because of their child's developmental stage. Ashley explained the reason behind the choice of communication method her child uses. She said, "He is going to be 3 in August, and he can't read or use the telephone yet, so he knows how to talk on Facetime." Robert mentioned that he did not have personal contact with his children before the COVID-19 vaccinations were made available and that experience influenced his current decision to see his children as often as he can. Participants adjusted their personal schedules and life for the best interest of their children.

Some parents also described making sure not to interfere in their child's communication with the other parent. John said:

So we talked on the phone, and we talked through text, if we're using Facetime, it's specifically to talk to the kids and the way that generally works is there's an element of privacy built in so if I'm talking to the kids on Facetime she's in another room or I'll give my kids the phone in their rooms, they can talk to their mom because we want to make sure that there's privacy built into that I mean that's a conversation between me and my son.

Independently Seeking Resources and Information. Parents talked about how they found resources and information on how to support their children through support groups online and through internet searches on their phones. Jamie described how she used technology in finding resources on how to support her child:

I secretly found all these groups on Facebook. I just Google things and I found like all these groups, like groups on grief. I was like okay what is bothering you today girl, and I saw “Oh, the grief is just crippling,” and I find about grief share. And then secretly doing motherhood groups, not necessarily interacting with the people just reading and listening to solutions and kind of like eating the meat spitting the bones out kind of thing when I do not want to talk, or I do not know how to communicate. So, that has helped me when it has just been reading, I read a lot. And so, that has helped me read like how to get out, how you will get ideas in my head, like how this will process out and, hopefully, as this divorce ends. These things will come back to minus more you could try this you could try that and cast a vision or some for victory for me and my children.

Andrew also described how technology contributed to the parenting strategies he was using to support his child:

So, technology gives me access to a system of tools and information. Like I mean, obviously I used my phone and the Internet to find not only the plush doll that goes inside out for happy sad and the feelings book, but I also found the ideas for it, you know from researching how to kind of help children through divorce or kind of how to help children or you know express feelings and things like that. You know reading different child psychology you know websites or whatever. So, technology enabled me to do that, and, obviously, you know when I brought those things to my ex, technology helped convince her to use it.

Working with Coparent to Meet the Child’s Best Interests

Parents in this study also expressed having a co-parenting relationship with the other parent. Most of the parents mentioned that they prioritized this type of relationship because they

believed it was in the best interest of their children. Some of the parents acknowledged that the co-parenting relationship also made things like navigating parenting time easier. Through these relationships, parents described being able to come to agreement on most child-related things, ensuring that the best interests of their child were met. Two participants shared similar experiences of being able to work together with their co-parent toward meeting their children's needs. Janet explained:

I think the more that co-parents can agree to do, the better you are going to be. Even without COVID-19, that would be beneficial and better for the kids anyway. But it would make life easier for everybody if they could just somehow meet in the middle and agree on the schedule and, you know, pickups and how this is going to go down because, you know, fighting it out in court is not fun for anybody.

John also shared his experience with his coparent:

My ex and I were on the same page on everything, on wearing masks to school, even on the vaccine. So, my son [older child's name], he is 7 now, and we left it up to him to decide whether he wanted to get the vaccine or not, and he did choose to get the vaccine. And so, you know with us it has always been about communicating and making decisions about what is in the best interest of the kids and during COVID, luckily, we were both on the same page about what those decisions were.

There were other parents whose relationship with the coparent was centered on being able to discuss children's needs with their coparent and providing the coparent the freedom to take the lead on ensuring that the children's needs are met. Robert said,

Since our 13-year-old is transgender, came out a year and a half ago, so is now taking hormone blockers. So born male. It has been discussed about giving the hormone

blockers, but she, the mother, is taking the lead on following through with that. So, I mean I am in complete support. So, yes, we have two children, both with their different medical issues, and there has never been any disagreements or dispute about that.

However, some parents discussed having contrasting expectations with their co-parents when it came to the health and medical concerns of children. For instance, Rose shared:

You know what is interesting is that when it first came around the biggest issues were how to handle it because he does not take it seriously, he does not believe in vaccines. He does not even want him to get the flu vaccine. He would not make them wear a mask for a while. You know, and he was like “Oh, he doesn't need a mask, it doesn't affect kids.” I said, “But it can, and he does not mind the mask so make them wear the mask. He is fine with it.” So, I ended up buying the masks for him and for [Participant's Child's Name] and said, “Wear these.” “Wear them” and then he wore them, you know.

External Sources of Support for Parents

This theme focuses on the external environment of parents, including the different systems that they may not be directly involved with, but still contributes to their adjustment and well-being. The theme also helps highlight some external resources that were vital to parents as they worked towards fostering their children’s resilience such as community services and family support systems. There were other factors that affected parents in one way or the other as they were navigating how to support their children through the divorce process and the COVID-19 pandemic. Three subthemes were identified to capture the diverse experiences shared by participants: (a) parental support network, (b) financial and employment-related changes, and (c) community resources and services.

Parental Support Network

All the participants mentioned receiving support from an extended family member or friends. This support, in one way or the other, helped parents themselves in navigating the divorce experience and, in return, be in a better place to support their children. This subtheme focuses on the support individual parents had, which was vital to them meeting their children's needs. Rose shared how they specifically made use of their support system to help their child:

I could not get anything done at home, you know, with just me, I do not have any family nearby, [Participant's Former Partner] was not offering to watch him during the week at all and work that out so I could work. He expected me to take off work instead. So, I said I talked to my parents who live down in central [Participant's Current State]. My mom retired from nursing. So she was just at home, my dad works full time, but my brother was working part time and living with them, and I said to my mom between you and my brother, can you help me watch [Participant's Child's Name] during the day? They have a huge house, a huge yard, tons of toys, sprinklers, activities, and my mom's fantastic with kids, and she was meant to be like a mom and a teacher. I said, can I come and stay with you, while we figure out what is going on with this COVID stuff and how long you must work from home?

Skyler also described their situation with having parents who were willing to take care of their child while they were away for school:

I am in school right now. So, like I said, I am attending the [County name] Job Corps Center in [City name]. So, I live on campus...and um so I had to move over here, and I do my work all on campus. It is, if you do not know what it is, it is like a trade school. So, I am working on myself. I am working to get my driver's license, working on my diploma

and then of course my degrees, and my certifications, so that I will be able to go back to see her. So, we agreed with my parents that it would be temporary so that while I am away, they can take care of her. They have guardianship of her now, and we are going to see where it goes from there.

Financial and Employment-related Changes

Most of the participants were grateful for having flexible employment and the financial resources to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and divorce. These resources offered parents the flexibility to navigate parenting time with their coparent and spend more time with their children. Some explained that their employers were understanding and accommodating to allow them to bring in their children to work some of the days or being able to work from home. Rose said:

I am grateful that I have a very flexible job, my boss is fantastic, and she knows [Participant's Former Partner] and everything I have gone through with him um, and she is very understanding when I must constantly take off. If I did not have a flexible boss and being in such a great situation, I do not know what I would do, and most people are in that situation.

Grace also explained that her employer was understanding with having her child at the office so long as it did not affect her work.

So right now, because there is no childcare in our area, I still have her Thursday and Friday afternoons, so I must take her to work. And so that has been an issue. So sometimes I try to find other people to watch her during that time. But luckily, my boss has been okay, and let me bring her in if she is not like, in my Zoom calls in the background.

Bent also added that having reduced work hours and everything closed created more free time to work on personal things and spend time with their children.

Other parents like John, who did not have flexible employers shared that their ex-partner's employment flexibility was helpful in how they supported their children's adjustment. Here is how John described his family's situation:

So, for me, I was able to go to work every day. My job did not shut down. However, my ex is a teacher, so it impacted her more. That did put a strain on the relationship, because she had two kids all the time during the day. So, when COVID happened, the agreement was, it did shift. I am sorry I should have said. So, it shifted. When the teachers were not allowed to go back to school, she kept the kids during the day, and I took them at night. And in [current state in which they reside], where we were at that only lasted through the end of that school year through the summer and then school started up immediately. So, I would say, from April to August, that is how the schedule changed so she would watch them during the day and then Monday through Friday, I had them every night.

Community Resources and Services

As part of navigating the divorce, participants found having access to community resources like parenting classes organized at the local community center, engaging with their church community, and utilizing counseling services as helpful in supporting themselves and their children. Jamie described her extensive and growing community support system, and how these supports could aid divorcing parents:

I did not even know, and a lady called me from [Children and Family Services], she was like can we help you be a good mom? They have been the greatest, so it is a religious organization and just a public community thing. And so that has been great. And then just

taking my kids out in the community and we have been doing it for so long, just meeting people meeting other moms — not necessarily telling them what I am going through, but just you know just a different community and then my church community and friends from college. So, I think a support system is great and loving enough to take a break.

Bent also explained the community resources he found helpful in meeting his children's needs:

The pandemic turned a lot of what was open and what was closed into a very black and white situation. So, you know for my side it helped me, it helped me get the kids back for a little while, to be honest with you, just because I had been in the military. I had access to a lot of facilities and stuff that were just closed for a lot of people. So, yes, I think having access to things that we could get them in a similar normal routine where we were going to my school building, because no one was there, and they had the Wi-Fi left on, and then I still had key code access. So, I could take them to a school. And they could sit there at a desk and do their school.

Bent also shared his experience from taking a parenting class:

That parenting class that I took; I learned a few things from there that put a few things into perspective for me. And that is not something that I would have looked forward to, I do not know, going to my local community center and spending, you know, four hours for three nights out of a week or something trying to get this class knocked out. So, having access to that made it more likely that I would sit down and pay attention and get it done, and I am glad I did. I took screenshots of a couple of the points that they made in there, because I was like “Oh boy that has been going on, and I didn't realize that's a thing.” So that was extremely helpful.

He later added that the information from the class came in handy when things got contentious between him and the other parents. The knowledge from the class served as a reminder of things like being careful to keep children out of the middle and ways to go about it.

Overall, this study highlighted the different supportive resources available to parents, in the form of support from friends, family, employers, and community services. However, there were other external resources like the legal system that affected some parents' ability to support their children. Most of the parents shared ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the legal system, which created challenges for the parents. There were parents who were interested in finalizing the divorce process but faced challenges, such as turnover and the need for a new attorney, unresponsiveness of courts, caseload of legal professionals, among others. The challenges also made it difficult for some parents to finalize agreements around child-related things. Parents navigating the legal system during the pandemic found themselves in positions where they could not make certain decisions around meeting their children's needs and managing their adjustment to divorce. Some parents also experienced additional challenges around parenting agreements which were not linked to the pandemic. For instance, Grace said:

So, one of the biggest things in here is one, the decision-making abilities. Like I said, a lawyer switched those around from what we had talked about, to begin with. But because counseling and ADD testing are two of the crucial issues that we have, they could fall under medical or educational. And he has medical, and I have educational. So, from a legal standpoint, I am damned if I do and damned if I do not do so. And that was intentional, to make it more subjective, to be able to say, like well, you did this, and you should not have kind of thing.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This study focused on understanding the various parenting adjustments made by divorced to foster resilience in their children during the pandemic. Parents in this study consistently described activities involved in helping their children navigate divorce experiences and the pandemic. Although there were some concerns about distinct aspects of children's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents were able to navigate the divorce process while addressing the concerns. Using the Multi-System Model of Resilience (MSMR) as a theoretical lens to help make sense of parenting adjustments made by divorced and divorcing parents, three sources of resilience were examined based on the major themes identified in the data. These three levels were internal resilience, coping and pursuits, and external resilience (Liu et al., 2020). These levels are interrelated and work together to provide us with a better sense of how divorced and divorcing parents fostered their children's resilience to parental divorce during the pandemic.

The internal resilience level of the MSMR helped shape my understanding of parents' well-being and stressors that might affect their capacity to support their children. Studies during the pandemic reported parents experiencing worsening mental health due to multiple stressors, as well as experiencing increased parental responsibilities (Costoya et al., 2022, Eales et al., 2021, Johnson et al., 2022, Patrick et al., 2020). The results reveal that parents experienced changes to their physical health in general and had to navigate multiple stressors. Previous studies showed an increase in parents' responsibilities during COVID-19 around childcare, schools transitioning online, and educational support for their children (Costoya et al., 2022; Fisher et al., 2020). A similar pattern was observed among parents in this study who shared experiencing an increased responsibility around navigating working from home, online schooling for their children, and

providing them with some educational support. Additional studies mentioned that the uncertainty that came with the pandemic and the spread of the virus contributed to parental stress (Scrimin et al., 2022). However, participants in this study saw an increase in their responsibilities, which may also be another source of parental stress. Increased responsibilities were due to multiple stressors from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on society. Although parents in this study did not explicitly mention parental stress, it is uncertain if these multiple stressors might have increased parental stress. However, parents in this study faced multiple stressors that were linked to changes due to the pandemic. This supports another study's findings that found that the disruptions families experienced from the COVID-19 pandemic brought about pandemic-related stress (Feinberg et al., 2022; Low & Mounts, 2022).

Parenting adjustments were made based on different concerns parents had about their children's overall well-being. These concerns were linked to changes from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as school closures and safety measures or restrictions. While decisions surrounding the safety of children were consistently noted amongst participants in this study, there seemed to be concerns about children's socialization because most places were closed, which made it hard for children to be outdoors and interact with other children. This is consistent with previous findings that have demonstrated that while many COVID-19 restrictions improved children's physical safety, they also hindered socialization (Kanewischer et al., 2022). This study also found that parents had concerns about their children's educational needs and ensuring that their children get needed schooling. This reflects parents' responsiveness and supportiveness to meeting children's needs which are examples of protective factors that facilitate resilience in children (Batool, 2020; Buehler, 2020).

Like the findings of Goldberg et al. (2021), parents in this study reported having disagreements with their ex-partners on safety protocols and other pandemic-related restrictions, including children wearing face masks, social distancing, and vaccinations, among others. Some of the parents were able to navigate these contrasting expectations to the point of getting the coparents to agree on doing what is best for their child while a few were still relying on the court to help with an agreement on making medical decisions for their children. Overall, the results from this study show that using only health factors to explain internal resilience for divorced parents during the pandemic is not sufficient. These parents faced multiple stressors that did not only impact just their health but also other aspects of their lives like perception. For example, a parent's perception of their experiences also plays a significant role in understanding if they believe in their own capability to facilitate their children's resilience and what coping strategies to use.

The coping and pursuits system in the MSMR model served as a useful lens in focusing on the different strategies parents used to foster their children's resilience. For this study, I was interested in parenting adjustments that were made by parents during the divorce process to support their children. It was observed from parents' responses that they were aware of the outcomes of divorce for children, and that influenced the strategies they used. For instance, providing children with a sense of stability by establishing and maintaining routines is useful to their post-divorce adjustment (Rogers, 2004). Similarly, parents in this study also invested in establishing routines and managing children's transitions between the two homes. Kanewischer et al. (2022) and Lebow (2020) discussed that the pandemic has had an impact on well-established family routines. However, parents in this study emphasized that they saw establishing or maintaining family routines as useful and decided to invest in doing that for their children.

This aligns with the findings of Antunes et al. (2021), who reported that parents recognized the value of establishing some sort of schedule for their children during the pandemic. Even with all the constraints of finalizing the divorce, parents paid critical attention to their children's well-being. Divorced and divorcing parents adjusted the establishment of routines during the pandemic by engaging in online activities like church service, virtual museum visits, educational activities, and being outdoors. Another way parents used routines in managing children's adjustment was by ensuring that routines were consistent in both homes by having a regular schedule for both parents to follow whenever it was their turn with the children. Routines also provide structure which is considered a protective factor that facilitates resilience in children navigating transitions (Wright & Masten, 2005).

Some parents employed unique parenting strategies like the use of a feelings book to help children express and speak about their feelings, getting special shoes for the coparent's house, and providing a customized Build-a-Bear with the parent's voice built into it for the child. Like Eales et al. (2021), some parents devoted time to taking their children out into the community and visiting parks and museums to ensure that they are getting the opportunity to socialize or do something fun outside being home all the time. Parents set aside weekends for children to engage in these activities. Parents in this study found diverse ways to meet their children's needs and manage their adjustment. This aligns with previous studies that mentioned that parents and children found creative ways to cope and adjust during the pandemic (Eales et al., 2021; Kanewischer et al., 2022).

Another parenting adjustment made by parents in this study was coordinating child-related things with their coparent and working together to meet children's needs. Parents in this study were intentional about establishing a co-parenting relationship with their ex-partner.

Lebow (2020) found that coparenting relationships looked different during the pandemic due to the challenges that came with the divorce process in general. While the pandemic-related stressors on the divorce process may be true, most of the parents in this study were found to be understanding and accommodating towards their co-parent, especially around coordinating parenting schedules and child-related things. Separated or divorced parents who maintain a coparenting relationship centered on mutual respect and cooperation contribute positively to older children's social well-being (Smith-Etxeberria et al., 2022). Prior studies that looked at protective factors that account for resilience in children also reported that low levels of parental discord and parents' involvement in meeting children's needs facilitate resilience process (Wright & Masten, 2005). This study also showed that parents were more accommodating and understanding towards each other, which may contribute to the process of resilience in their children.

Another key finding from this study is that strategies used by parents in supporting children were heavily influenced by technology. Parents found technology useful in maintaining consistent contact with their children and coordinating child-related things with their co-parents. Technology was also widely utilized to look for tools online for coping with loss, guiding kids through parental divorce, and finding support as a parent going through divorce. Additionally, some parents became more intentional with screen time for their children when schools shut down. Although the parents in this study mentioned having some form of a co-parenting relationship with their ex-partners, there were a few who had contrasting expectations when it came to screen time and making sure that children were learning. Eales et al. (2021) and Kanewischer et al. (2022) proposed that families in the face of the pandemic produced creative ways of adjusting to the new normal. Overall, parents in this study utilized different strategies

that were geared towards creating positive experiences for their children, as described by Buehler (2020). Some examples of these positive experiences include fostering a sense of warmth, support, and closeness through parent-child communication. Most of the strategies parents used were also linked to other resilience processes like stable and supportive environment, structure and monitoring, and low level of parental conflict. This also aligns with how the MSMR describes the coping and pursuits as making use of coping skills in response to challenges and needs (Liu et al., 2020). Divorced parents, being aware of the changes that their children were experiencing and their needs, made different parenting adjustments beneficial for facilitating resilience in children's adjustment to divorce in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the MSMR, the external level serves as a structural determinant of resilience. That is, it examines one's access to services, community resources, and other resources from the broader sociocultural environment (Liu et al., 2017). External support, such as community resources and family support networks serve as protective factors that help with children's adjustment to divorce (Leon, 2003; Wright & Masten, 2005). However, Brown et al. (2020) reported that the COVID-19 restrictions affected the levels of family support available to parents. Unlike Brown et al. (2020), most of the parents in this study mentioned receiving some type of support from either an extended family member or their friends. Parents also acknowledged that they were able to financially meet their family's basic needs because of their jobs. This finding supports previous study's findings that parents experienced minimal financial stress (Kelly et al., 2022). This study also found that parents' employment was another supportive resource useful in helping their children. Parents were able to take their children to work on days they did not have anyone to help or when their co-parent had an emergency to

attend to. Some parents also mentioned that their work hours were reduced and that allowed them to spend more time with their children.

Goldberg et al. (2021) and Lebow (2020) indicated that divorced parents' experiences during the pandemic may have been exacerbated by additional constraints like court closures, inability to connect with attorneys, inability to move forward with the divorce, and inability to finalize a parenting agreement. Similar constraints like court closures and the inability to move forward with divorce were described by parents in this study. Additionally, parents in this study also talked about other constraints like the caseload of legal professionals and the unresponsiveness of the courts. Tomlinson et al. (2022) found that many divorcing parents found court proceedings delivered via Zoom to be challenging. The external resilience resources of divorced and divorcing parents in this study included support from family members and friends, employers, community resources, and services. This study also found that parents' employment was another supportive resource useful in helping their children. Parents were able to take their children to work on days they did not have anyone to help or when their co-parent had an emergency to attend to. Some parents also mentioned that their work hours were reduced and that allowed them to spend more time with their children.

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Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers interested in extensive study about children's adjustment to divorce, coparenting, and the COVID-19 pandemic may find the results useful and as a guide to explore any gaps in this area. The sample for this study was educated white female residential parents with high incomes. Therefore, it would be beneficial to consider other parents from diverse backgrounds like low-income, non-residential parents, or parents with other gender identities and ethnicities. Future studies should investigate the barriers linked to lower participation and completion rates in divorce education programs among parents from other backgrounds. These studies would help professionals who offer divorce education programs to better understand ways to increase the diversity of parents who enroll in their programs, and how to better serve them. It will also help future studies explore children's adjustment to parental divorce and the COVID-19 pandemic among divorced parents from diverse backgrounds.

It would also be useful to include children or other individuals, such as therapists, to provide comprehensive information about children's adjustment and well-being. For instance, it would be beneficial to consider children's own accounts of how they were doing, and therapists' reports of children's adjustment to better understand the full context of the situation. This would be beneficial in a holistic understanding of resilience among divorced and divorcing families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theoretical sensitivity of this study also had some limitations. The internal resilience level of the model, focused on traits within an individual to inherently facilitate resilience, could

not fully explain the internal resilience of participants. For instance, divorced parents' health and health-related behaviors were not examined in this study. Although these aspects of divorced parents' internal resilience were not assessed, this study was able to explore the diverse ways parents adjusted to facilitate their children's resilience. Additionally, it was also observed that parents had to deal with multiple stressful situations while facilitating resilience. So, it would be beneficial for the Multi-System Model of Resilience to consider how an individual's attitudes and perceptions about their situation contribute to how they utilize the other levels in facilitating resilience. Therefore, future studies could examine how other resilience perspectives, like the Double ABCX model, look at the meanings that individuals and families attribute to their situation (Plunkett et al., 1997) and how it helps facilitate resilience. The double ABCX model believes that when a family can redefine their situation and see that making changes will benefit everyone, they are going to reach bonadaptation (Plunkett et al., 1997). Another example of a resilience perspective that could potentially help address this concern is the family resilience perspective, which emphasizes the role of key transactional processes that enable families to adapt to stressful situations (Walsh, 2016). These key transactional processes facilitate family resilience, and they have been organized into three domains: belief systems, organizational processes, and communication or problem-solving processes (Walsh, 2016). The family resilience framework assumes that there is no single model of healthy functioning that can fit all family types and situations (Walsh, 2016). Hence, future studies that explore resilience among divorced families using the MSMR should consider incorporating other perspectives to account for its limitations in the conceptualization of internal resilience.

Implications

Buehler (2020) emphasized a need for interventions to support parents on ways to help minimize adjustment problems and foster healthy child and youth development. The findings from this study provide different strategies that parents used to support their children's adjustment to divorce during the pandemic. Parents utilized technology in communicating with their children and as a tool for finding resources to support their children. Professionals who work with divorcing parents can provide guidelines on how to use the internet in finding credible sources on managing children's adjustment to divorce. Family science scholars and professionals could invest more in translating research findings on how to manage children's adjustment post-divorce into simple steps or points for parents. This information can be shared with other professionals who also work directly with divorcing parents or be made available online for easy access. Lebow (2020) also recommended that intervention programs may help parents understand the importance of focusing on the needs of children when navigating coparenting relationships.

Divorce education or parenting programs are designed to provide divorcing and divorced parents information and resources on how to navigate post-divorce adjustment for their children and themselves (Schramm & Becher, 2020). However, it was observed that some parents in this study had to resort to the internet on what practical things to do and how to navigate their own adjustment as well. In view of that, I believe that professionals like therapists who support these parents can work closely with them and help them produce strategies specific to meeting their children's needs. Subsequently, professionals can explore ways of creating and collaborating with online support groups for divorcing parents. This could be a way of addressing concerns divorced parents may have and assist them in navigating the divorce process. Divorce education

programs may potentially look at restructuring their curriculum to include sessions that will allow parents to creatively identify strategies to support children based on the content discussed in the sessions.

Extended family members and friends tend to be a major source of support for parents, and it was among the identified external sources of support for children in this study. Reed et al. (2016) found that social support and family relationships played a significant role in adult children's adjustment to parental divorce. They suggested that these support networks be incorporated into services and be prepared to provide prosocial advice or resources to those experiencing parental divorce. In addition to preparing social networks to support children, parents could be encouraged to find ways to grow and nurture the existing relationships children have with external family members and friends. This will benefit children by giving them the opportunity to stay in touch with other members of their family and contribute to their overall post-divorce adjustment, especially during times like that of the pandemic.

Although the focus of the study was on parenting adjustments, parents discussed some challenges they faced with the legal system. In the hope of better serving divorced and divorcing parents moving forward, it will be useful for the legal system to continue exploring how to use technology and other virtual platforms effectively and efficiently in handling divorce processes during crises like the pandemic. Key stakeholders or policymakers within the legal community might also consider collaborating with family science scholars and professionals to learn more about how divorced or divorcing families are navigating the *new normal*. This will go a long way to inform policies and improve practices to better support divorcing and/or divorced parents and their children.

Conclusion

Parents play a unique role in children's adjustment and well-being, especially during challenging times like that of parental divorce and the COVID-19 pandemic. Although these stressors can affect children negatively, it is also important to acknowledge that every child may have different experiences depending on several factors like their immediate family environment, external support systems, and parenting quality. The use of different positive parenting strategies can help children navigate changes that come with parental divorce and other crises like the pandemic. However, one cannot rely only on positive parenting strategies: instead, these strategies can be complemented with external support sources like family, friends, employers, and the community. It is also interesting to note that technology is useful to both children and parents navigating divorce in the *new normal*.

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Appendix A - Interview Guide

1. How long have you been separated from your former partner?
2. Please tell me about your parenting schedule. When are your children with you and when are they with your former partner?
3. Has this parenting schedule been consistent throughout your separation or have there been changes made to the schedule?
 - a. If changes have been made to the schedule, please explain what changes were made and why the changes occurred.
4. How has COVID-19 affected your family life?
 - a. Have you altered your behavior at all for you or your family in response to COVID-19 (e.g., wearing masks, social distancing, vaccinations, limiting contact with individuals outside my household)?
 - b. Did COVID-19 (or the related restrictions) impact your parenting schedule or the frequency by which you saw your former partner or children?
 - c. Have you experienced any deaths or serious illness of family members or friends during COVID-19?
 - i. Did you experience any travel restrictions or circumstances that limited your ability to be there for family/friends or services in the way you would have liked?
5. How would you say your child(ren) are doing now?
 - a. How are they doing navigating the experiences of COVID-19?
 - b. How are they doing navigating the changes that have come with the divorce?

- c. What types of things are you doing to help them navigate this process?
 - i. Do you do these things in coordination with your coparent or are there differences in the ways you each support your child(ren)?
6. Please describe the methods you use to communicate with your former partner (e.g., in person, phone, text, FaceTime, email, etc.).
 - a. Why do you use these methods?
 - b. How have the ways in which you communicate with your former partner changed since you separated?
 - c. Have there been any changes since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?
7. Please describe the methods your children use to communicate with your former partner (e.g., in person, phone, text, FaceTime, email, etc.).
 - a. Why do you use these methods?
 - b. How have the ways in which your children communicate with your former partner changed since you separated?
 - c. Have there been any changes in communication between your children and your former partner since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?
8. Please describe the methods you use to communicate with your children (e.g., in person, phone, text, FaceTime, email, etc.).
 - a. Why do you use these methods?
 - b. How have the ways in which you communicate with your children changed since you and your former partner separated?
 - c. Have there been any changes in communication between you and your child since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?

9. Has the use of technology been beneficial to you in your coparenting?
10. Has the use of technology made coparenting more difficult in any way?
11. Have you seen changes overall in your household in the ways you use communication technology through the COVID-19 pandemic?
12. What have you found helpful in coparenting during COVID-19?
13. What was difficult about coparenting during COVID-19?
14. Did your parenting plan provide any language that was beneficial to coparenting during COVID-19?
15. Did the language in your parenting plan make it more difficult for you to coparent during COVID-19?
16. Based on your experience of coparenting during COVID-19, do you have any recommendations for changes that could be put in place to help divorced or separated parents to coparent in similar situations to COVID-19 in the future?
 - a. Are there changes that could be made to parenting plans to be beneficial?
17. Based on your experiences, do you have any thoughts, recommendations, or suggestions that you wish judges, lawyers, or other court officials would know that could help them better meet the needs of divorcing parents?
18. What advice do you have for other divorced or separated parents who are navigating how to coparent during COVID-19?

Is there anything else we haven't discussed relating to coparenting during COVID-19 that you think would be helpful to share?

Appendix B - Codebook

- ❖ Child adjustment/well-being: (have it as a broad code)- use what parents shared – (not section them out)
 - Not COVID or divorce related.
 - Divorce related.
 - COVID-19 related.
 - General
- ❖ Parenting time
 - Unstructured
 - Flexibility
 - Informality
 - Inconsistent
 - Structured or rigid
- ❖ Challenges to coparenting/post-divorce adjustment (positive or negative)-
 - Nature of relationship
 - inconsistency in communication
 - cooperative colleagues
 - bad to better
 - Renegotiation of roles and/or boundaries
 - Contrasting expectations (Views on COVID-19 safety protocols and measures (same or different))
 - Acknowledging the importance of other parents' involvement
 - Communication with others
- ❖ Parent-child communication
 - Methods that are used (facetime/video calls, through other parent, text, letters/cards/physical mailings or gifts)
 - Reasons for methods (physical distance, connection, child developmental changes/skill development, routine/consistent contact)
 - Communicating with siblings (steps when away)
- ❖ Parent-parent communication
 - Content of communication (coordinating parent/child stuff)
 - Methods that are used (texts, calendars, phone,
- ❖ COVID-Concern about overall child-related things- A.
 - Health and Medical
 - Education response/ needs
 - Social and emotional well-being
 - TV exposure
 - School closure
- ❖ COVID impact
 - Reliance or frequency of using technology for communication.
 - Creating opportunities for bonding/family experience/improve relationship.
 - Financial or employment-related changes or lack thereof
 - No attributable impact of COVID or minimal impact

- Infection in the family, response
- Infection or death in social network or workplaces
- Relationship deterioration/exasperation of relationship issues
- Increased responsibility
 - Supplementing for areas that are lacking.
- Spillover or amplification of stressors
- Might exacerbated the divorce process (contributed to the divorce); changes resulting from the pandemic – [COVID- 19 exacerbated the divorce; deteriorated the relationship/marriage – used to work out of home but had to stay together when the pandemic started.
- ❖ Navigating the divorce process
 - Navigating the legal system
 - court closures/delays in finalizing divorce.
 - trusting or leaning on legal counsel or legal system (not being able to meet attorneys)
 - external support network
 - Preparation for unforeseen circumstances
 - Dealing with child illnesses or managing child schedules
 - Preemptive decisions regarding parenting/parenting plan
 - Lack of responsiveness of state/courts in policies during crises and emergencies
 - being more understanding /being reflective of your personal experiences or experiences of others
 - counseling/therapy/support groups/chaplains or the use of CFS/DCF resources
 - Support- financial or employment related resources)
 - Seeking out resources; independently finding what I need
 - Meeting children’s needs (routines)
 - Explaining the divorce process to children
 - Managing stress
 - Recommendations/thoughts/concerns
 - Divorce education program
 - Court system/attorneys
 - Divorced or separated parents
- ❖ Navigating the divorce experience (children)- what parents did or something? – Answers B: Strategies (used by parents to help their children)
 - Parenting time * - (Household changes/reconfigurations)
 - Routine and consistency in child schedules (both homes)
 - Therapy
 - Materials: Feelings book / Toys with parent’s voice built in, send cards to build connection or show love
 - Taking kids out into the community/ Community socialization/exposure
 - Staying touch- technology (giving priority to communication with child (sending cards, texting, phone calls)
 - Support/Foster child and coparent communication (in their relationship) Help child understand and express his emotions freely without parents’ interference.
 - Prioritizing children’s needs (divorce/separation during a pandemic)

- ❖ Managing child adjustment – coparents using strategies in collaboration (compare with how children are doing)
 - Yes, do it together (collaboration)
 - No
 - Coparent not responsive
 - Was not in the beginning but Willing at beginning but fade off after some time.