

**THE PHENOMENON OF RESILIENCE AMONG BLACK
ADOLESCENTS FROM DIVORCED FAMILIES IN THE VAAL
TRIANGLE AREA**

by

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment for the degree of

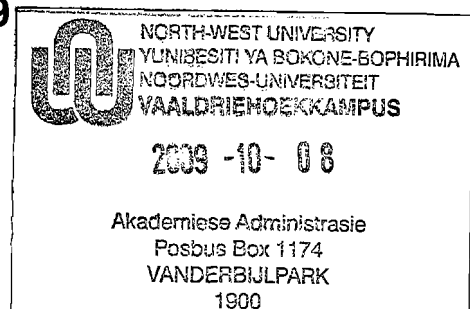
Master of Education

at the

Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Prof. L.C. Theron

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the Vaal Triangle Campus. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination and it acknowledges sources used.

Waarweert
Name

19 October 2009
Date

SUMMARY

In South Africa today many adolescents are faced with having to cope with their parents' divorce. There are many risks that occur when adolescents are faced with divorce. Of late research has suggested that parental divorce is an increasingly common phenomenon in black families, but there is no literature which focuses on what contributes to black adolescents coping resiliently with their parents' divorce.

The purpose of this study was to provide answers, by means of a literature review and empirical research, to what the antecedents of resilience are among black adolescents coping resiliently with their parents divorce. This was achieved by using a qualitative phenomenological design: ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with resilient black adolescents coping well with their parents' divorce.

This study makes a contribution to theory because it suggests a new resilience-promoting resource for black youth from divorced homes, namely dedicated support from friends and teachers (support that is 'always' available), not noted in previous resilience studies. This study also contributed to theory by confirming that resilience promoting processes such as community-facilitated spaces (hostel residence), extra-curricular activities at school and cultural rites encourage resilience among youth whose parents are divorced. This has not been noted in previous literature studies.

The findings of this study were used to draft recommendations for Life Orientation teachers on how to encourage resilience among black South African adolescents coping with the adversities of their parents' divorce. In so doing my study made a potential contribution to practice.

Keywords:

Resilience; black adolescent; divorce; risk and protective factors/processes; cultural rites.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Overview of Chapter 1



Figure 1.1: Overview of Chapter 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of this chapter is to establish the outlines of my study which focused on how some black adolescents cope resiliently with their parents' divorce. In this chapter the problem statement is discussed, research objectives are set out, the research method and research paradigm are briefly explained and a division of the chapters is given.

Throughout the world divorce has become a reality for many adolescents. South African youth are not excluded from this difficult reality (Amato, 2000) and black families are now experiencing higher incidences of divorce (Curran & Bonthuys, 2004; Lawson & Sharpe, 2000). Much research has been done on the risks and harmful outcomes experienced by adolescents following the divorce of their parents (Berner, 1992:25; Bezuidenhout, 2006:26; Clapp, 2000:4-27; Cox & Desforges, 1987:30; Johnson, 2000:56; Leon & Cole, 1993; Reed-Victor, 2003; Wells, 1989:7; Wodarski, 1982:315). These risk factors generally come from the adolescent or within the adolescent's family, environment or culture.

Even though there are many risks that children and adolescents face when coping with the divorce of their parents, some research indicates that protective resources can help some children and adolescents cope with the fact that their parents are getting divorced (Hutchinson, Afifi & Krause, 2007:23). In other words, it need not be assumed that divorce is always synonymous with risk and negative outcomes. Some youth are resilient in the face of divorce. What is not always clear, is what contributes to adolescents coping resiliently with the potential risks of divorce.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that will be investigated in this study is how some black adolescents cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. How do they manage to be resilient, or in other words, manage to continue functioning without developing maladaptive behaviour patterns, despite this stumbling block? I chose to research this topic because there seems to be a gap in current literature with specific focus on the resilience of black

adolescents coping with their parents' divorce. I became aware of this phenomenon when I taught a number of black learners who came from divorced families. I noticed that some were able to cope while others struggled to manage resiliently. I began to wonder what contributed to some black adolescents coping resiliently when others fell to pieces after their parents divorced. When I tried to find literature to explain this phenomenon, I discovered that there were many sources that discussed resilience in general, but hardly any that focused on black adolescents coping resiliently with their parents' divorce. Therefore I chose to do my research on what contributes to some black adolescents being able to cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents.

Throughout the world divorce has become a reality for many adolescents. Black families (especially in America) are now experiencing higher incidences of divorce (Curran & Bonthuys, 2004; Lawson & Sharpe, 2000) and South African youth are not excluded from this difficult reality (Amato, 2000). Divorce potentially instigates psychological, social and economic stressors (Lawson & Sharpe, 2000).

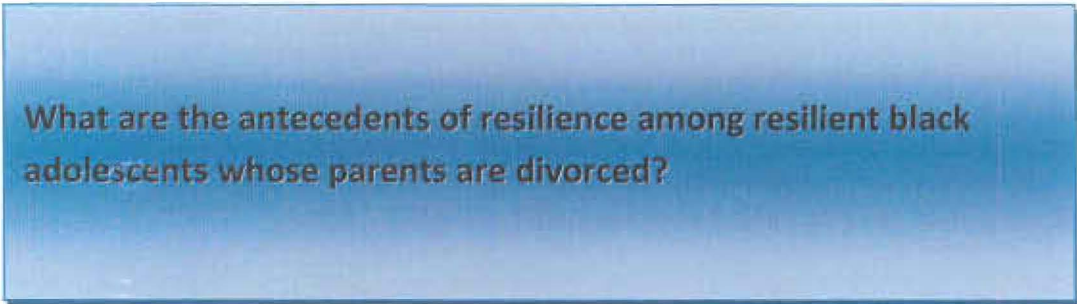
The hostility between parents who are divorced as well as the many negative changes and stressors (psychological, social and economic) which are associated with divorce, typically predict negative outcomes for affected children and adolescents, including behaviour problems and maladjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991; Cummings & Davies, 1994:2; Ginsberg, Hart, Molloy, Mulvey, & Rich, 2007:165; Lawson & Sharpe, 2000). In other words, divorce is thought of as a process that contributes to most children and adolescents being vulnerable rather than resilient. According to McGhee (2001), when it comes to divorce within the South African context, black children are more than twice as likely to live in poverty and suffer more from the aftermath of divorce, as only one parent generates an income. In other words, black youth are very vulnerable when their parents divorce.

Despite the stress of divorce and the additional psychological and social stressors, some children are still able to cope and be resilient. Resilience refers to the ability of being able to cope and return to normal (bounce back) in the face of significant adversity, risk, trauma or stress (Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008:242). Protective factors and processes play an important role in resilience because protective resources enable young people to cope with adversities more positively. Prior studies have suggested

that protective resources can be found in individuals and in their familial, environmental and cultural contexts (Kelley, 2005:265; Masten & Reed, 2005:75; Schoon, 2006:1-15; Snyder & Lopez, 2005:74-75; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:2). These protective resources are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

As noted previously, my interactions with black learners who seemed to function resiliently even though their parents were divorced, caused me to wonder what it was that encouraged them to be resilient when divorce typically had the opposite effect. I kept asking myself what or who enabled these young black adolescents to get up each morning with enough confidence and courage to continue pursuing their lives successfully despite the fact that their parents were going through a divorce, or that they came from a home where parents were divorced?

When I could not find an answer to my questions in current literature, I decided to find out from these learners themselves and so I posed the following question to guide my study:



What are the antecedents of resilience among resilient black adolescents whose parents are divorced?

Although an answer to this question could be deducted from literature in general, the latest resilience theory warns against assuming a one-size-fits-all approach to resilience issues (Ungar, 2008).

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The primary aim was to explore what the antecedents are that contribute to the resilience of some black adolescents whose parents are divorced.

The primary aim can be sub-divided into the following sub aims, namely:

- a literature study on divorce and how it impacts on adolescents;
- a literature study on the phenomenon of resilience;
- an empirical study on the antecedents of resilience among resilient black South African adolescents whose parents are divorced; and
- recommendations for Life Orientation teachers to encourage resilient functioning among black learners challenged by their parents' divorce.

Although this study will aim to make recommendations for Life Orientation teachers (given that they are an invaluable resilience resource) (Theron, 2007), the recommendations may also be useful to mental health practitioners, service providers and parents.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

In this study I used a qualitative approach to conduct my study. I collected, described, interpreted, verified and evaluated interview data to determine what the resilient functioning of black South African adolescents, whose parents are divorced, entails (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). I followed a phenomenological design by conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 resilient black adolescents whose parents are divorced (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:144). This method is described in detail in Chapter Four. A summary of the method follows below:

1.4.1 Literature Study

In order to collect meaningful data and then to make meaning out of what the research participants would tell me, it was necessary to base my interview questions and subsequent interpretation on a review of current relevant literature.

For this reason, relevant literature (books, journal articles, internet sources, dissertations) was traced using Ebsco Host, Sabinet, A-Z journals search. These were then read and from this overview the following themes and sources were identified as summarised in Table 1.1 below:

Themes	Sources
Divorce as a pandemic	• Amato, 2000 • Bezuidenhout, 2006 • Collins, 2005 • Hoek, 2005 • Lawson & Sharpe, 2000 • McGhee, 2001 • Moodie & Anstey, 2002
How protective resources buffer the impacts of divorce	• Alexander, 2002 • Armstrong <i>et al.</i>, 2005 • Bersthorn, 2005 • Blackburn, 2000 • Boyden & Mann, 2005 • Brooks & Goldstein, 2004 • Carew, 2005 • Charney, 2005 • Cook & Du Toit, 2005 • Copeland, 1997 • Dass-Brailsford, 2005 • Donald <i>et al.</i>, 2006 • Dumont & Provost, 1999

-
- Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005
 - Fergusson & Horwood, 2003
 - Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996
 - Friesen & Brennan, 2005
 - Frydenberg, 1999
 - Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 2003
 - Gouws *et al.*, 2000
 - Greene, 2002
 - Greene & Conrad, 2002
 - Greener, 2006
 - Hein, 2004
 - Hirayama & Hirayama, 2001
 - Horowitz & Garber, 2003
 - Howard & Johnson, 2000
 - Hultman *et al.*, 1999
 - Hutchinson *et al.*, 2007
 - Isaacs, 2002
 - Johnson & Lazarus, 2008
 - Killian, 2004
 - Kim-Cohen, 2007
 - Krish, 2006
 - Kümpfer, 1999
 - Leon & Cole, 2004
 - Lopez *et al.*, 2005
 - Luthar & Zelazo, 2003
 - Luthar, 1991
 - Mannes, 2005
 - Masten, 2001
 - Masten & Powell, 2003
 - Masten & Reed, 2005
 - McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005
 - Musick *et al.*, 1987
-

	• Myers, 2000 • Neher & Short, 1998 • Newman, 2002 • Owen & Shaw, 2003 • Reber & Reber, 2001 • Reed-Victor, 2003 • Riley, 2002 • Schoon, 2006 • Schoon & Bynner, 2003 • Sieh, 2005 • Smith, 2005 • Solomon & Laufer, 2005 • Starzynski, 2005 • Strümpfer, 2003 • Thomas & Menampampil, 2005 • Ungar, 2005 • Ungar <i>et al.</i>, 2008 • Ungar & Liebenberg, 2005 • Vakalisa, 2002 • Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004 • Velazco, 2006 • Velez-Ibanez, 1999 • Walsh, 2006 • Walsh & Crosser, 2000 • Westergaard <i>et al.</i>, 1999 • Williams, 2002 • Wong & Lee, 2005 • Wright & Masten, 2005 • Wyman, 2003 • Yates <i>et al.</i>, 2003
Effects of divorce on children and adolescents	• Basson, 2003 • Benokraitis, 1996

- Berner, 1992
- Bezuidenhout, 2006
- Brummer, 2000
- Bryner, 2001
- Clapp, 2000
- Clark-Stewart & Brentano, 2006
- Cowan, 1999
- Cox & Desforjes, 1987
- Dreman, 1999
- Duncan, 1994
- Duryee, 2003
- Edgar, 1999
- Ehrenberg *et al.*, 2005
- Fritz, 2003
- Harris, 1992
- Hetherington & Elmore, 2003
- Hughes, 2005
- Johnson, 2000
- Johnson & Wiechers, 2002
- Kelly & Emery, 2003
- Lansky, 2005
- McGhee, 2001
- Rademeyer, 1997
- Sandler *et al.*, 2003
- Stevenson & Black, 1995
- Strasheim, 2003
- Van der Merwe, 1989
- Warby, 1996
- Wells, 1989

Table 1.1: Literature overview

The above sources were read and interpreted in the light of the most recent theory of resilience, namely that resilience is both a dynamic process and outcome that is informed by young people navigating towards and negotiating for resilience-parenting resources and by the ecologies of these young people reciprocating such navigation and negotiation (Ungar, 2008). As such this study uses ecological resilience theory as its framework.

1.4.2 Empirical Study

In Chapter Four the empirical study is described in detail. Therefore I have very briefly summarised the empirical study below:

My research was focused on what contributes to the resilience of black South African adolescents whose parents are divorced. In order to get a deeper understanding of what contributed to these adolescents being able to cope resiliently I chose to conduct a phenomenological study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:95; Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997:22).

1.4.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research has to do with gaining an in-depth understanding of the specific topic that is being researched. A quantitative research approach was not used, as the focus of this research was not to identify the number of black adolescents who were coping with divorce, but rather how they managed to function resiliently while coping with divorce. In other words, the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of their resilient coping, and this was obtained through a qualitative research approach. I searched for a clearer or deeper understanding of what contributed to the resilience of some black youth coping with their parents' divorce by getting detailed information from a number of black, resilient adolescents who had direct experience of this phenomenon (Gilgun, 1992, 2001a, 2001b). This meant that I conducted a phenomenological study.

1.4.2.1.1 Phenomenological study

A phenomenological study tries to comprehend or understand people's perceptions, their viewpoints and understandings of a certain phenomenon (De Vos & Fouche, 2001:80; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). In other words, a phenomenological study tries to understand a given phenomenon from the point of view of participants who have had direct experience of the phenomenon. For this reason, my phenomenological study consisted of semi-structured interviews with resilient black adolescents who could explain what had helped them to cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. I tried to understand the adolescents' point of view and what helped them to cope resiliently with the situation in which they found themselves. I listened attentively to the adolescents as they described their experiences relating to the divorce of their parents. I was alert and observant for any meaningful information in their expressions, any questions that they asked, and occasional side-tracks. In short, the intention of this phenomenological study was to interpret and understand what enabled these black South African adolescents coping with the divorce of their parents to function resiliently.

1.4.2.1.2 Participant recruitment

Potential participants were all black South African adolescent learners whose parents were divorced and who coped resiliently despite this. However, due to logistical constraints, the population needed to be limited to a sample of suitable participants to whom I could have easy access. Therefore I decided that the sample would consist of black Grade 9 adolescents, whose parents were divorced and who attended an ex-Model C school in the Vaal Triangle school district. I chose this school because I was acquainted with a teacher at the school who could act as a gatekeeper.

This teacher introduced me to the principal who in turn agreed that I could conduct my study at his school. After following prescribed departmental permission procedures in order to recruit suitable participants, I worked with an Advisory Panel made up of a member of the schools' Human Resource Department, Life Orientation Educator, and learners who clearly understood the concept of resilience. I ensured that they understood the concept of resilience by approaching them and explaining to them the

motivation of my study and the concept of resilience. In this regard I used Masten and Reed's definition (2005:76), namely that resilient adolescents are those who achieve academic success, are socially accepted (i.e. have friends), display normative mental health, display socially acceptable behaviour and take part in activities suitable for their age, despite the fact that they are confronted with difficult or adverse circumstances (e.g. parental divorce). The members of the Advisory Panel agreed that this definition could be used in the context of my study to identify black, resilient youth from divorced homes. They then assisted me by identifying ten learners who fitted the inclusion criteria of my study. As the purpose of this study was to identify what contributes to black adolescents from divorced homes being resilient, purposive sampling was applied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:206; Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:79). Therefore the inclusion criteria were:

- **race (i.e. black);**
- **developmental phase (i.e. adolescents in Gr. 9);**
- **demographics (i.e. from the Vaal Triangle);**
- **from divorced homes; and**
- **resilient.**

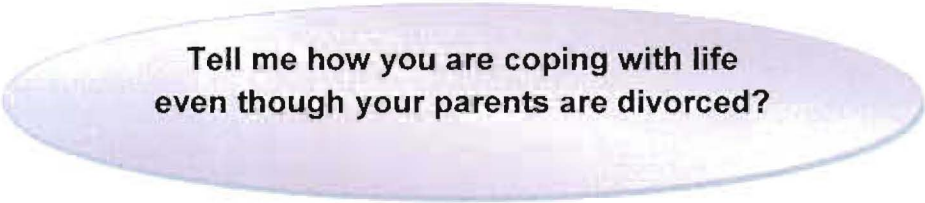
The choice of those participating did not rely on standardised tests of resilient functioning, as there were no resilience measures standardised for South African populations of black youth (Theron, 2007) when I commenced my study. Although there are South African measures of resilience like the *Learning Behaviour Scale* (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006), these were not standardised for mixed populations of black youth. Therefore I depended on the judgement of my Advisory Panel to differentiate between those learners who were resilient and those who were not, as done by Ungar (2006) and Theron (2007).

I introduced myself to the identified participants and explained my study and their potential role in it. Participants who agreed to do the interviews gave me a time and place that best suited them for their interviews. I conducted ten interviews. From about the eighth interview I realised that I was receiving the same information from all the

adolescents (i.e. data saturation) and therefore I confirmed this by doing a couple more and then stopping (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139; Smit, 2006).

1.4.2.1.3 Data collection

I used unstructured phenomenological interviews guided by a schedule to collect my information, focusing on the phenomenon of the resilient functioning of black adolescents from divorced homes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). The interview questions were based on the following core question:



**Tell me how you are coping with life
even though your parents are divorced?**

I followed up on this core question with additional questions, depending on what the adolescents shared with me. My questions all related to exploring who and what contributed to their resilience.

The phenomenological interviews were tape recorded. Thereafter the information that I gathered was analysed.

1.4.2.1.4 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis looks at themes found in the data that provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, and not at statistical meanings of the phenomenon (Ivankova, Creswell & Clark, 2007:255; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94). Specifically, I used inductive content analysis. Inductive analysis of qualitative data are used to identify segments of data within the participants' responses that answer the original research question, grouped and then interpreted by the researcher (De Vos, 2005:330; Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:99). In order to do this I made use of open and axial coding as explained in Chapter Four (Cf. 4.3.2.1.6).

1.4.2.1.5 Trustworthiness

It is important to conduct research which is trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba (1985:233) noted four categories for evaluating qualitative research work as shown in Figure 1.2 below:

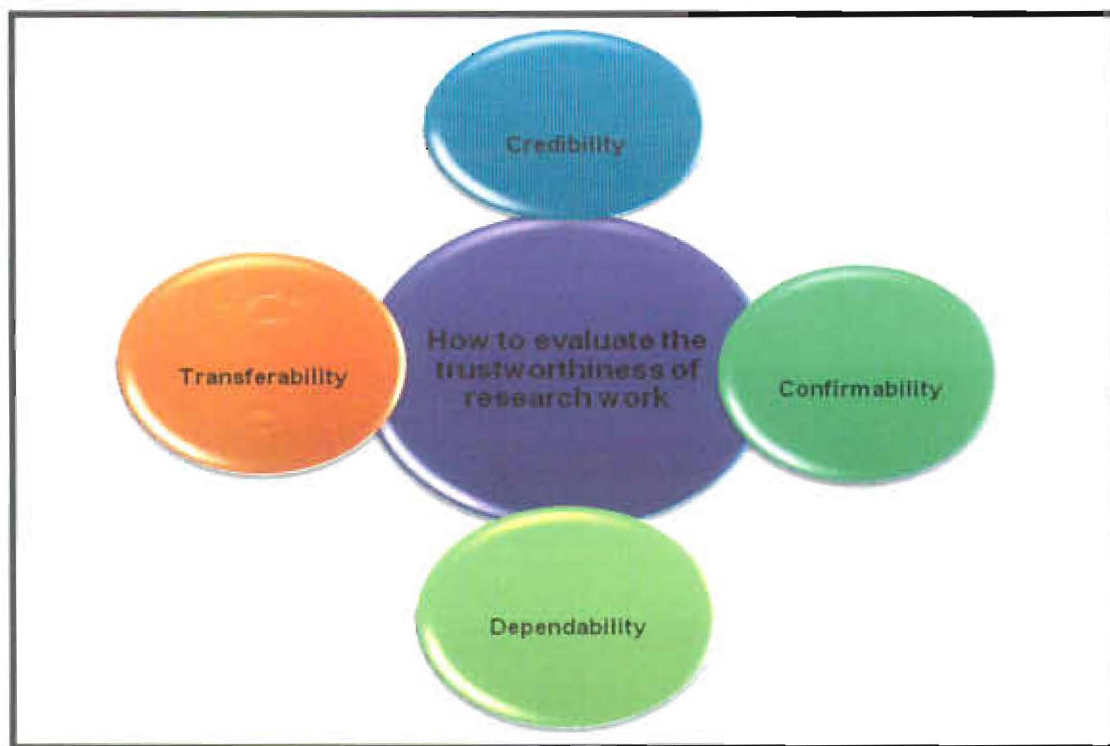


Figure 1.2: Trustworthy research

In brief, the categories suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985:233) encourage qualitative research results which are believable, can be generalised within certain limits, can be duplicated and can be confirmed by independent persons. These four categories for evaluating research work will be explained in detail in Chapter Four (Cf. 4.3.2.1.7).

1.4.2.1.6 Ethical aspects

Throughout my study I adhered to the current ethical guidelines (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101). Parents and participants first completed informed consent forms to give me permission to conduct my study. I assured all the participants that their responses

would be kept confidential. They were also made aware of the fact that their names would not be mentioned in the study. I informed the participants that if they at any time felt that they did not want to continue, they would be allowed to withdraw from the study and that they would go for debriefing. I made it my business to avoid harming the participants in the course of my research.

Before commencing my study I received permission from the necessary bodies and also ethical clearance from North-West University (NWU-0003-08-A2).

1.4.2.1.7 Research paradigm

The word paradigm originates from the Greek, meaning model, pattern or example (Covey, 1998:23; Joseph, 2000:11; Liebenberg, 2000:25). In other words, paradigms are beliefs that direct the way one acts and feels about the world as well as beliefs on how to understand the different aspects about the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:19; Lincoln & Guba, 1985:15). Most research is influenced by the researcher's perceptions and beliefs or the way in which the researcher views the world, the researcher's previous experience and the theoretical basis that the researcher attains during the literature overview (Gilgun, 2007:7). These become the paradigm that shapes what the researcher chooses to research, how she conducts research and how she makes meaning out of the data (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2005:14).

I worked from an interpretive, post-positivist paradigm. A post-positivist approach meant that I accepted that reality can never be totally understood or fully explained as a set of truths or facts (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:65). Therefore I was aware of the fact that the findings of my research represented the perceptions and experiences of the participants and again that I had interpreted their perceptions, which made my findings even less likely to be facts. In other words, I worked within a paradigm that encouraged me to understand the participants' experiences and to then document my understanding as one possible explanation of what the antecedents of resilience were for my participants. This related to me working from an interpretive paradigm: the interpretivist paradigm is focused on making meaning (De Vos, Schulze & Patel, 2006:6) and aims at understanding people's personal definitions and experiences and how they feel about certain situations (Henning, *et al.*, 2005:20). This implies that I interpreted the data of

the study and that I based my interpretation on the participants' opinions and interpretations (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a: 61-62). I hoped that by doing this, my study would provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of some resilient adolescents so that the processes that encouraged their resilience might be clearer (Henning, *et al.*, 2005:20).

In a qualitative study, I am known to be an instrument of data collection and therefore what I believe and what I have experienced in life will play a role in what data I emphasise and how I interpret the data received from the participants (Henning, *et al.*, 2005:22; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:151; Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:55). Therefore it was vital that I made sure that my assumptions about my research topic were known so that other researchers could determine whether or not my assumptions had an influence on the final conclusions reached (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:5).

In this regard, I went into this study with the assumption that it is possible for learners to cope resiliently with divorce. This was based on my experience of teaching learners who coped resiliently and on articles such as the one by Masten (2001:227) that suggests that resilience is the result of everyday processes and so more possible than many people think. I therefore listened to the adolescents very carefully during their interview sessions for a variety of everyday ways that help them to cope resiliently. I focused on how these learners interpreted their world. I constantly reminded myself that there is no one truth to explain why some learners cope with the divorce of their parents, and are able to do so resiliently.

Because I come from a well-resourced school and a privileged community, I expected to hear that participants were enabled by protective resources like school counsellors or community psychologists. I did not expect to hear that cultural resources (as suggested by Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Cheung & Levine, 2008:220) would encourage resilience, because as an English-speaking white South African female, I could not think of cultural practices that would make divorce easier to cope with. However, because I had read about this in more recent literature on resilience, I did ask participants specifically about ways in which their culture protected them. So, in conclusion, I approached my study with the belief that I would hear stories of resilience

and that these would reflect everyday protective resources like warm families, good schools and loyal friends.

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts, briefly defined in Figure 1.3, are used repeatedly in this study as defined below:

TERM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Resilience	A positive adaption when faced with hardship or diversity (Masten & Reed, 2005:75)	Well-behaved popular child despite having encountered neglect or abuse.
Risk	Increased likelihood of an unfavourable outcome (Schoon, 2006: 15)	Chances of developing depression are high when parents divorce.
Risk factor/process	Assessable target in a group of individuals or their circumstances that forces negative outcomes (Thomlison, 2004:384-387)	Premature birth, parental divorce, poverty, parental mental illness.
Vulnerability	An individual's weakness to an unfavourable outcome (Smith & Carlson, 1997:235)	School transitions for anxious children is hard to cope with.
Protective factor/process	The interaction of a person in a certain situation that predicts better outcomes when faced with risk (Masten & Reed, 2005:85)	Family, environment, cultural and social.
Adolescent	The period of life beginning with puberty and ending with completed growth and physical maturity (Reber & Reber, 2001:13)	Teenagers, ranging from the age 12-21.

Figure 1.3: Clarification of key concepts

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters of the study are divided as follows:

Chapter 2: *The phenomenon of resilience.* This chapter will focus on defining resilience, dangers threatening resilience (risk factors) and protective resources that function as antecedents that enable resilience.

Chapter 3: *Adolescents and divorce.* This chapter will document the process of divorce and outline why parental divorce is potentially equivalent to risk for adolescents.

Chapter 4: *Research design.* A closer look will be taken at the qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis used in this study.

Chapter 5: *Results of empirical research.* The data that were gathered through qualitative methods, were inductively analysed to provide findings that suggested that the antecedents of resilience among black youth coping well with their parents' divorce, can be found in protective interpersonal resources.

Chapter 6: *Summary.* Based on the research findings presented in Chapter Five, Chapter Six will include recommendations for Life Orientation teachers to encourage resilience in black youth coping with their parents' divorce, as well as a summary based of the empirical and literature study. Chapter Six will be followed by a Bibliography and thereafter addenda of the interviews as well as the covering letter.

1.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter an overview of what my qualitative study entailed was provided. The following chapter focuses on the process of resilience as explained in available literature.

CHAPTER TWO
THE PHENOMENON OF RESILIENCE

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 2

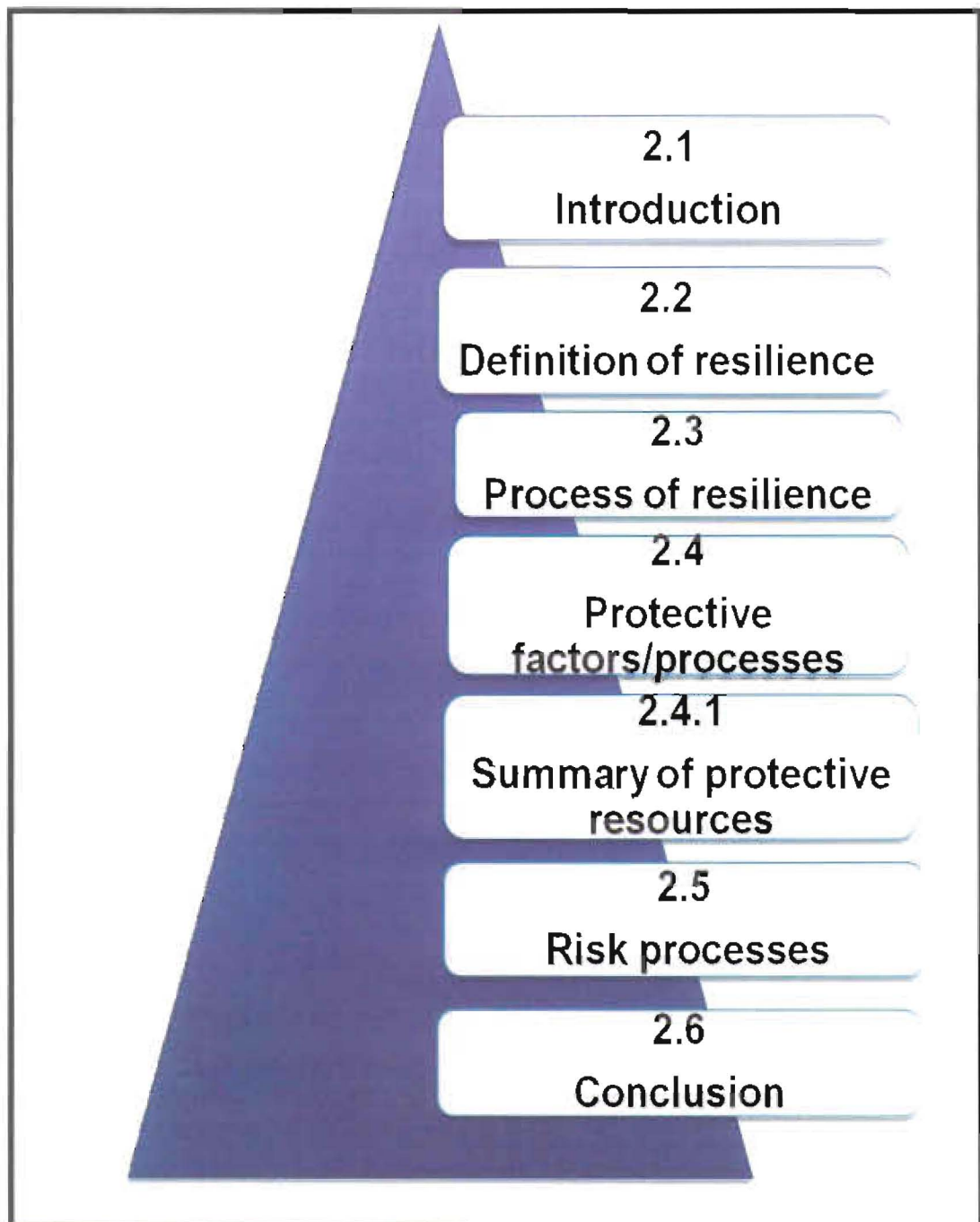


Figure 2.1: Overview of Chapter 2

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Resilient people are optimistic. They believe that things can change for the better. They have hope for the future and believe that they control the direction of their lives.

(Reivich & Shatté, 2002:40)

Resilience is an individual's ability to manage and thrive when faced with adversity (Brooks, 2005:297; Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:3; Demo, Aquilino & Fine, 2005:121; Froma, 2006:4; Masten & Powell, 2003:16). Much research has been done in different cultures in order to establish which qualities are found in resilient adolescents and what protective processes are common to their ecologies. In this regard protective resources that help an adolescent to be resilient are typically described as individual qualities and resources in the adolescent's family and environment. Grotberg (1995) has simplified this by saying that resilience depends on: I am (adolescent's character and sense of self), I have (adolescent's environment, family support system (and general care), and I can (procedures an adolescent follows to cope with emotions and trauma) (White & Wright, 2006:121).

The phenomenon of resilience will be the focal point of this chapter. What makes an adolescent resilient? What personal characteristics of an adolescent and what ecological (family, community and cultural context) resources contribute to an adolescent being resilient?

2.2 DEFINITION OF RESILIENCE

Resilience means triumph over adversity (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:3; Masten, 2001:228). Resilience is the ability to overcome obstacles in life. No matter how tough the situation is, resilient adolescents are able to "bounce back" and go on with life. Of late, researchers have begun to suggest that such bouncing back depends on the individual being willing and able to navigate towards and negotiate for protective

resources that will support resilient outcomes and the capacity of the individual's ecology to provide protective resources (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:588; Ungar, 2008:220; Ungar, *et al.*, 2008:2).

For resilience to be discussed, there must be risk. In other words, a person cannot be considered resilient when there is no risk (Masten, 2001:228; Ungar, 2008:220). Risk usually does not occur in isolation (i.e. one risk factor is normally not the origin of vulnerability), but in relation to other contributing influences (Schoon, 2006:9). Risks can include genetic, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic processes that are connected with a likelihood of maladjustment (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:3) (as discussed in more detail in 2.5).

There has been a progression in how resilience is defined. Initially, resilience was seen as person-centred. In earlier days resilience research focused on the individual and did not pay attention to other factors and processes that contributed to a person being resilient (Ungar, 2008:221). Although resilience was seen as existing within a person as an individual trait, nowadays resilience is believed to be the dynamic process and outcome associated with continuous protective interactions between an adolescent and supportive people or sources of positive support in their environment, family, community and culture. Therefore, resilience is more than a single characteristic (especially not one belonging to the individual adolescent) (Masten, 2001:232; Ungar, 2008:220).

More accurately, resilience refers to the interaction of inter-personal and intra-personal risk and protective factors, such as an adolescent's environment and the everyday challenges that adolescents are faced with and the capacity of the individual (supported by their environment) to cope resiliently with these challenges (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:3; Empson & Nabuzoka, 2004:42; Kelley, 2005:265; Masten & Reed, 2005:75; Schoon, 2006:6-7; Theron, 2006:199; Ungar, 2005:xv; Vaillant, 1993:284; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:2). As Ungar *et al.* (2008:2) mentioned, it is important for the adolescents to navigate their way to finding these protective resources and making use of them, but equally important that the ecologies of young people provide them with protective resources.

Generally Ungar *et al.* (2008:2) and Masten (2001:227) say that these protective resources have always been available. However, Ungar *et al.* (2008:2) further emphasise the importance of the adolescents identifying and then navigating their own way to make use of these health resources. Lastly, Ungar *et al.* (2008:2) also emphasise that it is important for youth to use these resources in a way that is culturally meaningful, not only to the adolescent but also to his community.

2.3 PROCESS OF RESILIENCE

As noted above, resilience cannot be viewed as a simple concept or be attributed to a single source. Rather, resilience is described as both a process and an outcome associated with the dynamic interaction between an adolescent and his environment or life circumstances (Masten, 2001:228). Resilience develops through the interaction between the individual and challenging circumstances and opportunities within his environment. This means that adolescents cope with adversity when they navigate towards and negotiate for protective resources that help them to cope with these difficult circumstances (Ungar, 2008:221; Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2). At the same time their ecologies (family, community etc) need to help them to access protective resources. Part of the protective resources that enable adolescents towards resilience can be found in the support of family and significant others (Kelley, 2005:265; Masten & Reed, 2005:75; Schoon, 2006:1-15; Snyder & Lopez, 2005:74-75; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:2).

Rutter (1985:598) and Gilligan (2001:5) propose that resilience is a collection of processes that allow people to become accustomed to risks that are unavoidable in real-life situations and that resilience is not an unchanging characteristic. This dynamic process of resilience relies on the following protective processes in Figure 2.2 below:

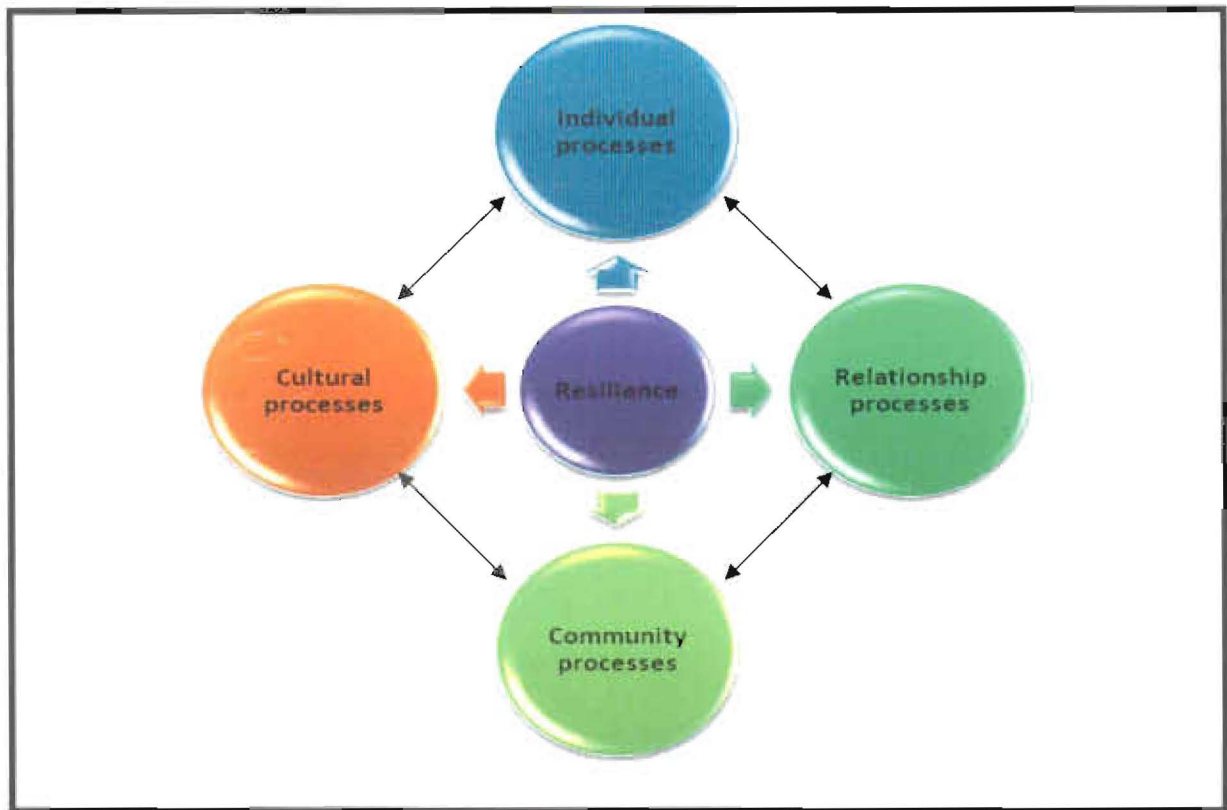


Figure 2.2: Protective processes that enhance resilience

It is important to stress that even though I discuss each of the protective processes separately below, they do not function alone and are integrally connected in ways that reinforce each other. Ideally, resilient adolescents have access to and make use of all of these groups of protective processes (Cf. Figure 2.2.).

2.4 PROTECTIVE RESOURCES THAT ENCOURAGE RESILIENCE IN ADOLESCENTS

Protective resources can be described as specific qualities, processes or events that are essential for the process of resilience to take place (Dyer & McGuiness, 1996). Many resilience researchers have gathered numerous forms of protective factors and processes from their research. Many researchers (Cook & Du Toit, 2005:250; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:400; Greene, 2002:4; Greene & Conrad, 2002:34; Kim-Cohen, 2007:274; Schoon, 2006:77; Sieh, 2005:276; Wright & Masten, 2005:22) have found

that protective factors are not the only contributing qualities to resilience, but instead the protective processes are almost more significant in encouraging resilience and buffering risk. For example, when an adolescent learns to identify the assets he possesses that he can rely on, this process encourages resilience.

Protective factors in the form of individual traits, (temperament, self-efficacy, self-esteem and intelligence) and protective processes found in healthy families, communities and cultures (e.g. family rituals; community opportunities for youth to engage in experiences of social justice) are known to enable youth towards resilience (Armstrong, Stroul & Boothroyd, 2005:392,394; Bersthorn, 2005:123; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:399; Hirayama & Hirayama, 2001:77; Masten & Reed, 2005:77; Schoon, 2006:76; Wright & Masten, 2005:19). Resilience is encouraged when protective resources buffer risks and problems that arise and help an adolescent to adjust to difficult situations (Cook & Du Toit, 2005:250; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:400; Greene, 2002:4; Greene & Conrad, 2002:34; Kim-Cohen, 2007:274; Schoon, 2006:77; Schoon & Bynner, 2003:23; Sieh, 2005:276; Wright & Masten, 2005:22). Protective processes encourage an adolescent to use different resources within his environment to cope (Ungar, 2008:221; Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2).

Research has identified a variety of resources within the individual, family, community and culture that play an important role in enhancing resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005:6). It is important to stress that of late researchers have begun to remind us that protective resources are not necessarily true for all contexts (Ungar *et al.*, 2008: 3).

- **Protective Individual Processes**

Internal protective factors (individual) within the adolescent, involve (among others) the ability to take control, be proactive, and make decisions about what to do. As mentioned above, earlier research emphasised the individual protective factors (intrapersonal), that contributed to an adolescent being resilient (Masten, 2001:232). Resilient adolescents took responsibility for their decisions and they engaged others when needed. Adolescents who are resilient seem to understand and accept their abilities and limitations, and know when and how much to push themselves (Maddux, 2005:279;

Masten & Reed, 2005:85; Norton, 2005:56; Strümpfer, 2003:70; Theron, 2004:317-318).

The following individual factors and processes, as summarised in Figure 2.3 below, have been reported to characterise resilient individuals.

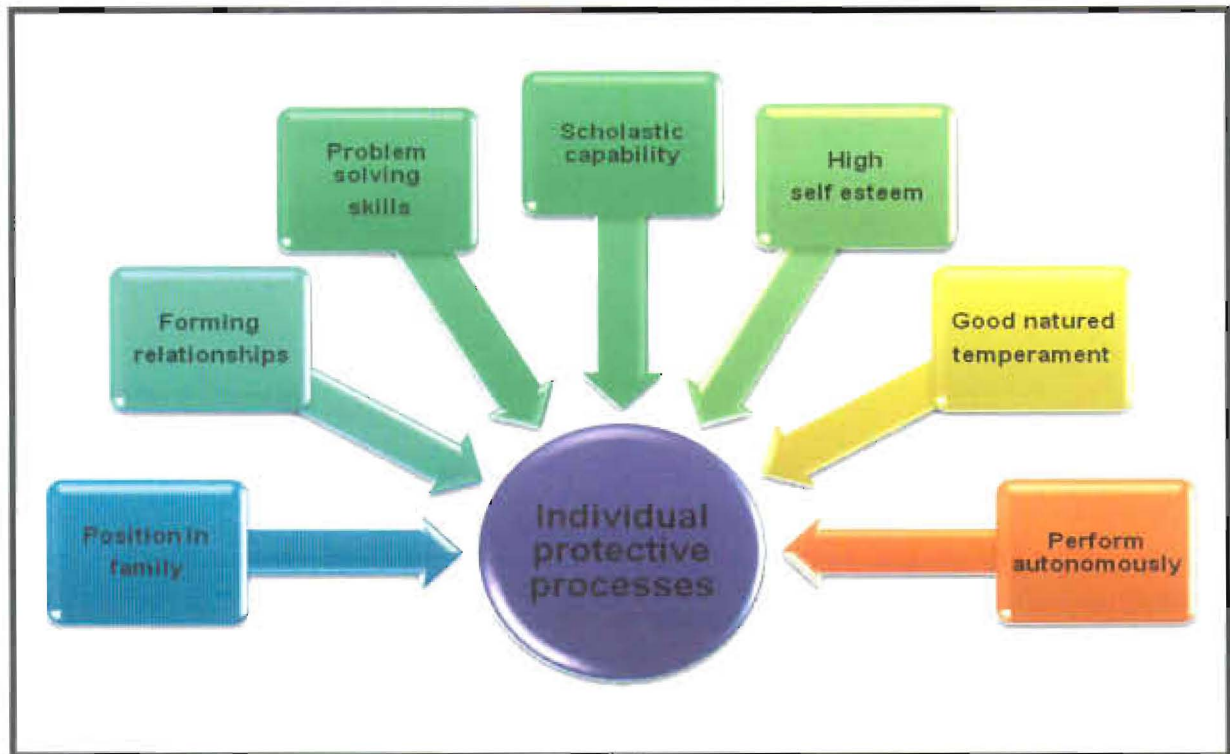


Figure 2.3: Protective individual processes

Research has shown that the **position in family** can be seen as a protective process. Adolescents who are born first are inclined to be resilient (Hultman, Sparen, Takei, Murry & Cnattingius, 1999:421; Westergaard, Mortensen, Pedersen, Wohfahrt & Melbye, 1999:993).

The prospect of a **support system** and means during major life alterations, for example a change from primary school to high school, coping after parents' divorce, death in the family, can make life changes easier to deal with (Schoon, 2006:1; Solomon & Laufer, 2005:235). For this reason, when adolescents are capable of **forming relationships** with other people, their chances of resilience are increased. Having or forming relationships with supportive individuals during difficult times provides opportunities for

adolescents to cope and rely on others during these changes. Such individuals usually include various family members, adults from the immediate community, peers and role models (e.g. teachers at school, pastor at church) (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Charney, 2005; Greene & Conrad, 2002:30; Killian, 2004:43; Leon & Cole, 2004; Mannes, 2005; Masten & Powell 2003:13, **Neher** & Short, 1998:154; Riley, 2002:179; Starzynski, 2005; Williams, 2002:200). However, as noted above, although these individuals must be accessible, adolescents need to navigate towards them (Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2). Good social skills, as part of an important individual protective process, enable adolescents towards resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005:8), in part because effective social skills help adolescents to communicate their needs, to form relationships and to make the most of networks (Ungar *et al.*, 2008:3).

Resilient adolescents may tend to have a sense of inquisitiveness, which encourages enthusiasm and problem-solving, resulting in a collection of **problem-solving skills** (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:251; Dumont & Provost, 1999:343; Fergusson & Horwood, 2003:132; Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Reed-Victor, 2003; Theron, 2004:319). A resilient adolescent will typically wish to improve, by being focused and goal orientated (Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Newman, 2002).

Whether or not individuals would be successful in coping with complicated situations can be determined by **scholastic capability** (Kingsley & Gowers, 2005:30; Kramer, & Hodes, 2003:180). Adolescents who are **cognitively competent** are often perceived to be resilient (Fergusson & Horwood, 2003:132; Horowitz & Garber, 2003:578; Luthar, 1991:600; Owen & Shaw, 2003:272). These adolescents also have a personal sense of power which is encouraged by a **high self-esteem** which in turn seems to reinforce academic progress (Alexander, 2002:27; Krish, 2006:102). Having a positive view about themselves and a high self-esteem is considered to be a protective process (Dumont & Provost, 1999:343; Fergus & Zimmermann, 2005:401; Masten & Powell, 2003:13) Self-esteem can be defined as the 'view' a person has about his/her self-worth (Greener, 2006:44). Having a 'desirable personal identity' is associated with many resilient youth and is linked to positive self-esteem (Ungar *et al.*, 2008:6). A positive identity is noted by Ungar *et al.* (2008:6) as one of the seven tensions that youth need to resolve as they navigate towards resilience. It is important for adolescents to be able

to determine a positive identity, as this encourages a sense of confidence that supports adolescents faced with new or difficult circumstances by allowing them not to dwell on the negative effects of failure (Greener, 2006:44).

Adolescents who may experience failure have different ways of expressing their emotions, for example crying, laughing it off, being reserved or bad-tempered (Killian, 2004:45; Kotchich, Summers, Forehand and Steele, 1997:409; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Starzynski, 2005). When adolescents tend to be overly emotional, they are less inclined towards resilience. On the other hand, a **good-natured temperament** encourages adolescents to adapt to the unpredictable happenings often associated with adversities (Isaacs, 2002:330). Adolescents who have a positive temperament usually prove to be good scholars, display less discipline problems, have a good self-esteem, have positive relationships with peers and are commonly known to be more content (Hein, 2004).

Resilience can be enhanced when adolescents can manage their problems independently and self-sufficiently. This state of independence and being self-sufficient is also referred to as autonomy (Reber & Reber, 2001:71). A resilient adolescent has the ability to **function autonomously**, but is not frightened to ask for help when needed (Greene & Conrad, 2002:36; Yates, Egeland & Stroufe, 2003:252).

In summary, the individual protective processes listed above typically enhance resilience: protective individual resources such as the position in the family, capacity for developing positive relationships, successful problem-solving skills, intellectual abilities, a positive self-image, control over emotions and being able to function autonomously, all contribute to the adolescent's capability to cope resiliently. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, individual processes on their own are probably insufficient to encourage resilience as individual strengths need to be complemented by resilience processes found in relationships, communities and cultures (interpersonal protective processes). These are discussed next.

- **Protective Family Relationship Processes**

A number of studies have been done on familial protective processes (Cook & Du Toit, 2005: 248; Killian, 2004:46; Masten & Reed, 2005:75; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005:29). Family protective processes are said to enhance resilience among adolescents coping with hardships (Cook & Du Toit, 2005: 248; Friesen & Brennan, 2005:297). One protective process is forming of positive, supportive relationships. Many of these relationship factors can be found in positive family systems. These factors are identified in Figure 2.4 below:

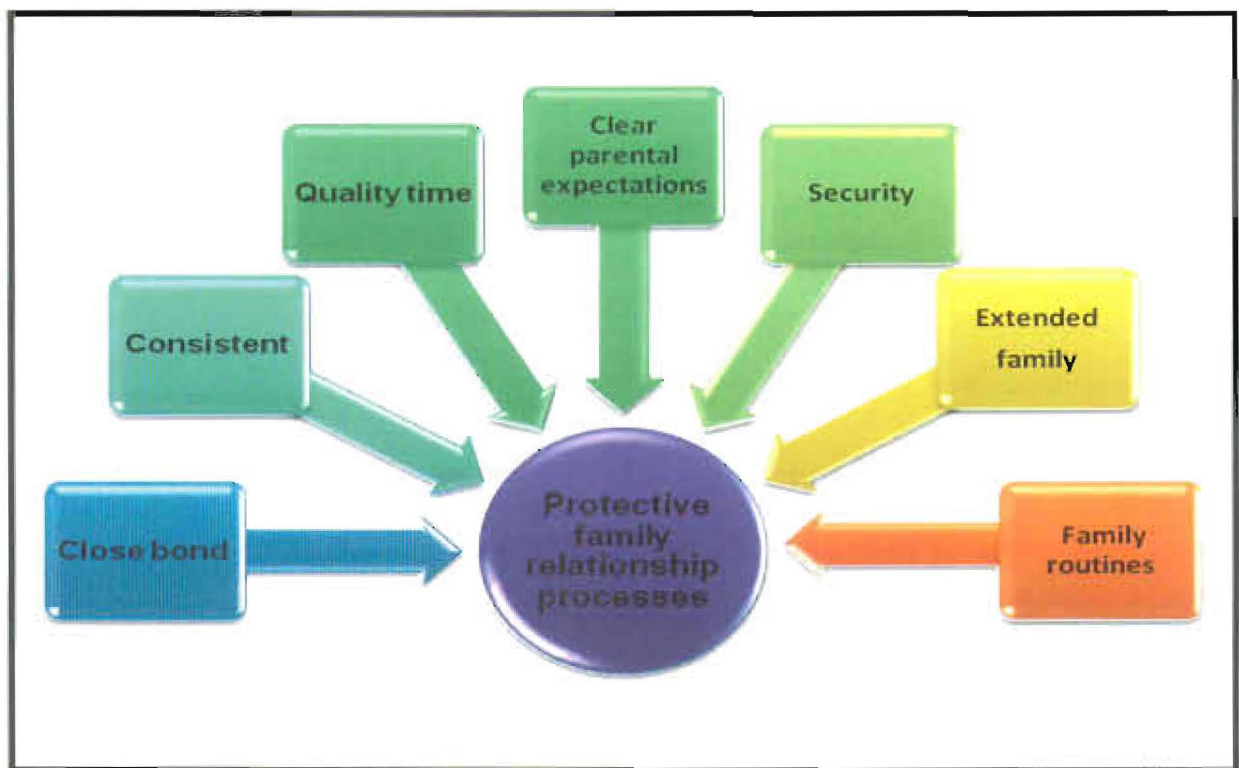


Figure 2.4: Protective family relationship processes

According to Kümpfer (1999:189-191); Masten and Reed (2005:82); Schoon (2006:9-15); Ungar (2005:xxv); Wong and Lee (2005:316), familial factors can have a positive influence on an adolescent. One way of this happening is when parents develop a **close bond** with the adolescent. Close bonds encourage a sense of cohesion and belonging which in turn enable resilient functioning.

Families who are **consistent** and able to manage stress and everyday life in predictable ways and to spend **quality time** with the adolescent, promote resilience (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996:289; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Kim-Cohen, 2007:277). If parents have realistically high, encouraging, **clear parental expectations** concerning school performance (Howard & Johnson, 2000) they will enforce a supportive, enabling relationship with the adolescent, which in turn encourages resilience (Wyman, 2003:302). Parents who **inform** adolescents of their expectations clearly through set rules and regulations that are fair, give the adolescents a sense of **security** – when rules are clearly communicated, adolescents know what to expect and this makes their home a space of safety (Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000:71). A secure, nurturing and supportive family environment is associated with positive adjustments throughout childhood and adolescence (Anon., 1995; Carew, 2005:283; Frydenberg, 1999:343; Greener, 2006:44; Schoon, 2006:14).

Family routines are recommended as an important factor that contributes to healthy families, adaptability and organisation of family life. **Family routines** are vital for rebuilding a sense of family, including family identity and values after divorce has taken place. According to Hutchinson *et al.*, (2007:25) family routines are needed to create and support **continuity and consistency** in the family environment, especially when adolescents have to face many changes within their lives. Time shared with one's family can contribute to resilience, also after divorce.

A child's emotional stability not only depends on his parents but on other **extended family** members too. An adolescent should feel welcome and relaxed in all his living surroundings (Masten & Reed, 2005:85; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2005:219; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:3). An extended family is an imperative support system that plays a role in assisting an adolescent in developing resilience (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:582; Newman, 2002). Extended families such as aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins can play an encouraging role by helping adolescents feel loved and important, and even by providing direction when needed (Anon., 1995; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4).

Protective family relationships encourage adolescents and are essential antecedents of resilience. Relationships within the family alone are not the only essential antecedents

of resilience but the community also plays a vital role. While adolescents form intimate relationships within the family, relationships formed within the community provide a broader network of support that the adolescents can rely on. According to Ungar *et al.* (2008:6), having a positive relationship with other people is one of the seven tensions that adolescents need to resolve as they navigate towards resilience. Adolescents need to form positive bonds with other people. This is a way of navigating themselves towards the positive resources that they need to cope resiliently.

- **Protective Community Processes**

An adolescent functions in an environment that consists of a variety of different structures and role-players, including community-based institutes (e.g. (school, church, clinics etc) that hopefully form a network that supports adolescents (Greener, 2006:42). As mentioned earlier, it is clear that adolescents need to navigate their way to interacting with or connecting themselves to health-promoting people and structures within their community (Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2).

Adolescents who cope with hardship often rely on their community to provide them with **positive protective resources** in order to cope resiliently. The community in which a child grows up can be a good influence, if the norms and structures provide a supportive network and encourage positive social bonding opportunities between the individual and the community (Kümpfer, 1999:189-191). Protective community processes are summarised in Figure 2.5 below:

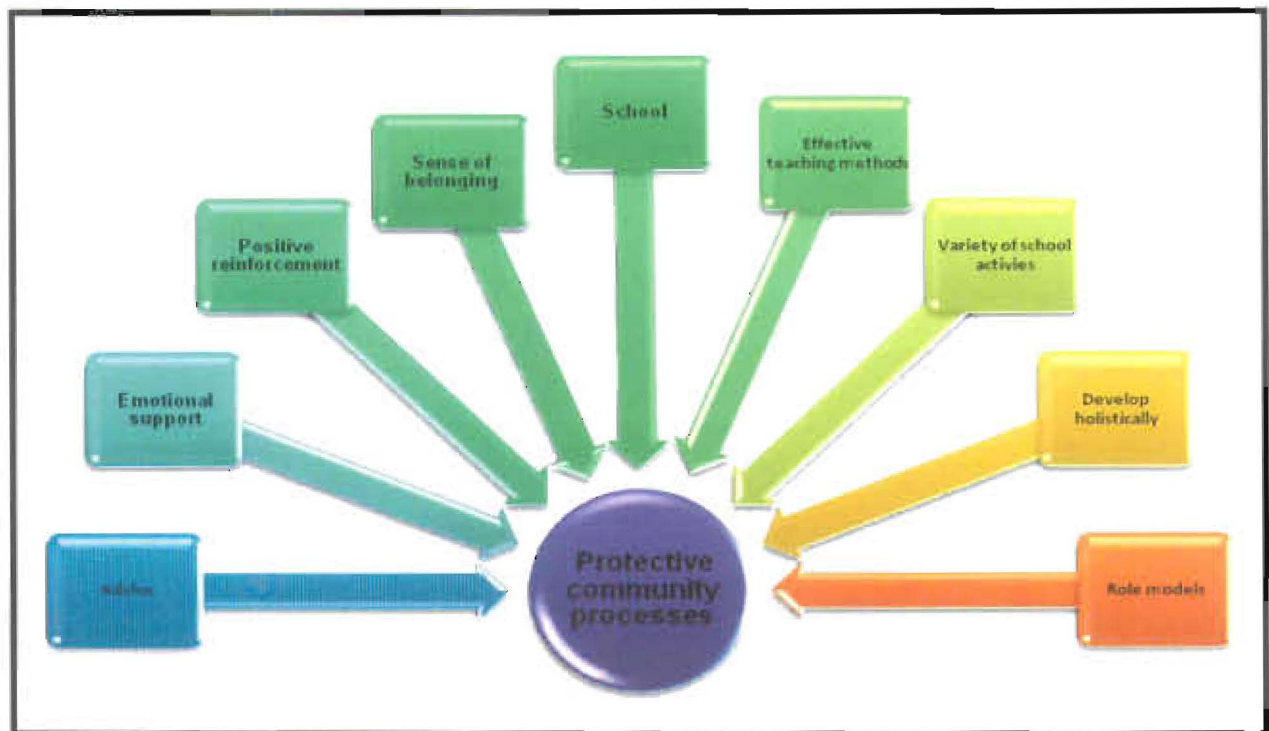


Figure 2.5: Protective community processes

Positive protective resources provided by the community include aspects such as receiving **advice, emotional support and positive reinforcement** (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003:529; Starzynski, 2005). Adolescents who have opportunities to learn to trust others, mostly feel comfortable and are able to manage the stressful situations with the help of others (Reed-Victor, 2003).

Emotional support and reinforcement that adolescents receive from the community enhance resilience and enable the adolescent to **ask questions**. By feeling free to ask questions they can access different opinions, guidance and support during hard times (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Copeland, 1997:53; Musick, Stott, Spencer, Goldman & Cohler, 1987:229; Williams, 2002:200). Not only do they gain valuable advice, but adolescents who live in communities that provide room for asking questions, typically feel supported.

When adolescents are supported by their community they get a **sense of belonging**. Wong and Lee (2005:316) believe that adolescents acquire a sense of belonging within a protective system, which involves contact between adolescents and their families,

schools, peers and communities. This is supportive as adolescents experience social support (Boyden & Mann, 2005:8; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 2003:401; Wong & Lee, 2005:316).

Having a **strong relationship with friends** can be seen as protective processes outside the family environment (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7). This enhances resilience as it gives the adolescents a space to talk freely about problems that they are faced with (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Masten & Powell, 2003:13; Williams, 2002:200). Adolescents find it easier and more comfortable to talk to other **adolescents who are faced with similar adversities**, for example if they are both going through their parents getting divorced. Adolescents find it easier because they can relate to each other's situations, asking help and offering advice becomes easier. This makes the adolescents realise that whatever emotions or experiences they share with others, are valued and accepted (Copeland, 1997:55; Walker, 2001:7).

Experiencing 'Social justice' is another one of the seven tensions mentioned by Ungar *et al.* (2008:6) that youth need to negotiate as they cope with difficult circumstances. A sense of social justice is often promoted when adolescents experience peer acceptance and when their communities encourage opportunities for youth to feel accepted. This would be especially important following parental divorce, when many adolescents feel that society is unfair and that they are judged for their parents' decisions.

Role models such as teachers, sport instructors, youth pastors, school counsellors and other competent adults may form a support system for adolescents (Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4). Adolescents require role models who display appropriate and ethical behaviour and who welcome them when they need assistance. Adolescents need role models that live out positive values and problem-solving skills as this helps adolescents to develop coping strategies (Greener, 2006:45-46).

- **School Protective Processes**

One of the major potential protective community resources for adolescents can be found in schools. According to Schoon (2006:14) and Johnson and Lazarus (2008:19-20) the general characteristics of the school environment play an important role in developing adaptive development within adolescents. The general characteristics are set out in Figure 2.6 below:

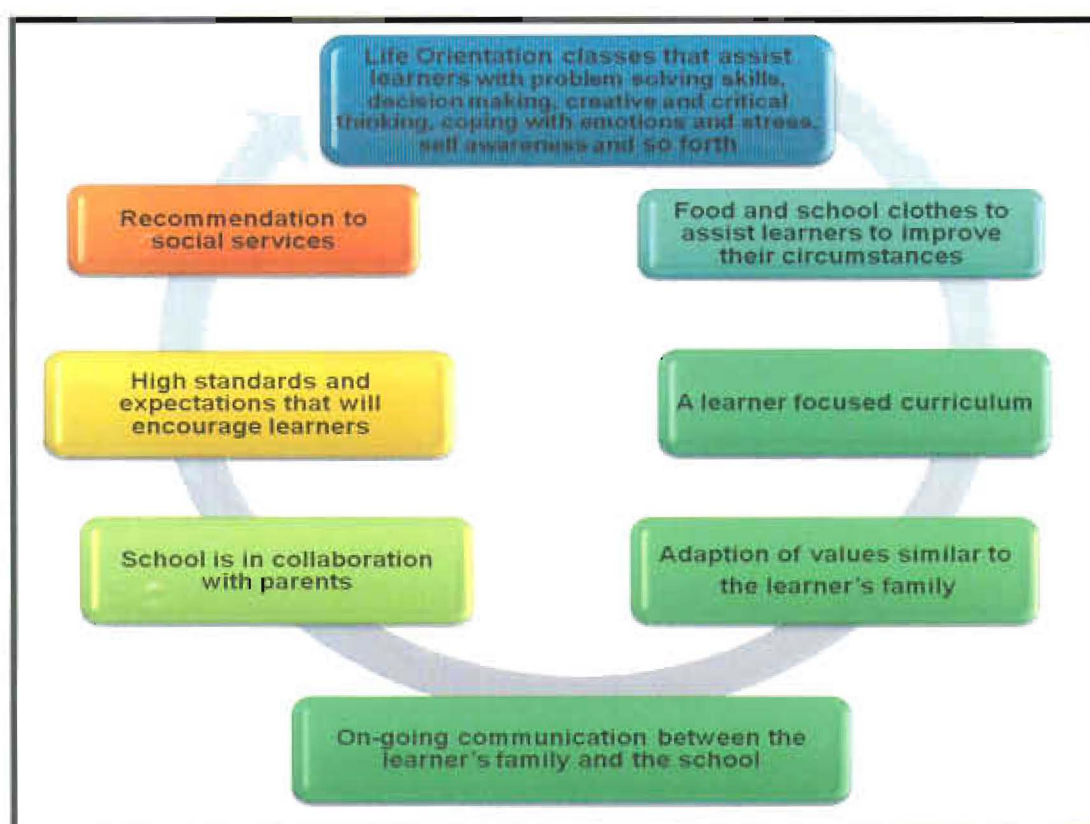


Figure 2.6: Important characteristics of an adaptive school environment (Anon., 1995; Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4).

According to Chisholm, Hoadley, Kivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule (2005:91) adolescents spend the majority of their day at school, so school therefore plays a major role in the adolescent's resiliency. Schools that are equipped with more effective resources have fewer problems with adolescents who are dealing with adversities, possibly because they can offer adolescents support (Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:29).

One of these resources that can enhance resilience among adolescents at school is a range of **effective teaching methods** which enables the teacher and the learner to form **enabling relationships** necessary to positively boost an adolescent (Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:19; Vakalisa, 2002:17-23). Enabling relationships with adolescents can be formed by a teacher showing empathy, being sympathetic and also aware of problems that influence an adolescent's behaviour (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:97). Enabling relationships also give the adolescent the opportunity to have someone just listen to their problems. Listening is an element of the dynamic process of communication. When we are unable to listen, we are unable to communicate (Wright, 2006:64). A way in which listening can help is that it shows the adolescent that what they are saying is of relevance and this in turn encourages them to communicate freely (Velazco, 2006:75). Therefore, listening can be a very significant instrument that teachers can use to show adolescents that they matter and to encourage their resilience.

Through effective teaching methods teachers can enable adolescents to take part in a **variety of school-based activities**, which, according to research, is positive for adolescents coping with adversities (Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:20). Different activities create the opportunity for adolescents to form relationships, not only on a school-based level, but also with members of the community (Reed-Victor, 2003; Vakalisa, 2002:16). These activities offer a platform from which adolescents can **talk** about concerns, get help from professional individuals who in turn enable the adolescent to structure their own point of view (Vakalisa, 2002:18-21).

For an adolescent to **develop holistically**, skills, knowledge, attitudes (positive) and values are required. Learning areas in schools like Life Skills (part of the Life Orientation learning area) provide adolescents with a variety of tools to be successful in life. These tools include: problem-solving skills, critical and creative thinking, coping skills, emotional and communication skills and an area for self discovery (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006:273).

- **Protective Cultural Processes**

Even when adolescents experience instability, extended family and community offer consistency and tradition. Adolescents who are anchored within the family and community environment, can continue to use positive coping techniques and ways of socialising that are exercised within their culture. Consistent support between adolescents' culture and traditions and culturally suitable support within their community are important for enhancing resilience. Adolescents who experience continuation of traditional rituals and routines, form a grounded sense of identity (Blackburn, 2000) and cope more resiliently with life's challenges.

There are a variety of protective cultural processes that contribute to an adolescent coping resiliently, as summarised in Figure 2.7 below:

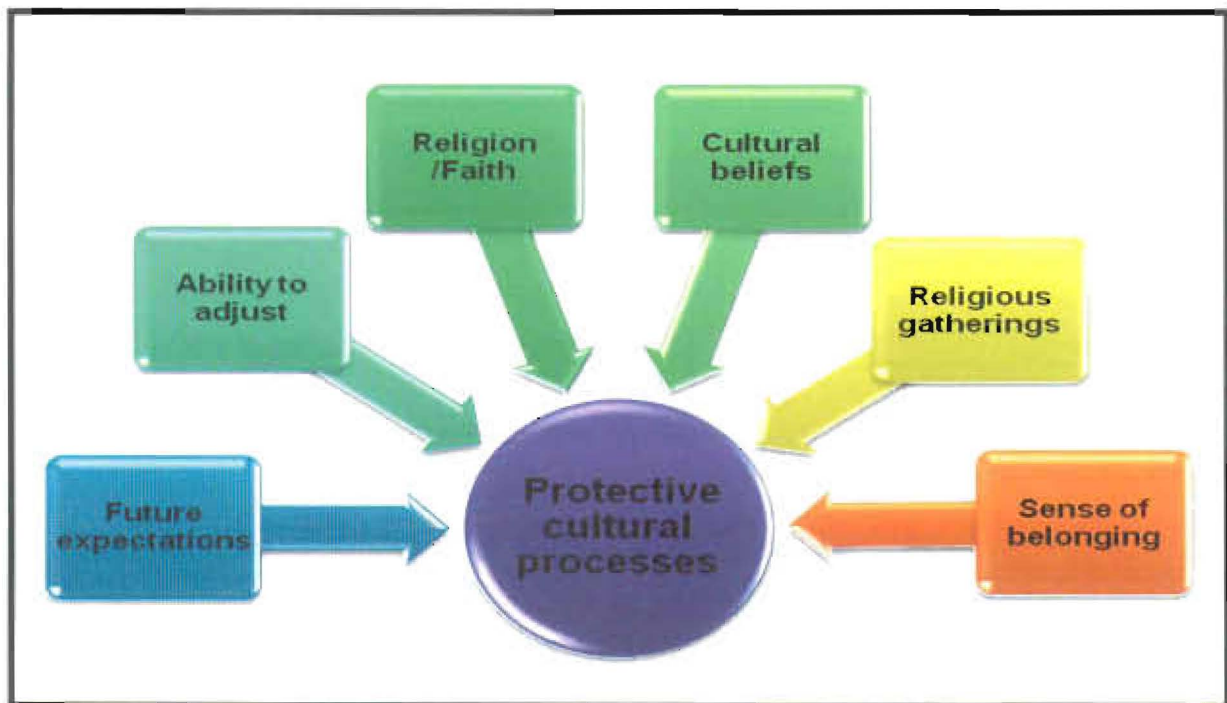


Figure 2.7: Protective cultural processes (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005:40; Reber & Reber, 2001:170; Ungar *et al.*, 2008:3; Velez-Ibanez, 1999:76-79; Walsh, 2006:51).

Adolescents may sometimes be unaware of cultural factors which can either enhance resilience or break it down. People are inclined to respond to challenging circumstances in the typical ways that their communities and cultures are accustomed to dealing with life. Velez-Ibanez (1999:76-79) found in research conducted on Latino populations that adolescents who have high **future expectations** of their culture are encouraged towards resiliency. If a culture itself is seen as resilient, adolescents within the culture will be encouraged to become more resilient. Often, when groups of people are faced with significant change, resilience is encouraged when the culture of that group is able to accept and cope with change. The **ability to adjust** becomes part of shared values and belief systems and skills that are taken over by generations to come and characterised as culture (Carter, 1999:12; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005:40; Reber & Reber, 2001:170; Walsh, 2006:51; Walsh & Crosser, 2000:306). When cultural traditions encourage rituals that help adolescents to accept and cope with change, resilience is promoted (Masten & Reed, 2005: 84).

Furthermore, a culture that highlights interdependence, co-operation and mutual assistance as important values, and that provides opportunities for young people to form bonds with healthy adults, encourages resilience (Masten & Reed, 2005: 84; Ungar *et al.*, 2008:3).

Many adolescents also rely on **religion or faith** (which is typically a cultural practice) and most adolescents feel that this enables them to cope (Boyden & Mann, 2005:8; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Killian, 2004:46; Kümpfer, 1999:199; Myers, 2000:56; Smith, 2005; Solomon & Laufer, 2005:239; Williams, 2002:200). In Dass-Brailsford's study (2005:583), black adolescents that trusted in **cultural beliefs (ancestral worship)**, reported that this helped them cope with adversities and encouraged resilience. **Religious gatherings** for youth provide adolescents with alternative supportive **role models** and **individual guidance** (counselling) (Thomas & Menampampil, 2005:332-333). These gatherings further enhance resilience through a **sense of belonging** (Howard & Johnson, 2000).

According to Ungar *et al.* (2008:6) cultural adherence is one of the seven tensions that young people need to resolve as they navigate towards resilience-promoting resources.

This means that they need to take ownership of dominant cultural norms and cultural practices. For example, according to the Mexican culture, support is drawn from traditional values and beliefs when dealing with troublesome situations. When no support is provided by family members, no structure or routine, adolescents turn to their cultural traditions to cope (Holleran & Waller, 2003:342). When adolescents try to ignore their cultural norms and practices they are often in conflict with the adults in their communities or isolated and this would understandably detract from resilience.

2.4.1 Summary of Protective Resources

In summary, the process of resilience relies on both individual traits as well as supportive assets and processes from ecology (e.g. family, community and culture). All these supportive elements are known as “protective factors” or “protective processes” and together these make up protective resources. When an adolescent navigates towards these protective resources, resilience is encouraged. Obviously, it is important that the ecosystem of the adolescent makes protective resources available, otherwise the adolescent would have nothing towards which to navigate. So, in conclusion, individual, family, community and cultural protective resources work together to mediate risk (Armstrong *et al.*, 2005:394).

2.5 RISK PROCESSES

As noted earlier in this chapter, it is not possible to talk about resilience in the absence of risk (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:3; Empson & Nabuzoka, 2004:42; Fergusson & Horwood, 2003:132; Kelley, 2005:265; Masten & Reed, 2005:75; Schoon, 2006:6-7; Theron, 2006:199; Ungar, 2005:xv; Vaillant, 1993:284; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:2). For this reason, a discussion of the process of resilience is not possible without reviewing risk processes or factors. In the paragraphs below, I will provide an overview of the origins of risk. I only provide a brief overview so that the complete context of resilience can emerge. My chosen risk factor (i.e. divorce) will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Risk processes can be seen as disabling conditions or happenings that deny or minimise a person's opportunity for resilience. Risk processes can be represented in three main domains, namely the individual, family and environmental/contextual factors (Boyden & Mann, 2005:20; Cox & Desforges, 1987:56; Empson & Nabuzoka, 2004:40; Schoon, 2006:15; Thomlison, 2004:384-387; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4).

Smith and Carlson (1997:235) emphasise that it is the ever-growing effect of risk factors rather than a solitary risk factor that has a tendency to generate negative outcomes time after time. In other words, risk factors are more probable to be cumulative and risk increases when cumulative risk factors are present (Bonanno, 2005:265; Carson, Swanson, Cooney, Gillum & Cunningham, 1992:275). Figure 2.8 indicates the on-going relationship when confronted with risk factors.

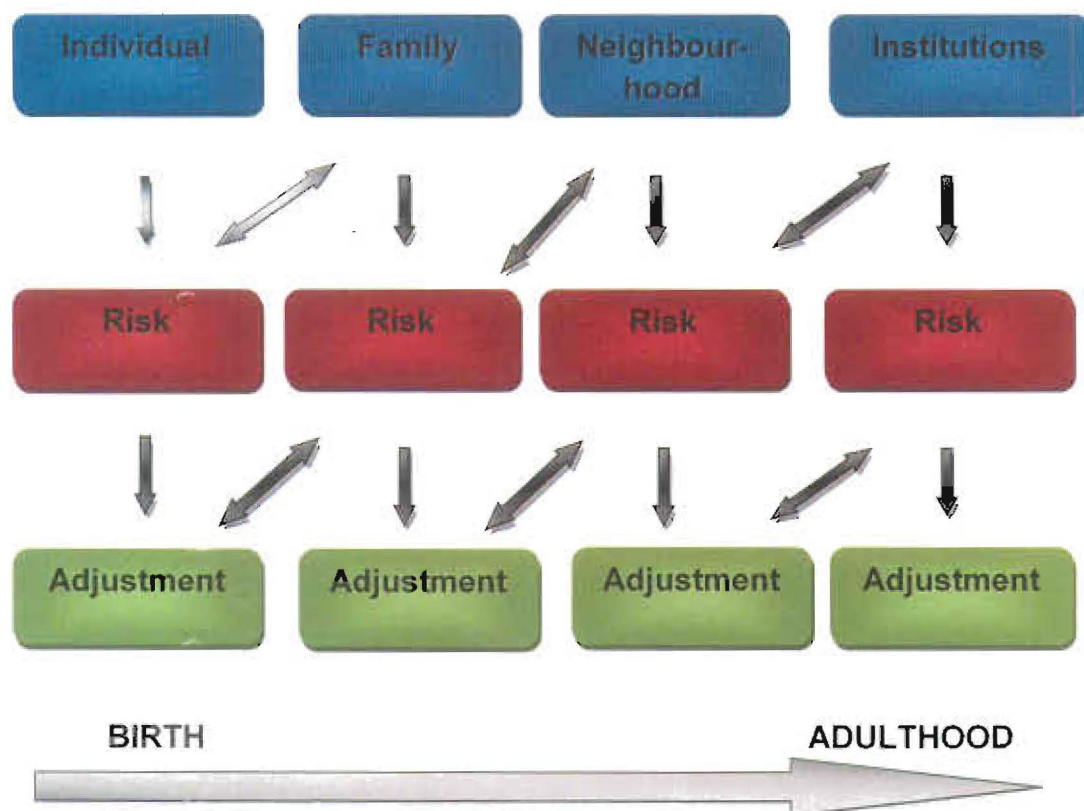


Figure 2.8: On-going relationship of risk factors, resilience and adjustment (Boyden & Mann, 2005:20; Cox & Desforges, 1987:56; Empson & Nabuzoka, 2004:40; Schoon, 2006:15; Thomlison, 2004:384-387; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4)

Figure 2.8 suggests that risk can originate from multiple domains (both inter- and intrapersonal) and that risk is multiple and often ongoing. Figure 2.8 also suggests that inter- and intrapersonal domains can also provide support so that there is adjustment to risk. Obviously, when there is adjustment to risk, resilience is facilitated. If there was no risk and no adjustment, there would be no resilience.

The categories of inter- and intrapersonal risks will be discussed below:

- **Intrapersonal Risk Factors**

Intrapersonal risk factors can be defined as risks or adversities within an adolescent such as poor intelligence, a difficult temperament, inappropriate or inadequate social skills, and external locus of control, and little autonomy, among others (Boyden & Mann, 2005:6). In most of these instances, the adolescent will not have the individual qualities that encourage navigation towards resilience-promoting resources.

Complications that influence the developmental process, e.g. trauma, alcohol and drug abuse, physical abuse; premature birth, injuries during birth and being underweight can be identified as risk processes (Cameron, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2007:288; Reed –Victor, 2003; Schoon, 2006:9).

An adolescent who might have a **severe/chronic illness** or generally **poor health** will experience difficulty in coping with adversities (Riley, 2002:181). Continuous poor health contributes to how an adolescent might function (negatively/positively) when dealing with hardships. This may lead to **inadequate school performance** if illness or poor health is prolonged (Bundy, McGuire, Hall, & Dolan, 2004; Donald *et al.*, 2006:298; Levinger, 1986). An able-bodied adolescent who is healthy is emotionally and psychologically more prone to resilient behaviour than an adolescent who is weak or ill (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7).

Adolescents who form relationships with **unsupportive individuals** during times of hardship could encourage risk (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Charney, 2005; Greene & Conrad, 2002:30; Killian, 2004:43; Leon & Cole, 2004; Mannes, 2005; Masten & Powell

2003:13; Neher & Short, 1998:154; Riley, 2002:179; Starzynski, 2005; Williams, 2002:200). Adolescents **run** the risk of feeling **isolated** when they don't have peers to talk to and cannot express how they feel (Thomas & Menampampil, 2005:335). When adolescents are incapable of forming supportive relationships with peers (and others) they don't experience a safe environment and therefore find it difficult to cope resiliently (De Chen & George, 2005:454; Ronen & Seeman, 2007:1054; Tansey, 2008).

Adolescents who **don't have the courage to explore** different opportunities, don't develop sufficient problem-solving skills which are needed in dealing with adversities in everyday life (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:251; Dumont & Provost, 1999:343; Fergusson & Horwood, 2003:132; Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Reed-Victor, 2003; Theron, 2004:319). When adolescents don't have the courage to explore, this may lead to failure as well as bad temperament. This happens because adolescents are inclined to be exceedingly emotional. An adolescent who has no control over his **temperament**, will find it difficult to cope resiliently in different situations (Isaacs, 2002:330).

- **Interpersonal Risk Factors**

Literature explains that it is not only an adolescents' inner qualities, but also their ecologies that heighten risk. Interpersonal risk factors can be defined as risks or adversities that affect adolescents not from within themselves but from outside, such as their community, family and culture. It is apparent that there are countless possible unfavourable factors within an individual's ecology which could disrupt the balance in favour of an adolescent being seen to be at risk.

Familial risk factors have often been related to negative outcomes (Smith & Carlson, 1997:235). Families in crisis situations are identified by unevenness, disharmony, and disruption or poor routine. When the pattern of the family's functioning is incompetent, risk is even more increased. When trauma is experienced, it often forces the family to initiate **change and transformation** and not all families cope well with change (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005:31). Adolescents who don't experience a sense of stability through family routines are placed at risk because having set routines gives the

adolescent a sense of comfort (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2007:23-25). If parents fail to create an environment which provides adolescents with set rules and regulations to help them manage successfully in life, they are placed at risk (Howard & Johnson, 2000).

Sometimes parents are so worn out due to emotional and physical adversities with which they are faced, that they tend to **neglect the needs** of an adolescent. Inadequate support, love and care required by the adolescent can be referred to as risk processes (Howard & Johnson, 2000; Kim-Cohen, 2007:277). Parents place the adolescents at risk when quality family time is not spent with one another (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996:289; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Kim-Cohen, 2007:277).

Adolescents who **do not have an enabling relationship** with extended family, are said to be at risk because they have limited resources to help them cope (Masten & Reed, 2005:85; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2005:219; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:3). Without devotion from family and extended family members, adolescents will struggle to experience a sense of belonging (Anon., 1995; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4).

Adolescents who are faced with the adversity of **abuse** within their family, for example: physical abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, are at risk of not being able to cope (Isaacs, 2002:330).

Adolescents who **do not receive emotional support and positive reinforcement** from the people in their community, lack the management skills to deal with difficult times. They also have no-one outside of their family that they can turn to, to ask for help (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Copeland, 1997:53; Musick *et al.*, 1987:229; Williams, 2002:200).

Teachers who appear **unapproachable** make it difficult for adolescents to turn to them for help or advice, especially when they feel that they don't find the adequate love and support at home. This could develop problematic behaviour, which makes them more prone to risks (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:97).

Peer pressure is an additional well-known risk factor that plays a vigorous role in an adolescent's life: often negative judgements and bad influences of peers can eliminate the positive influence that a parent or educator might have. Therefore it is very important to recognise the potential negative impact that a peer group can have on an adolescent (Cosden, 2001:55). Peer groups can have a negative influence on a child being non-resilient in various ways (Cosden, 2001:55). Figure 2.9 below illustrates these influences:

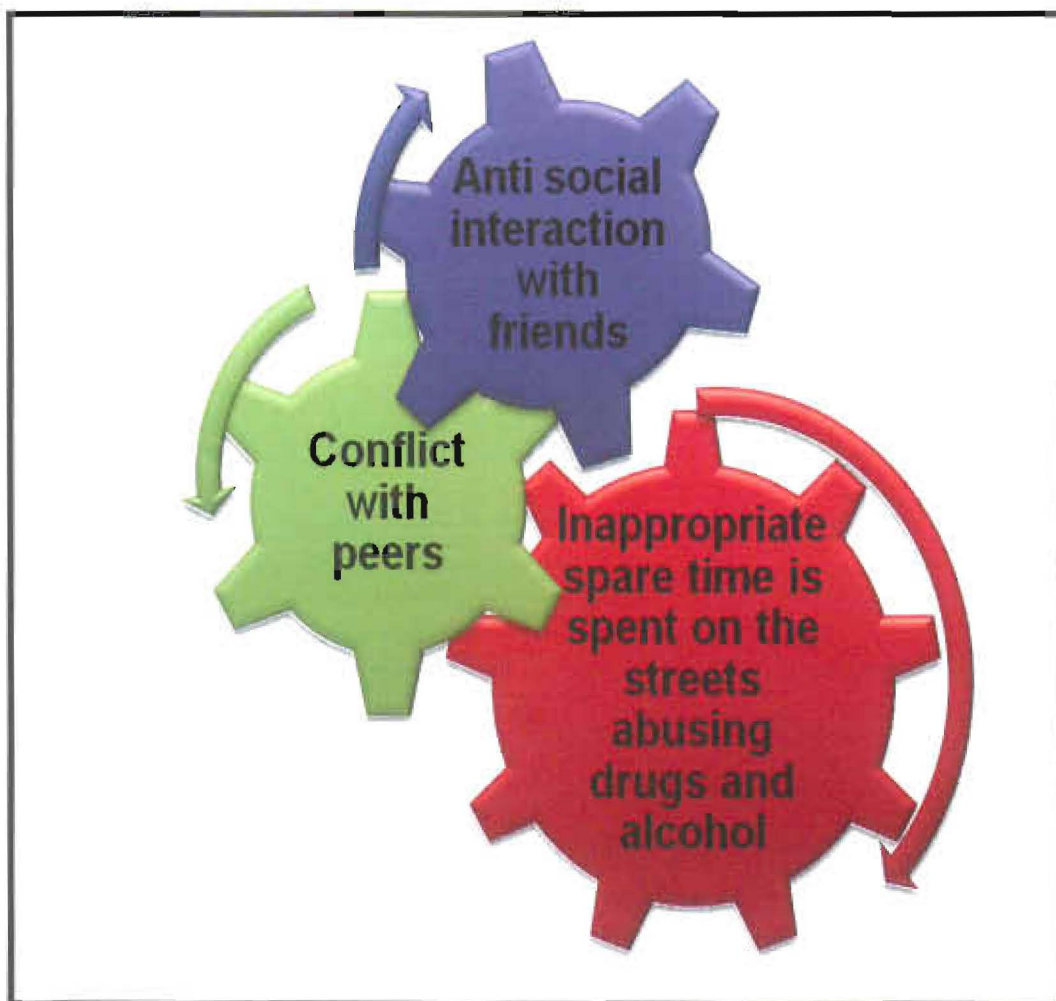


Figure 2.9: Negative influences of peer group pressure

When **cultural aspects**, for **example values**, don't play such an important role in the adolescent's life, the incorporation of positive cultural values (like coping with change) cannot be used or implemented by the adolescent while dealing with

diversities. This is due to the fact that sometimes **cultural rites, values and beliefs are not passed down to the next generation** (McCubbn & McCubbin, 2005:32; Seidman & Pedersen, 2003:332; Walsh, 2006:51; Walsh & Crosser, 2000:306). Cultural aspects play a vital role in developing resilience-promoting skills and characteristics through **various traditions**. In the absence of positive cultural traditions that play a vital role in forming **character traits**, like honesty, never giving up, optimism and humanity, adolescents are placed at risk of **losing fundamental pieces of their culture** which in turn discourages resilience (McDonald, Glode & Wien, 2005).

2.6 CONCLUSION

The conclusion that stands out as the most remarkable in all the research on resilience is the astonishing recovery power of adolescents that arises from ordinary everyday protective processes (Masten, 2001:228). These commonplace protective resources can be found in the individual, the wider social context (community and culture), and the family environment (Carew, 2005:283; Frydenberg, 1999:343; Kelley, 2005:265; Kümpfer, 1999:189-191; Masten & Reed, 2005:75; Schoon, 2006:1-15; Snyder & Lopez, 2005:74-75; Vakalisa, 2002:18-21; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:2). By making the most of these resources some adolescents carry on and live fulfilled lives even though they come face to face with real misfortune (Hauser, Golden & Allen, 2006:206).

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I discuss how divorce is mostly a misfortune to children and adolescents.

CHAPTER THREE DIVORCE

...the biggest cost of the divorce will be paid by the children (Harvey & Fine, 2004:9)

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 3

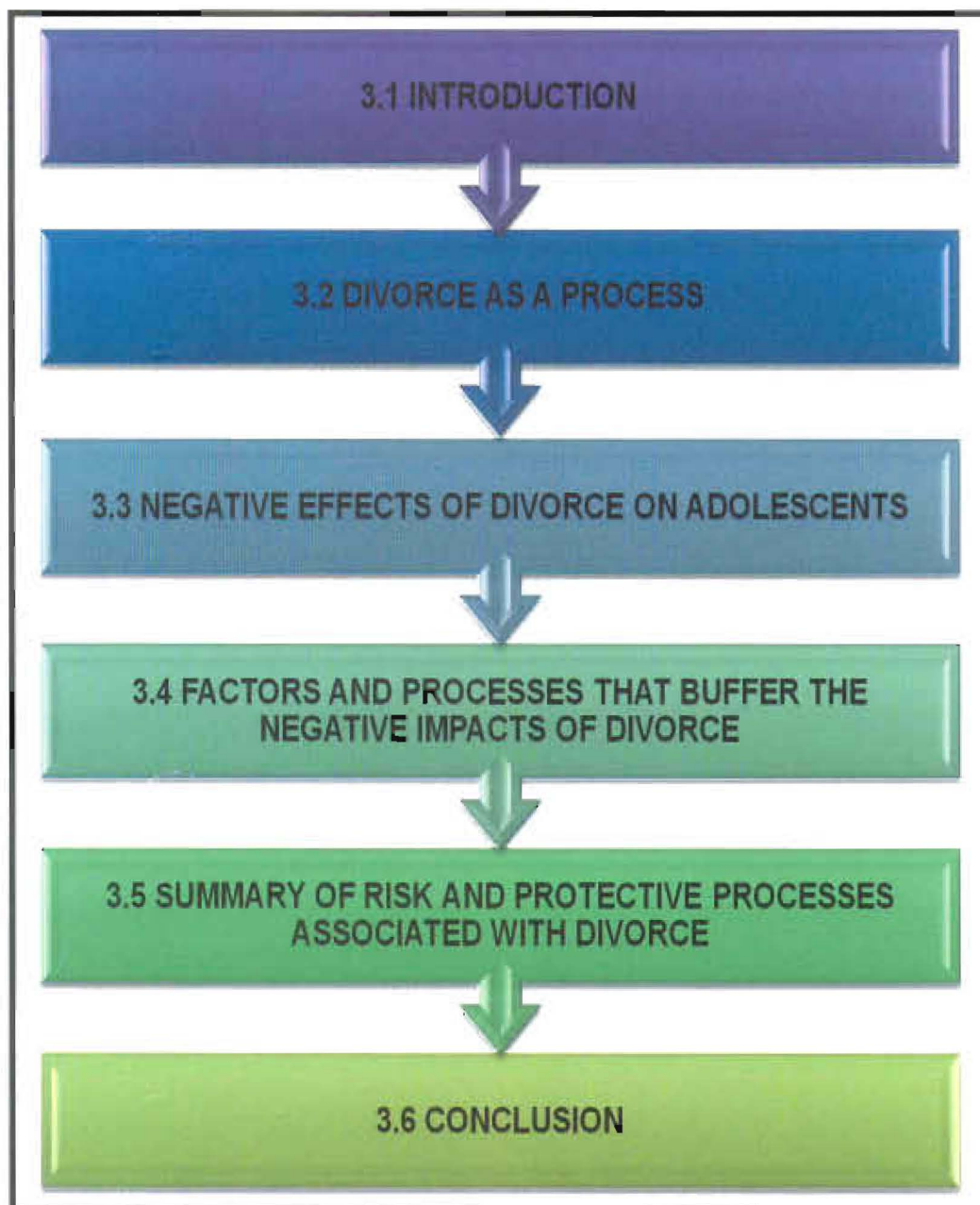


Figure 3.1: Overview of Chapter 3

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Divorce can be defined as a legal separation of what once was a promising, prosperous and contented relationship that then began crumbling socially as well as emotionally (Collins, 2005:483). This legal disbanding of a marriage that was contracted between two people must be done by the judge of a court of competent authority. It is therefore the formal dissolution of a marriage (Benokraitis, 1996:452; Benokraitis, 2004:425; Grisewood, Morris & Morris, 2006:76; TNCED, 1999:97).

It is generally accepted that the impact of divorce on children and adolescents is negative (Bezuidenhout, 2006:15). Moodie and Anstey (2002) state that 27 000 South African divorces were approved in 2002, affecting more than 45 000 children and adolescents. According to Young (2008) the number of divorces in South Africa increased to 32 484 in 2005. Approximately 80% of learners in some schools come from divorced families (Hoek, 2005:1). In my experience, this would include black learners.

According to Lawson and Sharpe (2000) there has been a great change in the formation of the black family over the past 30 years. One remarkable change has been the breaking of marital bonds. The number of black partners who divorce is greater than before, and the number of black couples getting married has declined. Two thirds of all black marriages end in divorce, and two out of three black adolescents will go through the separation of their parents by the age of 16.

The rising divorce rate in black families has played a part in the downfall in the number of black two-parent families. In the year 1970, 68% of black families were two-parent families. This figure dropped to just 50% in 1990, a decrease of 18% over 20 years, compared with a six percent drop over the same time for white families (Lawson & Sharpe, 2000).

Following divorce many adolescents have to cope with changed living contexts, labile emotions and changed economic conditions (Basson, 2003:99; Bryner, 2001:210; Clark-Stewart & Brentano, 2006:168; Harris, 1992:80; Hetherington & Elmore,

2003:192; Johnson, 2000:2; Sandler, Wolchik, Davis, Haine & Ayers, 2003:216; Stevenson & Black, 1995:32). According to McGhee (2001) when it comes to divorce within the South African context, black adolescents are more than twice as likely to live in poverty and suffer more from the aftermath of divorce, as typically only one parent generates an income.

Despite the stress of divorce and the additional psychological and social stressors, some youth are still able to cope. What enables some black adolescents to get up each morning possessing the confidence and courage to continue pursuing their lives successfully despite the fact that their parents are going through a divorce, or that they come out of a broken home? As outlined in Chapter One, this is the question which prompted my study. In order to truly understand what youth (especially black youth, given my study's focus) go through when their parents divorce and what helps them to cope with this resiliently, it is necessary to look at the phenomenon of divorce in some detail.

3.2 DIVORCE AS A PROCESS

Divorce is a process that often does not happen quickly but takes a long period of time, where two people slowly move away from each other and reorganise and build their new lives (Benokraitis, 2004:428; Lansky, 2005:1).

Six stages or "stations" of the divorce process were identified by Bohannon (Bohannon, 1970:29-55; Hall, 2005; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:361; Shaub, 2002). Because these stages of the divorce process overlap with one another, no specific order is followed (Morgan & Coleman, 2001). The six stations of divorce are summarised briefly in Figure 3.2 below:

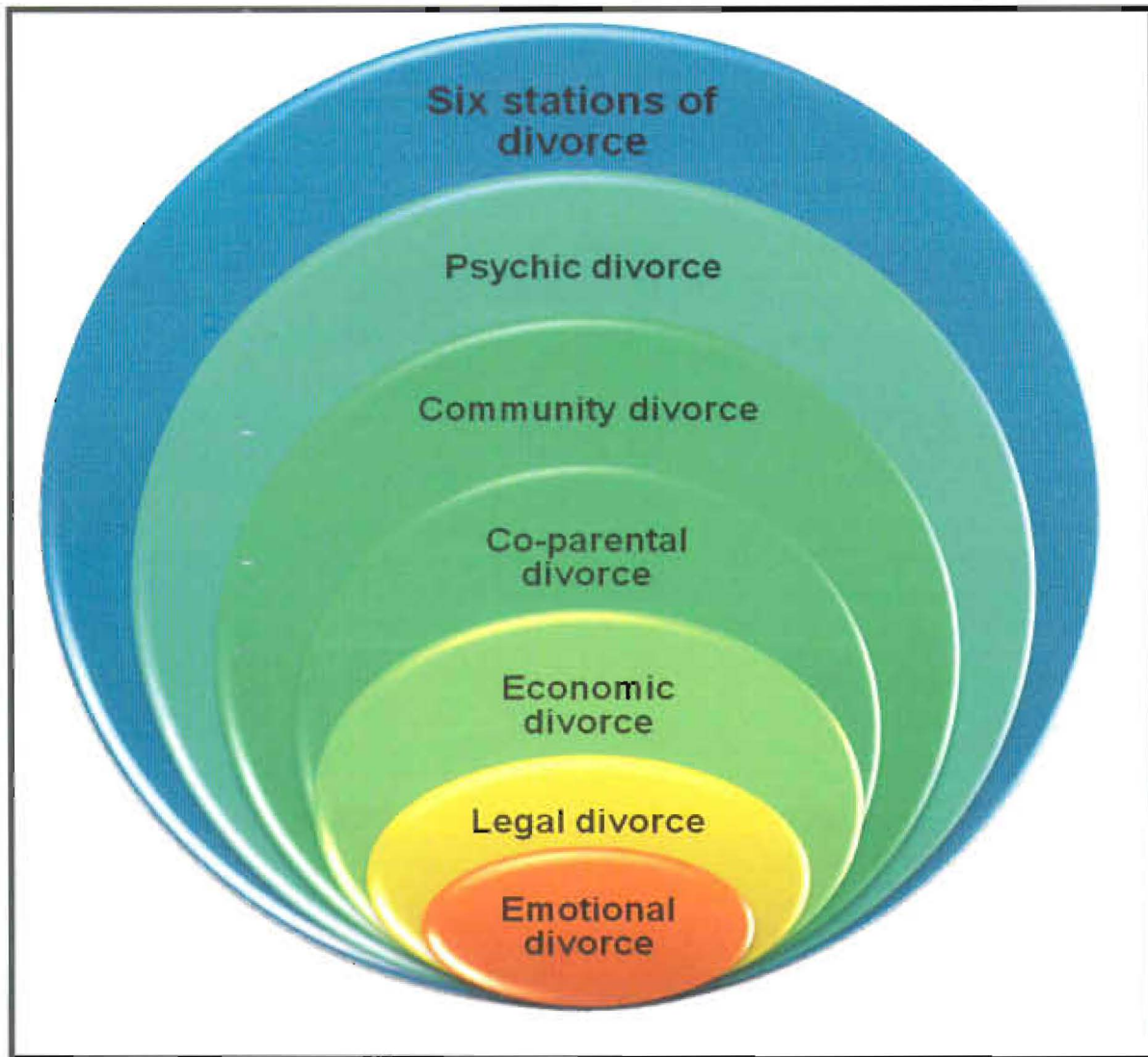


Figure 3.2: Bohannon's six stations of divorce

The six stations are discussed in detail below as I wanted to show how each station could have an impact on the adolescent and what the potential risks associated with each stage are for adolescents whose parents are getting divorced. As mentioned above these stations are discussed in no specific order.

- **Emotional Divorce (Moving from affection to disaffection)**

Emotional divorce commonly starts prior to any legal action that takes place. The husband and wife may experience feelings of anger, unhappiness, sadness, anxiety, depression, guilt, fear and rejection (Bryner, 2001:202; Lansky, 2005:1). The husband or wife might be very irritated with each other, but despite this they still remain married

as they may be scared of being alone or of upsetting the adolescent. During this emotional stage the husband and wife might be frustrated with each other but they still believe that their marriage can overcome its obstacles (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:24).

As the partners are trying so hard to correct the situation, feelings of hurt and anger may strengthen, because they realise that they can try as hard as they can but it is not working out for them. At this stage the partners are very unhappy and they usually start thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of getting a divorce. Sometimes partners lose interest in each other and isolate themselves emotionally. Usually this is the stage where the partners seek for legal advice (Benokraitis, 1996:454). Adolescents are often only informed about the divorce once legal advice has been acquired and a final decision to go through with the divorce has been taken (Clapp, 2000:117).

Throughout the emotional divorce stage, adolescents might see that the bond between their mother and father is no longer there. This alone is a devastating ordeal for an adolescent to cope with, and may leave the adolescent feeling confused, angry and hurt. Because some partners try to keep the relationship going, the adolescent may hope that there is still a possibility for their parents to still work out their differences (Benokraitis, 1996:455). This is an important time for the parents to talk with the adolescent openly and honestly and inform him¹ about the true state of affairs, and eliminate any fears that the adolescent may be going through (Butler, Scanlan, Robinson, Douglas & Murch, 2002:93; Lubowski, 1995:1-7).

- **Legal Divorce (Legal advice is required and formal dissolution takes place)**

A further stage of the divorce process is the legal divorce. This is the formal closure or ending of a marriage where lawyers take part in the divorce process. Now both spouses negotiate topics like taking care of the adolescent, visitation rights, sharing of assets and property and other economic problems (Benokraitis, 2004:428; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:24). This might be the simple but expensive part of a divorce for the partner deciding to file for divorce (Borden, 2002). Whatever the divorce settlement, some

¹ In this study I refer to adolescents using male pronouns. This is merely stylistic and not intended to exclude girls.

partners may still carry on with conflict even after the legal divorce has been established (Clapp, 2000:72).

The legal divorce stage is the time when the adolescent is faced with the reality of his parents not staying together anymore. Getting divorced is the final conclusion. Van der Merwe (1989:23) mentions that it is very hard for adolescents to deal with the fact that their parents' decision to get a divorce is final and there is no way that they can change their parents' decision. Children worry about who will take care of them and are scared that both their parents will leave them.

Adolescents who can come to terms with the divorce of their parents, as being the final decision, can now go through the grieving process, similar to that associated with death (Fritz, 2003). Adolescents who are unable to accept divorce as the final decision, may be at risk as they cannot let go of the fact that their parents will no longer be together (Bryner, 2001:201). Adolescents who are very positive and future-orientated have been described as more resilient (Theron, 2004:319), and so adolescents who can focus on the future may go through the divorce more confidently and positively.

- **Economic Divorce (Distribution of income, assets and maintenance)**

Economic divorce is where the family's income, assets and debt are shared between the two partners. This is also the stage where the two partners will decide on who will be financially liable for the adolescent (Williams, 2005). A divorce is often associated with economic strain and poorer living standards (Bryner, 2001:203; Duncan, 1994:444). Typically, the female's income and living standard is inclined to drop more than that of the male. Furthermore, many South African women earn less than men (Smith, 2000:16) and so divorce potentially has a greater economic impact on women than on men (Budlender, 1996:58). In some cases the male's income might even increase because the mother gets custody of the adolescent (Eggebeen & Lichter, 1991:807; Martin, 2007; Rosin, 1996:16).

When going through a divorce, the custodial parent may have to work longer hours and might have to hold down more than one job, in order to pay all necessary bills. This can

be seen as a risk process as less time is spent with the adolescent (Bryner, 2001:203; Clapp, 2000:74; Duncan, 1994:451; Ehrenberg, Bush, Pringle, Luedemann & Geisreiter, 2005:42; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:193). The custodial parent, commonly the mother, generally has a lower income than most two parent families. Adolescents living with only one parent usually don't have as many economic resources as those living with both parents.

Many families that are going through divorce move to a new home, sometimes linked to economic factors. Therefore adolescents might experience change of schools, friends and lose out on other supportive relationships linked to their previous neighbourhood. In other words, economic issues may lead to more losses which in turn may be associated with additional risks for adolescents (Hughes, 2005).

- **Co-Parental Divorce (Custody and visitation rights)**

Co-parental divorce relates to who accepts legal responsibility for the day-to-day financial support of the adolescent. This stage also includes the final decisions relating to visitation rights (Benokraitis, 2004:428; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:24; Williams, 2005). This is a very difficult time for adolescents as they might feel trapped or torn when they have to make a decision regarding with which parent to stay. Often adolescents don't want to make this decision as they don't want to choose sides (Warby, 1996:22). If the parents are unable to come to a conclusion regarding the custody of the adolescent, the family advocate usually recommends a forensic psychological evaluation of the parents and adolescents, and the court then decides what will be best for the adolescents (Rademeyer, 1997:12).

Research has proven that approximately 80% to 84% of adolescents from divorced families remain in the care of their mothers (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:182; Seltzer, 1994:236; Watson, 2003:87), even though joint custody by both parents is becoming more accepted (Afifi & Keith, 2004:67; Lansky, 2005:122). Preadolescent and adolescent girls are often prone to developing a strong, close, supportive relationship with their divorced mothers (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:197).

The most significant effect of divorce is that adolescents from divorced families typically go through the rest of their adolescent lives living under the same roof as only one biological parent. In order for socialisation and full development to take place, it is essential for an adolescent to have both a mother and a father. When it comes to divorce and the absence of one of the parents, an adolescent tends to sense a feeling of insecurity, and may also sense a feeling of not being wanted by the parent who leaves the house. Adolescents may also confront and fight with the parent whom they stay with about the absence of the other parent. Adolescents may also start admiring the missing parent and remember only their good qualities (Bezuidenhout, 2006:26).

Some adolescents find the divorce of their parents worse than the death of a mother or father (Rademeyer, 1997:12). Additional changes like relocating or moving school add to the negative emotional impact that many adolescents experience (Dreman, 1999:161; Edgar, 1999:119; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:192; Sandler *et al.*, 2003:216).

In addition, as their living arrangements and home contexts change, adolescents may have to take on adult responsibilities like taking care of siblings or functioning more independently than would otherwise have been expected (Clark-Stewart & Brentano, 2006:130; Strasheim, 2003). Many adolescents may feel that they lose a lot of their own free time and also lose out on their childhood (Van der Merwe, 1989:28).

- **Community Divorce (Process of informing the community of divorce)**

Community divorce is when friends, family, teachers and other people are told about the divorce (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:24; Williams, 2005). Sometimes bonds with peers and friends do not stand up to the pressures of parental divorce and moving, but a stronger relationship often forms with grandparents (Lawler, 2000; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:25).

Some adolescents are told by their parents that their divorce must remain a secret so that certain people are not aware of what is happening. Some parents try to sustain the pretence for a long time, pretending that they are a happy, united family. This is

extremely puzzling for an adolescent who experiences his family in a totally different way (Berner, 1992:65-67; Cox & Desforges, 1987:31; Wells, 1989:13).

When friends and family keep their hopes up that the couple will get back together (Borden, 2002), adolescents may become confused as they receive mixed signals about what is happening with their parents' relationship, and could then take longer to accept the reality of what is happening or has happened.

Some adolescents may find the community divorce very embarrassing (Lansky, 2005:42). Cowan (1999:43) and Basson (2001:69) state that adolescents who felt that they were responsible for the divorce of their parents, assumed that the community would punish them. Therefore the adolescents did not want to tell the people in their community about their parents' divorce. In other South African studies some adolescents felt shy and embarrassed about their parents' divorce and felt that they had failed (Cowan, 1999:43; Van der Merwe, 1989:112).

- **Psychic Divorce (Re-establishing of single identity)**

Psychic divorce is when the couple separates psychologically, although not all people manage to separate in this way from a previous spouse (Benokraitis, 1996:455; Ford, 2002:82). When psychic divorce takes place, there is a final separation that allows the ex-spouses opportunities to support themselves and discover ways of getting used to being divorced and of going on (Lawler, 2000). In order to move on, the ex-spouses often mourn what they have lost. The mourning of the parent and the adolescent may occur at different times and may not end at the same time and this can lead to misunderstandings and arguments (Clapp, 2000:152).

Adolescents may experience mixed feelings ranging from acceptance to rejection, as parents build up their new life (Clapp, 2000:187). When custodial parents meet new partners, some adolescents feel rejected as their custodial parent's interest is focused on the partners and no longer on the adolescent. Adolescents may also feel that a lot of time with the custodial parent is lost because the latter is rebuilding a new life by dating (Basson, 2003:240).

Even when parents move on and marry someone else, adolescents may hold on to the possibility of going back to their normal complete family life (Clapp, 2000:4; Cox & Desforges, 1987:30; Leon & Cole, 1993; Wells, 1989:7). When young people struggle to accept their parents' divorce, their adjustment to the new reality of their lives is made difficult.

3.3 NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON ADOLESCENTS

The above stations of divorce impact negatively on adolescents, although it must be emphasised that the effect that parental divorce has on adolescents, differs for each individual and according to the specific situation. A marriage can be terminated in a lot of different ways. Some marriages end in separation after a prolonged period of arguing and misunderstandings and a steady weakening relationship; others end abruptly with very little indication of serious difficulties. How the final separation will take place, as well as what was occurring beforehand, will have a major impact on the reactions and adjustment of the adolescent (Clapp, 2000:91; Cox & Desforges, 1987:29; Leon & Cole, 1993). Nevertheless, the effects of divorce are thought to be mostly negative and can be either short- or long-term. They will be discussed under the following subheadings:

- Emotional impacts;
- scholastic impacts; and
- gender-related impacts.

3.3.1 Emotional Impacts

Divorce typically impacts negatively on the emotional functioning of adolescents. Most adolescents feel a deep sense of loss – of their family, security, as well as their daily routines and family traditions (Clapp, 2000:71). Adolescents of divorce may mourn the loss of married parents in a similar way to that of the death of a parent (Rademeyer, 1997:12). Potgieter (1986:50) emphasises the significant difference between divorce and the death of a parent: *“While the death of a parent brings about final parting and intense grief, divorce involves no such finality.”* This suggests that the loss which adolescents of divorce experience is more complicated and also protracted.

Other adolescents feel betrayed by their parents and are unsure that they can be relied on to protect and care for them. Some adolescents may no longer feel loved and often experience feeling of powerlessness to do something about the situation (Clapp, 2000:72). Many adolescents over-accentuate their own roles in contributing to the divorce and this leaves them feeling distressed.

Some adolescents cope with their emotions by acting up, including showing excessive aggression, behaving in unacceptable ways, and/or participating in or initiating acts of vandalism, non-compliance, and delinquency. A common reaction of adolescents who are faced with the reality of divorce is anger. Other adolescents' response is just the opposite and they internalise their emotions. This can manifest as depression, anxiety, guilt and social withdrawal (Berner, 1992:25; Brummer, 2000; Bryner, 2001:205; Duryee, 2003:152; Johnson & Wiechers, 2002:177; Kelly & Emery, 2003:356; Lansky, 2005:191; Wells, 1989:29). Adolescents' self-esteem often deteriorates after divorce. Some adolescents go through an acute sense of shame about the divorce, which might also have a negative effect on their self-esteem (Johnson, 2000:56).

3.3.2 Scholastic Impacts

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Johnson (2000) conducted interviews with teachers and found that two thirds of the adolescents dealing with the separation of their parents, showed changes in their school behaviour. Teachers noticed that these adolescents sought a lot more attention. A school survey sponsored by the U.S. National Association of Elementary Principals, reported that adolescents going through the separation of their parents, typically achieved less, had more discipline problems and stayed away from school more often than adolescents from intact families (Johnson 2000:66).

Divorce has been connected to poor academic performance, poor school grades and teachers' reports of problems related to academic achievement (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:575; Lansky, 2005:190). Many adolescents whose parents are divorcing or divorced display sadness in school and some may even become violent and disobedient (Cox & Desforges, 1987:96; Cummings & Davies, 1994:5).

Preoccupation with problems at home makes it difficult for adolescents to concentrate at school. Some adolescents have complained about being so distracted that they are unable to comprehend what the teacher is saying during class. Adolescents' anxiety and restlessness compound their learning problems, as well as the disrupting behaviour that some display in the classroom (Berner, 1992:25; Clapp, 2000:76).

3.3.3 Gender-Related Impacts

According to Harmer (2001), adolescents are affected by divorce differently, depending on their gender.

Table 3.1 summarises the impacts of divorce on adolescent males and females.

Boys	Girls
Typically build up or develop behavioural problems in school.	Typically show higher rate of depression over the divorce and changes that have to occur within their new environment.
Poor academic performance.	Poor academic performance.
Higher involvement with drugs and alcohol.	Higher percentage of drop-out rates at school.
Increase in aggressive behaviour.	Hang around with an older crowd and likely to take part in sexual activities earlier than those not dealing with the divorce of their parents.
Higher percentage of drop-out rates at school than adolescents from intact families.	

Table 3.1: Impact of divorce on adolescent males and females

From Table 3.1 above it seems that the biggest difference is that boys act out to cope with emotions (including using drugs) whereas girls internalise their emotions (Wodarski, 1982:315). Girls also seem more likely to become involved in sexual relationships. Neither boys nor girls seem to be immune to the negative impacts of parental divorce.

3.4 FACTORS AND PROCESSES THAT BUFFER THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DIVORCE

According to Brown (2001), the negative effects of divorce can be buffered in the following ways:

- Extra familial support systems;
- correctly assessing responsibility for divorce;
- putting an end to conflict;
- the supportive child-parent relationship before, during and after the divorce; and
- supportive relationship between parents during and after the divorce.

These are discussed below under the following headings:

- Parental processes.
- School processes.
- Community processes.

3.4.1 Parental Processes

Parents play an important role in how adolescents cope with their parents getting divorced, as summarised in the quote below:

Parents who are getting divorced should remember that with teenagers, it's the basics that count:

- Time and attention, lots of love, peace and consistency between parents and freedom from poverty (Bishop, 2001).

When going through a divorce, parents are sometimes not emotionally available for their children. Parents of divorce are often emotionally unable to give their children the support and assistance that they need in order to adjust to their new changing environment (Basson, 2003:1; Bezuidenhout, 2006:26; Bryner, 2001:203; Johnson, 2000:2).

Hetherington (1991:333) mentioned that divorced parents do not communicate with the adolescent as often and effectively as they should. Divorced parents have also shown that their discipline is not as successful as when adolescents are disciplined by intact parents. Research has shown that divorced parents tend to spend less time with the adolescent and are not as caring and sensitive as they were before they got divorced (Warby, 1996:22). In other words, parents tend to put their parenting skills on hold as they feel they need to first deal with other issues which at this stage are more important than the adolescent (Basson, 2003:1; Bezuidenhout, 2006:26; Bryner, 2001:203; Johnson, 2000:2).

Parents who continue fighting in front of the adolescent, don't realise that they actually put the adolescent in a helpless situation. Parents who can prevent fighting among one another in front of the adolescent, can help the adolescent as this is seen as protective (Amato & Keith, 1991:26; Barnes, 2003; Niolon, 2003).

Parents' actions can have an immediate effect on the psyche and well-being of their offspring regardless of their age. An adolescent can rarely cope with complicated feelings alone. Adolescents need the support of their parents to enable them to express themselves freely (Berner, 1992:15). Therefore adolescent-parent relationships are important, especially relationships in which the communication channels are kept open.

Most adolescents are not informed honestly and directly of what is happening to the family during this difficult time leading up to the divorce. Although parents may feel that everything is clear and does not need to be explained, it is often unclear to the adolescents, who remain anxious and uncertain. More than often an atmosphere is created where the adolescent feels that he cannot speak or ask questions (Berner,

1992:65; Cox & Desforges, 1987:31; Wells, 1989:13). When the opposite is true, the negative impacts of divorce are somewhat mitigated, in part because the adolescent can be prepared.

Parents should be honest with their children when telling them about the situation and this should be done as soon as possible, keeping in mind the age and the level of understanding of the child. Adolescents should be encouraged to ask questions so that the parents can know what matters to their child. It is important for the parents to make the child understand that they are divorcing one another and not the child (Berner, 1992:65-67; Cox & Desforges, 1987:31; Wells, 1989:13).

Leon and Cole (1993) (briefly summarised in Figure 3.3) suggest a number of steps that parents can take to help adolescents cope with their divorce. When implemented consistently and sensitively, these steps can go some way to buffering adolescents.



Figure 3.3: Steps for parents to help adolescents cope with divorce

3.4.2 School Processes

Schools that provide a caring atmosphere are able to encourage adolescents to excel in their school work and make them realise that their school is concerned about their future (Alexander, 2002:15). The best support that many schools can make accessible to adolescents struggling with domestic difficulties, is to carry on with usual school routines (Cox & Desforges, 1987:99; Johnson, 2000:67). Schools give structure and stability to these adolescents coping with divorce and maintain a foundation “*that’s not going to come apart like the family came apart*” (Ourth & Zakariga, 1982).

Adolescents going through their parents’ divorce mentioned that teachers play an important role in their recovery and self-esteem. Teachers ought to be well trained and know a lot about adolescents by giving them age appropriate information as well as support. If teachers themselves are eager and passionate about their work, they will try many different ways of getting the adolescents’ attention in class and this can motivate adolescents to also enjoy their school work (Donald *et al.*, 2006:145). Teachers who are so passionate about their work might have high expectations and this might also motivate adolescents to achieve good results (Burton & Bartlett, 2005:90; Chambers, 1999:43).

Teachers who are genuinely concerned about students’ feelings are capable of showing sincere interest, care and love and of giving advice. Having a positive relationship with a teacher usually involves empathy, acceptance, compassion and understanding (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:97). A positive learning environment can be obtained when teachers make use of positive behaviour management skills which promote resilient functioning (Maphumulo & Vakalisa, 2002:330-331). Teachers who take part in different activities that make the adolescents feel good about themselves engender skills that foster resilience.

3.4.3 Community Processes

The community can protect adolescents against risk. By socialising or being part of an organisation within a neighbourhood may be an important protective process for

adolescents (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 2003:401). The community can provide adolescents with a purpose in life and encourage them to feel cared for and appreciated (Thomas & Menampampil, 2005:335).

Community support from neighbours and other adults provide adolescents with a feeling of belonging because they come into contact with social support (Boyden & Mann, 2005:8; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 2003:401). Adults who are caring and always able to help, is a protective community process (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000:547; Mannes, 2005). Adults in the community being coaches, religious leaders, professionals, care-givers, therapists, older people who are able to support and encourage the adolescents through difficult times, are all seen as supportive resources (Mannes, 2005; Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Resnick, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, Tabor, Beuhring, Sieving, Shew, Ireland, Bearinger & Udry, 1997:830).

This support that adolescents get from the community can promote resilience as these important people from the community provide the adolescents with the love, guidance and encouragement needed to deal with their existing problem (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Copeland, 1997:53; Musick *et al.*, 1987:229; Williams, 2002:200.)

Many adolescents enjoy partaking in different sports and being part of sport clubs as this gives them an opportunity to meet new people and be successful by excelling. Therefore adolescents build up a sense of self-worth and achievement which can be associated with resilience (Alexander, 2002:22; Howard & Johnson, 2000). It is important that adolescents are given the opportunity to experience success (Masten & Reed, 2005:84). By experiencing success the adolescent may become more confident, which is also seen as a protective process. All of the above are even more applicable to adolescents that feel displaced when their parents divorce.

3.5 SUMMARY OF RISK AND PROTECTIVE PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE

In Table 3.2 below, the factors associated with parental divorce that pose risk to the psychological well being of adolescents as well as the factors and processes that can protect them, are summarised (Chisholm *et al.*, 2005:91; Greene & Conrad, 2002:46;

Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:189; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Kelly & Emery, 2003:352-362; Masten & Powell, 2003:13; Newman, 2002:1020-1033; Portnoy, 2007:126-134; Smyth, Sheehan & Fehlberg, 2001:61-63; Wolchik, Braver & Sandler, 1985:5-10).

RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE	PROTECTIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE
The never - ending conflict among parents This is most likely the single biggest predictor of poor outcome for adolescents. 20-25 % of divorced parents prolong the conflict post-divorce. Often parents carry out this never-ending fight in front of the adolescents.	Personal characteristics of the adolescent that lead to positive coping Adolescents who are intellectually strong, self-regulated, self- governing, mature and have a high self esteem and a sense of humour, appear to cope better. Adolescents with the above characteristics are inclined to use more active coping skills such as problem-solving or seeking social support, so they are not liable to feel passively influenced by the divorce and less likely to hold a grudge against themselves.
Diminished or incompetent parenting Mothers in higher-conflict divorces are inclined to be less affectionate and are very strict when it comes to	The presence of positive social support This protective factor can be derived from many different sources, including a sibling who serves as a shield against stressors.

the discipline of adolescents. Fathers from higher-conflict divorces tend to be more withdrawn from adolescents. Loss of either parent in terms of contact with the parent or the quality of parenting, has harmful and often long-lasting effects on adolescents. A new parent entering the family or a parent leaving the family is also seen as a risk factor.	Adolescents who try to find supportive relationships more actively, have a tendency to adjust faster. Adolescents may feel more comfortable by disconnecting themselves from a troubled family situation and rather looking for support from people and institutions outside the family environment. This support, for example from peers and other individuals like teachers, coaches, friends' parents and extended family, may protect adolescents from the negative outcomes linked with divorce. Academic, social, artistic, athletic, and extra-mural activities or achievements may also support adolescents when it comes to dealing with their parents' separation.
Economic decline Economic decline is often accompanied by changes in living circumstances, new schools and activities, and loss of established peer support groups. The decline in the standard of the living situation also entails deprivation. This may have an effect on the emotional strength and	Competent custodial parenting Positive psychological change of the custodial parent is a good predictor of positive outcome in adolescents. Parents who can combine warmth and affection with appropriate control, and who are consistent, communicate well, and provide fair, sound discipline, make the home predictable and reassuring for the adolescent, which is protective. Family routines and rituals support adolescents coping with divorce.

availability of parents, and on their parenting effectiveness.	
Loss of non-parental supportive relationships The break-up of relationships with individuals outside the immediate family can imply the loss of grandparents, extended family, friends, teachers, coaches, family friends, and others. Such loss takes familiar and needed support away from the adolescent.	An involved and competent non-custodial parent Adequate contact and good quality parenting by the non-residential parent, this usually being the father, is essential to the well-being of the adolescent. The quality of time spent with the adolescent is more crucial than the quantity. A lot of research indicates that joint physical custody in the absence of parental conflict creates a better result for adolescents and that cooperative and active co-parenting also leads to very positive results.
Remarriage and re-partnering Ongoing connection and losses by the parents can delay the development of mature, intimate relationships as the adolescent grows into adulthood. Repetitive re-partnering taking place shortly after the	Schooling Schools can be associated with a protective process because adolescents spend at least 41 hours a week at school, excluding the time spent taking part in sport or other extra-mural activities. Schools that provide a positive, safe environment with teachers that are attentive and caring, can provide adolescents with a feeling of autonomy,

divorce is extremely hard on the adolescent's ability to cope and to adjust to the divorce.	connectedness as well as a sense of purpose. Teaching adolescents useful life skills that they will need, such as social problem-solving skills, will encourage positive self-esteem among adolescents. Schools can play a vital task in promoting resilience just by concentrating on essential areas, as this gives the adolescents support from outside the family structure.
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Table 3.2: Risk and protective factors associated with divorce

3.6 CONCLUSION

Children as well as parents often experience a deep sense of loss as a result of a divorce. Family members deal or cope with unhappiness in various ways. Some withdraw, might sulk or be silent, while others might experience overwhelming emotions such as anger; they may also shout and lose their tempers (Cox & Desforges, 1987:16).

Although there is literature available on the topic of divorce, as well as how adolescents adjust, it is worrying how little information is available on how black South African adolescents cope with divorce. In conducting my literature review, I struggled to find information that related specifically to the impacts of divorce on black youth. For this reason, the information in this chapter refers to adolescents in general. It was clear from the information available that divorce is mostly associated with risk in terms of adolescents' ability to cope with its impacts. This strengthened my conviction that we need to gain a better understanding of how some black adolescents avoid this risk.

The next chapter will focus on the research design and method of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 4



Figure 4.1: Overview of Chapter 4

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on outlining the whole process of research used in my study.

This chapter contains appropriate information concerning qualitative research designs and methods that were used in this study to examine what contributes to black adolescents coping resiliently with divorce.

4.2 RESEARCH AIM

The primary aim was to explore what the antecedents are that contribute to the resilience of some black adolescents whose parents are divorced.

The primary aim was sub-divided into the following sub-aims, which included:

- a literature study on divorce and how divorce impacts on adolescents;
- a literature study on the phenomenon of resilience;
- an empirical study on the antecedents of resilience among resilient black South African adolescents whose parents are divorced ; and
- recommendations for Life Orientation teachers to encourage resilient functioning among black learners challenged by their parents' divorce.

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

I used a qualitative empirical study to investigate how black South African adolescents are able to cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. My study was done in two phases namely:

Part 1: A literature study

Part 2: Phenomenological research

The above-mentioned processes will be discussed below.

4.3.1 Part 1: Literature Research

Literature sources including internet articles, journal articles and relevant books were used to collect information on the following topics of my research:

- The phenomenon of divorce. This enabled me to get more background information on divorce.
- The effect of divorce on adolescents. This enabled me to identify the risks that adolescents were faced with when coping with the divorce of their parents.
- Resources that buffer the impacts of divorce and encourage resilience. This enabled me to identify the protective resources that can enable adolescents to cope resiliently with their parents' divorce.

The above-mentioned literature topics are overviewed in Chapters Two and Three and the literature review was used to guide my interviews and how I made meaning of the collected data.

4.3.2 Part 2: Empirical Research

As my research concentrated on how black South Africa adolescents cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents, I used a qualitative research design to conduct my

study. I chose a qualitative research design because my main aim was to get an in-depth understanding of how black South African adolescents cope resiliently with their parents getting divorced (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270-272; De Vos, 2001:80; Henning, 2004:3; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:144; Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:51). A short description of qualitative research designs is discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is used when a researcher wants to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:257). It is used to answer complex questions about the characteristics of a given phenomenon, which in turn allows researchers to more fully describe and understand a given phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94; Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997:22). Qualitative researchers are aware of the fact that the issue being studied has many different dimensions, therefore they try to describe the phenomenon to its fullest meaning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:133; Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997:22; Tuckman, 1994:380-383).

In order to provide deep understanding, qualitative research entails different methods and ways of gathering information that allow researchers to develop a fuller understanding. These methods include, among others, observations, ethnography, individual interviews or focus group interviews (Henning, 2004:3; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94). One specific form of qualitative research is phenomenological research as discussed later on.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:154) identify the following nine general criteria used to evaluate a qualitative study, as summarised in Table 4.1 below:

Assessment Criteria	Description	How it was carried out in my study
Purposefulness. 	The research question is the motive to use a method in order to obtain and	The research question and the reason for this study was to determine what the antecedents of resilience are when black adolescents cope resiliently with

	analyse information .	divorce. This research question can best be answered by doing qualitative research because it implies a need for deep understanding of the phenomenon of resilience among black youth whose parents are divorced.
Explicitness of assumptions and biases. 	Assumptions, beliefs and values are acknowledged and interpreted by the researcher.	I was aware from the outset that my personal assumptions could bias how I interpreted the data collected. These assumptions were outlined in Chapter One (Cf. 1.4.2.1.7).
Rigour. 	The researcher makes use of careful and meticulous methods to obtain information and to analyse that information. Throughout the whole process the researcher follows guidelines to ensure objectiveness.	The method I chose to gather my information was through face to face, semi-structured phenomenological interviews. I conducted interviews with ten resilient black South African adolescents whose parents are divorced. The interviews took about 45-60 minutes to complete. I followed the ethical guidelines to ensure that the participants were comfortable throughout the whole process.
Open-mindedness. 	The researcher is open to changing the hypothesis as well as the	Because the adolescents that were interviewed came from different family backgrounds and environmental influences, it was

	interpretations when new information is discovered.	vital that I kept an open mind when interpreting their responses to my questions. As new data emerged I changed my interpretation according to the data that I received.
Completeness. 	The researcher illustrates the object of the study in all its difficulty. A lot of time is spent on the research study in order to better identify the complexity of the phenomenon.	I interviewed ten adolescents to deeply understand what contributed to their resilience. Each participant was interviewed twice to clarify my understanding (and in some cases, three times). I did a lot of reading on resilience and divorce in general to provide me with a theoretical framework to understand what they were telling me.
Coherence. 	The information needs to produce consistency within the findings so that the researcher can be able to present an overall completed work piece.	The information that I gathered through the interviews provided me with some consistent information concerning black adolescents confronted with coping with the separation of their parents. None of the participants told me anything vastly different and therefore I found consistency through the coding process that I used.
Consensus. 	Other individuals as well as professionals agree with the interpretations	I shared my findings with my study leader as I was in constant contact with her. I also went back to my participants with the coded transcripts, to ensure that what I

	and explanations given by the researcher.	interpreted was correct. I also spoke to a fellow-student about the findings I had made.
Usefulness. 	In the end the whole research process provides a better understanding of the phenomenon, so that it is possible to predict future actions as well as provide tools that can enhance an individual's quality of life.	As will be outlined in Chapter Five, the process of interviewing participants and returning to them to clarify what they meant, allowed me to understand more deeply what encourages resilient functioning in black adolescents whose parents are divorced. I now have a better understanding of the phenomenon, and hope to provide future Life Orientation educators with the tools to help learners who struggle to cope with divorce as a reality in their life.

Table 4.1: Assessment criteria for qualitative research

4.3.2.1.1. Phenomenological study

My choice of empirical design for my study was a phenomenological study. A phenomenological approach is aimed at understanding and interpreting the meanings that people give to phenomena they have experienced (De Vos & Fouche, 2001:80; Gilgun, 2005:44; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139; Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 1997:28). Basically, with a phenomenological study the researcher tries to understand different individuals' insights, and how they understand a phenomenon as it occurs (De Vos & Fouche, 2001:80; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). Therefore the information that is gathered from the phenomenological study is considered and analysed within the specific context that it is taken from (i.e. it cannot be generalised to dissimilar contexts)

(De Vos & Fouche, 2001:80). In other words, in a phenomenological study participants are asked to talk about their experience, perceptions, perspectives and understanding and the researcher uses their descriptions to understand the phenomenon in question. The phenomenon that my study focused on was how black South African adolescents cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. For that reason I asked the participants questions linked to what enabled them to be resilient while facing the adversity of their parents' divorce. I used a phenomenological approach because I believed this would be an appropriate way to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of resilience among black adolescents whose parents are divorced, especially because the more general explanations of resilience could not explain this specific phenomenon.

Within a phenomenological study the researcher is the instrument of data collection. In other words, I did not use questionnaires or other instruments to collect the data. I interviewed the participants myself and I ensured that during the interviews, the participants did not lose focus and that they understood what I was asking. When I conducted my interviews I made sure that I did not provide the participants with any answers by putting words in their mouths (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:145). Also, I ensured that the participants felt comfortable by creating a relationship of trust with them (Gilgun, 2005:47; Henning, 2004:50-57; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146-150). I took into consideration that effective communication had to take place, so I communicated very clearly and slowly to ensure that the participants understood my questions. I started by explaining the purpose of my research to the participants so that they had a better understanding of the study. When first meeting each participant, I greeted him and introduced myself by name, to make him feel more comfortable. I also used positive body language by laughing and smiling with the participants when they said something humorous or funny. By keeping eye contact it also showed the participants that I was interested and paying full attention to what they had to say. I also ensured that the environment where the interviews took place would be a relaxed and comfortable place for the participants. If the participants are relaxed and comfortable the participants can express their feelings and give honest and in-depth responses to my questions. When participants feel at ease, interviews flow better (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:147; Marshall & Rossman 2006:114; Thompson & Rudolph, 2000:32).

4.3.2.1.2 Participants

The potential participants were all black South African adolescents who coped resiliently with the divorce of their parents. Due to logistical limitations I needed to limit the sample size of my participants. I therefore decided to limit my study to black adolescents living in the Vaal Triangle area.

According to Sandelowski (1999:79), in qualitative research numbers are not important to ensure the adequacy of a sampling strategy. Quantitative researchers on the other hand would not be interested in how black South African adolescents are able to cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents but rather how many of them can cope (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:255; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94). In short, they would be interested in the numbers of adolescents that could cope. For phenomenological studies, Gall, Borg and Gall (1996:201) do not specify sample size but do instruct that participants should be chosen because of their personal involvement regarding their experience to the phenomenon that is being studied. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:144), in phenomenological studies the usual number of participants typically ranges from 5 to 25 individuals. They also stress that these participants must have encountered the phenomenon that is being researched (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:144). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:139) and Smit (2006) point out that participants are interviewed until the responses from the participants start showing a pattern (giving the same answers), which is known as data saturation. If this occurs it is not necessary for further interviews to take place.

Because I was conducting phenomenological research, my participants needed to have experience of the phenomenon in question and so my sampling was purposive. The criteria used included that participants:

- had to be black;
- had to be adolescents;
- had to come from the Vaal Triangle area;
- had to come from divorced homes; and
- had to be resilient (as identified by an Advisory Panel).

In summary, the participants who took part in my study were in Grade 9, their parents were divorced and they were identified as being resilient. An Advisory Panel (AP) (as discussed in Chapter One) (Cf.1.4.2.1.2) helped to identify learners who were resilient, as was done in previous studies (Cameron, *et al.*, 2007:296). We debated what it meant to be resilient using the standard definition that resilient youth are youth who demonstrate academic achievement; pro-social conduct; peer acceptance; normative mental health and involvement in age-appropriate activities (Theron, 2007:362). The AP agreed that this definition would aptly define resilient youth in their school as well. Thereafter they identified ten adolescents (five males; five females) who were resilient and fitted the rest of the inclusion criteria.

4.3.2.1.3 Data collection

Data are the essential material with which researchers work to conduct their studies. Data can be collected by observations and interviews and in qualitative studies this can take the shape of language (e.g. transcribed interviews). In order for me to answer my research question, I needed to collect valid data that I could analyse and interpret (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:87; Reber & Reber, 2001:367).

A number of data collection methods exists relevant to the qualitative approach (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:156-169). These include:

- **Open-ended interviews**

The open-ended interview cannot be considered as truly open-ended because only the answers that are given are open-ended. In short, questions are prepared beforehand and are put in order carefully and asked in more or less the same sequence in each interview (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:174).

Main advantage	Main disadvantage
The main advantage of open-ended interviews is that the data are collected in a systematic order which helps the researcher to identify the similarities of the data.	The most important disadvantage is that, since the questions are structured, sometimes very little information is collected from the interviewee.

- **Unstructured interview with a schedule**

Unstructured interviews are performed by using a research schedule or a list of questions that are prepared ahead of time. Typically these questions direct the researcher and include the questions and themes that are needed to complete the study. In unstructured interviews with a schedule, the questions do not have to be asked in a specific order, but all the topics are dealt with in the interviews (Greef, 2005:295-296; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146-147; Welman *et al.*, 2005:165-167).

Main advantage	Main disadvantage
Unstructured interviews with a schedule provide for fairly systematic gathering or collecting of data.	The main disadvantage of these interviews is that they require someone who is extremely skilled and capable of conducting the interviews.

Unstructured interviews with a schedule also ensure that important data are not left out.	
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- **In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews can be described as face-to-face interactions involving the interviewer and interviewee, where the main purpose is to grasp the interviewee's personal life experiences as told in his own words. In these interviews the focus is on the participant and the researcher does not necessarily follow an interview schedule. The main role of the researcher is to introduce the themes or topics related to the research focus and to motivate the participants to provide more and deeper information (Greef, 2005:292-293; Welman *et al.*, 2005:165-167).

Main advantage	Main disadvantage
In-depth interviews enable the interviewer to get an "inside look" at the phenomenon in question. Personal and social topics can be discussed more openly through in-depth interviews.	In-depth interviews can take up a lot of time. The huge amount of information that is gathered makes ordering and interpretation difficult for the researcher.

In this study I used phenomenological interviews which helped me gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of how black South African adolescents cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. In essence, the phenomenological interviews that I conducted were semi-structured interviews guided by a schedule, as explained below.

4.3.2.1.4 Phenomenological interview

A phenomenological interview is quite lengthy, lasting about one to two hours, with a precise selection of participants suitable for the phenomenon being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). Phenomenological interviews can also be known as an “informal conversation.” In my study this meant the adolescents or participants did the majority of the talking and I did the listening (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139).

I used semi-structured interviews (i.e. I had a random list of questions to which I needed answers) which focused on the phenomenon of the resilient functioning of black adolescents coping with divorce (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). In other words, I tried to discover what and who encourages these adolescents to function resiliently. I searched for additional information during the interviews by probing (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:253). Probing means clarifying and/or asking additional questions to get deeper or more detailed information. All the phenomenological interviews were taped and transcribed word for word. The interview questions were based on the following core question:

- Tell me how you are coping with life even though your parents are divorced?

A copy of one transcribed interview is incorporated in Addendum A.

After putting the core question to the participants, I then probed for protective factors and processes that encouraged resilience depending on the answers given by the adolescent. When concluding the interviews the adolescents were debriefed.

I listened carefully to the adolescents explaining their daily struggles and how they were coping with the divorce of their parents. I had to be alert for any clues as to what the protective resources were that enabled these adolescents towards resilience (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). Often when I transcribed the interviews, I realised that I had not probed deeply enough or that I had missed a clue. In such cases I made follow-up appointments with the participants and further explored the phenomenon of their resilience with them.

4.3.2.1.5 Data collection process

I met with each participant individually outside of school hours. Mostly, I met with them at the school because it was most convenient for the participants (they were either school hostel residents or they preferred to meet me away from their homes). In most cases I used an empty office for the interviews. One of the interviews was held in a classroom because the office was not available. In another instance, the participant asked if we could rather sit outside under a tree because that was most comfortable for her - we did so. The first interview typically lasted about an hour and the follow-up interviews were shorter (typically half-an-hour).

The first interviews focused on what antecedents contributed to the participants' resilience. The second interviews were mostly about clarifying information from the previous interviews. In some instances a third interview was conducted to clarify even further. I met with most of the participants again to verify my interpretation of the interview data.

I conducted the interviews in English because all the participants indicated that they were comfortable in English, especially as they had attended English-medium schools for at least 5 years.

4.3.2.1.6 Data analysis techniques

In this study data analysis refers to the process of content analysis.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:144); and Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997:173), a researcher can use the method of **content analysis** to identify the unique features of data that will be gathered. Gilgun (2007) and Leedy and Ormrod (2005:142) indicate that content analysis is a systematic and thorough analysis of the data with the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, and biases. In my research the content of the interviews was analysed to try and answer how black South African adolescents cope resiliently with their parents' divorce.

The following steps in Table 4.2 are typical of content analysis (Gilgun, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:140-142; Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:105-113).

Steps in content analysis	The way in which I used it in my study
Data are selected.	I used all the interview transcripts.
The researcher reads and rereads the data and then looks for data segments that seem to answer the research question. These segments are given different code names.	I read and reread the transcribed interviews. As I became familiar with them, I noticed there were data that told me what or who had enabled the participants towards resilience. These data were inductively coded. In other words, I labelled or coded these segments and the codes that I used to label them emerged from the data itself. I did not have a predetermined set of codes (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:107), but my knowledge of how adolescents cope resiliently with their parents' divorce gained through my literature study (Cf. Chapter Two and Three) did have an influence on the codes that I chose.
The coded data are then put into themes. In other words, data that reoccurs during the interviews is grouped together in a specific category. These different categories are given a code name (Brown, Stevenson,	As I read and reread the interview transcripts, I noticed similar coded data across the interviews. I began to group these coded data into themes.

Troiano & Schneider, 2002; Stamp, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Wells, 1995).	
The original transcripts are then reread thoroughly, to ensure that no themes or important data were left out, and that no conflicting data were missed (Gilgun, 2007).	I carefully reread the transcripts of the interviews to make sure that I did not leave out any important themes or data that would be applicable or important to my research. I also checked for data that might have contradicted the themes that were emerging.
The last step that the researcher will take is to try and link the previously analysed data to the existing theory meaningfully to prove how it supports the existing theory as well as maybe giving new insight.	I compared the themes that were emerging in my data to what current resilience theory says about the protective resources that enable adolescent resilience. I noted when the emerging themes corresponded with current literature and I also noted when emerging themes seemed to offer new information that I could not find in current theories of resilience.

Table 4.2: Steps in content analysis

In Table 4.2, I refer to coding. Coding involves the naming and categorising of information that is relevant to the research question. Coding can be described as the analytical process where information or data can be divided, conceptualised and linked to develop theory (Henning, 2004:104-109; Strauss & Corbin, 1998:3). The main aim of the coding was to identify the antecedents of resilience among the participants in my study.

When it came to coding my research findings, the first step I had to take into consideration was open coding. Open coding is the method of redefining the data into

different building blocks of information (Goulding, 1999). Open coding occurred at the beginning of my study, whereby I used certain labels or certain codes and attached them to information that I had gathered (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:62). The reason why I did open coding was to express relevant information in the form of ideas: the intention of the open coding was to label the information that related to what and who encouraged black adolescents to function resiliently when faced with their parents' divorce (Flick, 1998:180-183).

After open coding, the next step that I followed was axial coding. I put the coded information together in new ways. I systematically and continually compared coded data, after which I gathered or grouped similar data and gave them a name that displayed the relationship that linked them (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:500). The aim of axial coding is to make clear connections between different categories and their sub-categories. This stage basically involves the explaining and understanding of the relationship between the various categories as well as the phenomenon they are related to (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:500; Bornheim, 2000:77; Goulding, 1999).

The last step of data analysis (especially when using a grounded theory approach) is selective coding. In selective coding, the process of identifying and selecting one main category that relates to the other identified categories or themes is used (Bornheim, 2000:77; Stamp, 1999). Selective coding allows a researcher to highlight the main key component that systematically links into all the other related categories that emerged in the data (Gilgun, 2007:16). I did not discover one specific category that explained what gave rise to resilience among my participants. Instead I noted that there are interrelating protective resources that enable black South African adolescents to cope resiliently with divorce. Therefore, selective coding was not valid to my research and was not used.

4.3.2.1.7 Trustworthiness

The key characteristics for conducting efficient qualitative research are based on the trustworthiness of the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:276). Qualitative research often relies on an interpretive process. What I have experienced or gone through in life

as well as what I believe had an influence on how my data were interpreted and might have had an impact on the trustworthiness of my research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:37). In other words, because interpretation of data can be influenced by assumptions, prior experiences and even researcher bias, it is important to purposefully take steps to ensure that the research findings are trustworthy.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:277); and Lincoln and Guba (1985:991) emphasise that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the key characteristics of trustworthiness.

- **Credibility**

Another word that can be used for credibility is “believability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:21). Lincoln and Guba (1985:21) argue that work done in a qualitative manner must allow *“the data to speak to the findings.”* In other words, credible findings are believable and people are more likely to believe findings when they are equipped with lots of information. Therefore in my study I provided many meaningful descriptions concerning the setting, participants, procedures that were followed as well as my interactions with the participants, so that my findings would be credible and believed by others (De Vos, 2005:346). I also added rich interview excerpts that illustrated the themes and sub-themes I identified. This was especially important when some of the findings replicated what I had assumed prior to my study (e.g. that good friends and good schools encouraged resilience). By including detailed quotes, my findings were credible, despite my original assumptions.

- **Transferability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985:219) refer to the term “transferability” which is the degree to which results that are found can be transferred or be general to other settings, contexts, or populations.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:110), there are certain factors that make a specific setting unique and therefore it is difficult just to generalise qualitative data. By

taking these specific factors into account, decisions about transference to other settings can be done. Therefore I supplied adequate information about the setting so that some generalisation may perhaps be possible. For example, I included a table of background information about my participants in Chapter Five (Cf. Table 5.1).

Even though I did this, I always kept in mind that generalisation is not the aim of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:40; Gilgun, 2005:44-45; Lincoln & Guba, 1985:202). Seeing that my study focused on how black South African adolescents can cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents, and because I only conducted ten interviews, my findings will not be appropriate to all black South African adolescents coping with the divorce of their parents.

- **Dependability**

Dependability and reliability (in quantitative research) are very similar and relate to how dependable the data are that has been collected by the researcher. In other words, when findings are dependable it means that the chances are good that other researchers will come to the same conclusions if they should repeat the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:40; De Vos, 2005:346). To be able to repeat the study, other researchers need to have a detailed description of the context, participants, data collection and process of analysis. In my study I therefore described the circumstances and process of my research in detail (De Vos, 2005:346).

It is very important that the process should also be logical, easily traceable and well-documented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:187). For this reason I include examples of a transcribed interview (Addendum A) and of my process of content analysis (Addendum B).

- **Confirmability**

Confirmability means that my findings can be confirmed and supported by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:219). Different methods can be used to improve confirmability. To apply this in my study, I searched for any negative cases that

disagreed with the findings. I also checked with my study leader and with a fellow student to make sure that I was not biased when it came to the interpretations of my data. The fellow student read my transcripts and did some independent coding that helped me to check that I was not biased. I also engaged the participants in this process: During the interviews I repeated or paraphrased some of the information to ensure that what I had heard was correct (De Vos, 2005:346). After the interviews I went back with my transcribed documents and asked the participants to check that what I have interpreted was correct.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:100) refer to the following additional methods (summarised in Table 4.3 below) to ensure validity in qualitative research:

Component of Validity	How I applied it to my study
Extensive time in the field.	I conducted ten interviews. After the eighth interview I noticed that I was getting similar answers (data saturation) but I conducted two more to be sure.
Negative case analysis.	I read and reread the transcripts to look for any data that would contradict my analysis.
Thick description.	As noted above, I provided a rich description of the context of my study. In Chapter Five I provide lengthy excerpts to highlight my interpretations.
Feedback from others	I continuously got in touch with my study leader and asked her opinion on my emerging analysis. After my interviews were conducted I went back to the participants to show them how I interpreted what they had said and asked them if I had done this

	successfully. I also shared and discussed my findings with a fellow-student as well as colleagues at work.
Respondent validation.	When I had finished analysing my data, I went back to most of my participants and showed them my findings in order to find out whether or not my findings were meaningful to them.

Table 4.3: Methods to ensure validity in qualitative research

4.3.2.1.8 Ethical aspects

First and foremost I did not conduct my study without receiving written consent from all the participants (Alston & Bowles, 2003:21; Field & Behrman, 2004:98; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101). I also ensured that the adolescents were completely briefed about the research topic. I ensured that the adolescents understood that their privacy and sensitivity would be protected and informed them what was going to be done with the information I received from them during the interviews (that I would write it up anonymously in my dissertation and in research articles or conference papers). My study was also granted ethical clearance by the North-West University (NWU-0003-08-A2). In addition to this, there are further ethical guidelines which a study must follow. This is done so that the people who are partaking in a study will not be harmed in any way. The following ethical guidelines in Table 4.4 were adhered to (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101):

Ethical aspects	How I applied it to my study
Informed consent.	After I fully explained the purpose of my study to the participants I asked them to complete a consent form, signed by them and their parents, giving me

permission to interview them in my study.

I assured them that their names would not be mentioned at any point of my research. Instead they chose pseudonyms.

Appointments with my participants were made to suit them. This included the best time and place with which they were comfortable.

All my participants were very willing to partake in my study. I also had no problem obtaining permission from their parents.

Right to withdraw.

I also made my participants aware of the fact that if at any time they felt uncomfortable they had the right to withdraw from this study. They were also informed that if they felt they could not answer a question they need not do so.

I conducted two interviews with each participant. I went back to some participants for the third time to ensure that I had obtained all the information that I needed to conduct my study. I continuously reminded them that they had the right to withdraw if they wished to do so.

Privacy of participants.

By ensuring that the participants were kept anonymous I asked them each to give me a "nickname" that they wanted to use for this study, for example Nash

and Shorty.

In addition I did not write down any information that may have lead to disclosure of their identity.

I also kept the school's name confidential and referred only to a school in the Vaal Triangle area.

Deception of participants.

Every participant was given the correct information, including the aim of my research, as well as the potential benefits, stumbling blocks and the risk they might encounter if they participated.

I also gave each participant sufficient chance to ask me to explain something that they did not understand clearly.

I told them that if the questions I asked reminded them of difficult times and led to them feeling uncomfortable, I would help them to get in touch with a counsellor who could talk them through this. However, this was not necessary.

Restoration of participants.

At the end of each interview I summarised what we had spoken about and I checked that the participants were OK.

I thanked the participants for the time they spent with me and for being willing to take part in my study.

Release of findings.	My research findings are explained in this dissertation. The limitations of my findings are noted in Chapter Six of this dissertation. I avoided plagiarism at all times.
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Table 4.4: Ethical guidelines

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the entire research process was discussed. This discussion included the qualitative research design, as well as phenomenological methods of gathering verbal information and analysing that information by means of inductive content analysis. I also overviewed the proper measures to be taken to ensure ethical and trustworthy research.

CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH FINDINGS

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 5

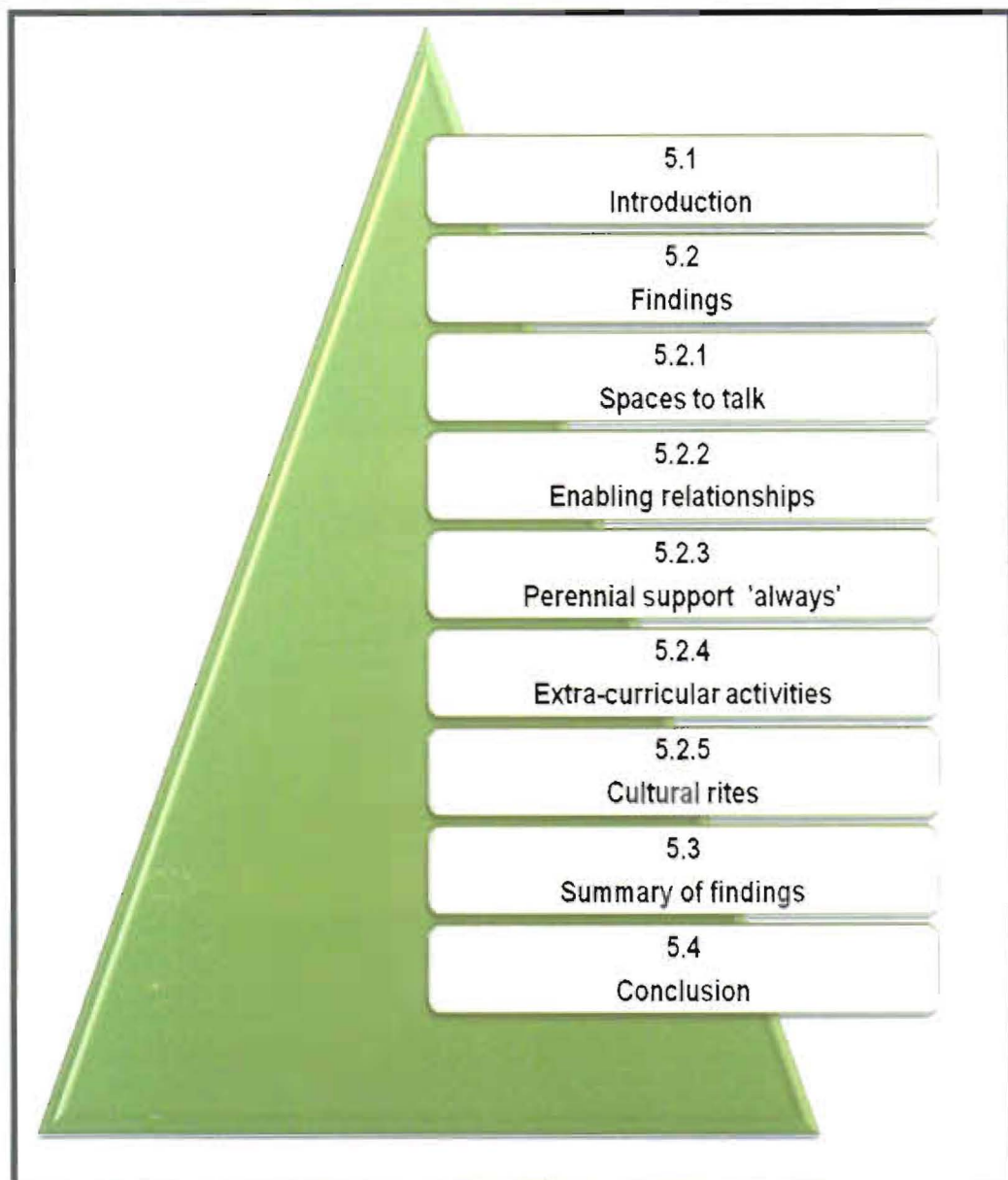


Figure 5.1: Overview of Chapter 5

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an in-depth analysis of the interviews that were conducted during the study. The themes that will be discussed in this chapter will show how some black South African adolescents cope resiliently after their parents' divorce.

I used the following guidelines to determine how many of the participants voiced sentiments that supported the findings:

- All the participants – all the participants.
- More than six but less than ten – most participants.
- Between three and five participants – some of the participants.
- Two participants – a few participants.

The general background information in Table 5.1 below was obtained from the participants before the interviews. Race is not indicated in the table below as all the participants were black.

Nickname	Current age	Age parents divorced	Male/ Female	Siblings	Living arrangements	Living in the hostel	Home language
Shorty	16	16	Female	4 sisters	Mother & stepfather	Yes	Xhosa
Cutie	15	9	Female	1 brother	Mother & stepfather	No	Sotho
Scones	14	4	Male	1 sister	Mother & stepfather	Yes	Sotho
Lindo	15	4	Male	-	Mother	Yes	Xhosa
Nash	15	7	Female	-	Mother & Stepfather	Yes	Sotho

Tipsy	15	14	Male	1 sister	Mother	No	Zulu
Pippa	15	11	Male	2 brothers	Mother	No	Zulu
Lebza	14	10	Female	1 sister	Mother	No	Sotho
Teza	14	12	Female	1 brother	Mother & Stepfather	Yes	Zulu
Thondo	15	11	Male	-	Mother	No	Sotho

Table 5.1: Background information of the participants

5.2 FINDINGS

I have grouped the findings of my research into themes and sub-themes. My themes include:

- Spaces to talk.
- Enabling relationships.
- Perennial support: “always.”
- Extra-curricular activities.
- Cultural rites.

All these themes will be discussed below.

5.2.1 Spaces to Talk

The first theme relates to spaces to talk and how these spaces encouraged participants to be resilient. The spaces to talk were not only restricted to one source. The participants often mentioned that they were able to talk to their teachers and to their peers. Within the community, spaces to talk were confined to going to therapy and

support at the hostel. Only in two instances did participants refer to spaces to talk within the extended family. Each of these is discussed below.

- **Teacher-facilitated spaces**

Most of the participants confirmed that **teachers provided a space to talk**. The participants felt that teachers were very caring people who were always willing to help. They spoke about teachers offering the love and support that they as adolescents might no longer be receiving at home as often as they did before the divorce of their parents, because their parents might be too busy trying to sort out their own problems. The adolescents felt that **their teachers were trustworthy** enough to talk to and that this was a safer space than trying to talk to their parents. Most participants said that just being able to go and talk to a teacher about their problems helped them cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. For example, Cutie said:

Well knowing that the teachers are so willing to help makes me feel safe and comfortable 'cause I know that even if my mom and dad are too busy dealing with problems of the divorce, I can turn to my teacher for support and even love that I might not always get from my parents at that time (Int. 2 part 3, lines 32-33).

Teachers who can trust, respect, appreciate and connect with the adolescents, foster resilience (Tansey, 2008:22-25).

In a similar way, Nash stated that he found teachers were **easily approachable** and always there to support him:

My teachers helped me because when I was really down they always reminded me that I am unique and a very strong person. They also told me that I am never alone and I will always have them supporting me and I can talk to them anytime that I need to which helped because sometimes I can't talk to anyone at home and then I can easily go to a teacher and they would help me. Just having someone to talk to and I

know that I can really trust them really helped me a lot (Int. 5 part 2, lines 40-45).

Both Cutie and Nash were enabled by the **accessibility** of their teachers and the fact that they believed their teachers were trustworthy. Trustworthy and available teachers encouraged some participants to feel comfortable. This in turn facilitated the sense of a safe space which allowed them to open up. Shorty made this point clear when she said:

Because the teachers are so open and encouraging, I am not scared to talk to them about my problems. It was nice to be able to express my emotions and feelings with someone else that I could trust, someone not at home. I don't know I just felt very comfortable around my teachers. They are really cool and helped me a lot (Int. 1 part 3, lines 19-22).

Thondo also felt that his teachers being so **encouraging** helped him cope as he was able to **relax** and think about the positive things in life. For example, Thondo said:

It really helped a lot 'cause it was easy to talk to her and she made me feel relaxed and helped me by telling me everything will be fine I must not worry (Int. 10 part 2, lines 35-36).

For Pippa, the safe space to talk was encouraged by the realisation that his **teachers really cared** about him and were interested in how he was doing. In this regard he said:

It was nice because I knew that they cared and they wanted to talk to me and make sure that I am doing okay and I did. I told them everything that was bugging me (Int. 7 part 2, lines 30-31).

Adolescents coming from disadvantaged homes are liable to show resilient characteristics if they go to schools with caring teachers who provide a caring relationship with the adolescents (Howard & Johnson, 2000; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:20).

Supportive teachers have been noted to encourage resilience, also among youth who are trying to cope with their parents' divorce (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:203; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:20). Dass-Brailsford's 2005 study with black South African students emphasised that teachers were a source of support noted by resilient black students, but she stressed that this was associated with the fact that these teachers were also black and therefore easier to identify with (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:586-587). It was interesting to note that when participants referred to teachers these were mostly white teachers. This suggests that teachers do not necessarily need to share the culture of their learners to be able to encourage them.

It was also interesting to note that in the above excerpts the participants referred to accessible, trustworthy teachers but also unintentionally to their own willingness to make the most of the protective spaces which their teachers offered. Words like "*I can turn to*" and "*I can go to*" suggested that it was not just available, empathetic teachers who encouraged resilience, but also the willingness of the participants to turn to these available teachers. In other words, these excerpts demonstrate that resilience is a dynamic, interactive give-and-take process (Bernard, 1999:270; Boyden & Mann, 2005:9; Cameron *et al.*, 2007:285; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2005:407; Greene & Conrad, 2002:33,37; Koller & Lisboa, 2007:342; Schoon, 2006:6, 95; Siqueira & Diaz, 2004:150; Ungar *et al.*, 2008: 2).

- **Friend-facilitated spaces**

Most of the participants did not only talk to their teachers but also **to their friends**. Parents who were already divorced might still be having quarrels which affected the adolescents. Some participants found that being able to go to a friend and express how they were really feeling helped them cope with the divorce. In this regard Lebza said:

The one day I was really feeling bad 'cause my dad came over to talk to my mom and they had a really big fight and my mom was crying the whole night, so the next day at school I told them about it and they also just let me talk all my feelings out about it and said everything will be ok. My mom is very strong and will look after us. I think it was a Friday

so they also invited me to sleep over and we just talked the whole night. It helped me (Int. 8 part 1, lines 27-31).

Most of the participants felt that their friends were not just there to talk to, but that their friends were there for listening, as well as giving them positive, **good advice** that they needed through this difficult time they were facing. Nash made this clear by saying:

Um by talking to my friends it helped me to stop always worrying about the divorce and sometimes I just did not know what to do anymore and then I would ask them and they had good answers that helped me (Int. 5 part 2, lines 26-28).

For others, talking to friends provided **encouragement**. According to Teza, friends helped him through the divorce by encouraging him:

My friends are always there for me whenever I need to talk to someone. They encourage me to be strong, they also tell me that there are other children that are going or have gone through the same thing as what I am and they have coped so if they can do it then so can I (Int. 9 part 2, lines 25-27).

Thondo suggested that his friends provided him with more than a space to talk – he was able to **vent strong emotion** in this space:

Um just by talking to me about it and giving me some advice was really helpful. I got my anger out by telling them how angry I was with my mom and dad and I actually hated them (Int. 10 part 1, lines 35-36).

As with teachers, friends seemed to make up for parents who were no longer emotionally available, which, as noted previously, is a common risk factor in divorce (Bryner, 2001:203; Clapp, 2000:72; Duncan, 1994:451; Ehrenberg *et al.*, 2005:42; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:193; Howard & Johnson, 2000:326). For example, Lebza said:

Without a doubt if it was not for my friends I would be so lost. I told them all my problems and they would help me by saying I must just relax everything will be fine and that they will always be there no matter what. That was nice to know that I could always talk to them when I needed to 'cause sometimes it was difficult to talk to my mom and dad about it. So my friends actually came to my rescue (Int. 8 part 1, lines 103-106).

Lindo's friends were so available to him, that he felt like they had some sort of telepathic connection in the sense that they seemed to intuit when he needed support:

This helped me to cope because I knew I could talk to them anytime and that they cared, 'cause it was so funny they just knew when to phone it was like they were knowing what was going on in my mind" (Int. 4 part 3, lines 9-10).

In summary, most of the participants felt that their friends enabled them in many different ways. The participants felt comfortable expressing their hidden emotions to their friends. Friends not only provided a safe environment for them to reveal or express their private thoughts and emotions, but could also give the participants advice or solutions on how to deal with those emotions and thoughts. This type of encouragement helped the participant to cope resiliently by providing them with spaces to talk and even to vent.

A number of previous studies (De Chen & George, 2005:454; Ronen & Seeman, 2007:1054; Tansey, 2008) suggest that peer support and positive friendships encourage resilience. To the best of my knowledge, previous studies have not made this point with regard to black adolescents coping resiliently with divorce.

- **Community-facilitated spaces**

Five of the ten participants were hostel residents. Many of these participants saw the hostel as their own private **community**, in which they lived. Many said that staying at

the hostel helped them because they had people there to talk to and to support them when they were struggling and that being part of this community had encouraged resilience. For example, Nash explained:

Well here at the hostel I am always around people and can talk to them and there is someone here to always help me with my work and I can just think more about my school work and make sure that I can become better one day (Int. 5 part 3, lines 8-10).

Some of the participants felt that the **hostel shielded them** from all the troubles that they knew they had at home, and it was comforting for them because there was always a friend near to talk to when times were tough. I came to this conclusion when Shorty said:

There are too much trouble and stories at home that I don't want to hear. And at [hostel] it's much better 'cause I enter activities and I have friends that I can talk to and laugh with. But now if I go home they tell me this and that and I don't want to know (Int. 1 part 2, lines 119-121).

Participants who stayed in the hostel felt a sense of belonging there, which they did not feel at home because home was associated with problems. The participants therefore felt that by being able to stay at the hostel, provided them with the necessary protection that guarded them from these troublesome circumstances. The hostel environment also provided the participants with frequent positive distractions, through different extramural activities at school – they had access to these activities because they lived in the hostel. The participants had ample opportunity to talk about their problems and ask for advice and this in turn made it possible for the participants to experience a sense of safety. Typically, hostels are not associated with enabling young people towards resilience (Kapp, 1991:469). For the participants in my study, the opposite was true.

One participant who was not in the hostel, Lebza, felt that the community supported her. She related that **there was a lady from her neighbourhood** who showed an interest in how she was coping:

Yes there is this one lady that works at the shop up the road where I live and she is friends with my mom and dad. She always asks me how it is going with me and my sister. She always invites me over to come talk and stuff. She was also divorced so she told me a lot that happened with her (Int. 8 part 1, lines 50-53).

The community can give the adolescents extra support, a chance to express or talk about their feelings, someone who will listen to them, and a sense of belonging. This is typically associated with enabling resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005:9; Greene & Conrad, 2002; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Mannes, 2005; Masten & Reed, 2005; Williams, 2002; Wong & Lee, 2005). The community plays an important role of letting the adolescent realise that there are others, not only people within their family, who also care for them (Thomas & Menampampil, 2005:335). Therefore the community plays an important role in the resilience of an adolescent coping with divorce. Previous resilience studies (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:583-584; Ramphela, 2002:102; Theron, 2007:367) noted that community support is enabling to black adolescents facing a variety of adversities.

Another sub-theme noted under community-facilitated spaces to talk, was **therapy**. Some of the participants mentioned that by going to therapy and knowing that they could **talk freely** to a therapist helped. It gave the adolescents a chance to talk about their problems from their own perspective. Therapy was also a place of comfort for the adolescents. For Shorty part of the value of a therapeutic space lay in talking to a professional:

Going for therapy made me feel safe and comfortable 'cause I could talk to someone who I knew could really help me because it is their job and they know what they are doing and they would listen to all my problems (Int. 1 part 3, lines 32-34).

In addition, therapy held value because it challenged how some participants were thinking about their parents' divorce. Adolescents often might feel that they are the cause of the divorce. This makes them feel responsible for their parents splitting up

(Basson, 2001:69; Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:109; Cowan, 1999:43; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:184; Johnson, 2000:126; Kalter, 1990:312; Lansky, 2005:42; Strasheim, 2003). They do not see the divorce as the cause of their problems, but rather their actions as the cause of the divorce. Many adolescents experience a sense of guilt (Berner, 1992:25; Brummer, 2000; Bryner, 2001:205; Duryee, 2003:152; Johnson & Wiechers, 2002:177; Kelly & Emery, 2003:356; Lansky, 2005:191; Wells, 1989:29). Shorty's going to see a therapist provided a space in which her self-defeating thoughts could be challenged:

She told me I have to say that it's not my fault that they got divorced its their own problems they are going through the divorce not me and that my mother has to talk to me and I must not let the family problems affect my school work and stuff (Int. 1 part 2, lines 205-207).

The only outliers with regard to spaces to talk, related to spaces created by extended family. In two instances participants referred to extended family (an uncle and grandfather) who provided spaces to talk. For both participants, being able to talk to these extended family members was enabling. For example, Thondo said:

(laugh) because he just let me talk to him about how I was feeling and I was not scared to talk to him and he always had positive things to say to me that made me feel much better afterwards (Int. 10 part 2, lines 52-53).

Although extended family is well documented as a protective resource (Cook & Du Toit, 2005:248; Dass-Brailsford, 2005:582; Newman, 2002) the scant reference in my study might be related to the fact that the participants were adolescents and therefore friend-focused (developmentally appropriate for adolescents) or to the fact that some of the participants were in the hostel and so had limited access to extended family.

5.2.2 Enabling Relationships

The second theme that related to antecedents of resilience was enabling relationships or relationships that provided the participants with support to cope resiliently. This theme was also not only confined to one source. Most of the participants mentioned that they had enabling relationships with teachers, friends and people in their community, who gave them **advice**, **encouragement** and **pep talks** (spirit-boosting conversations).

- **Teachers**

Most of the participants stated that they had **enabling relationships** with some teachers because these teachers provided them with **positive advice**. For example, Lebza said:

Um, there were two teachers that I could say helped me. It was nice because I could talk to them whenever I really needed to and they would help me. They told me not to worry and I must just concentrate on myself and my schoolwork and all the other problems will eventually work out (Int. 8 part 1, lines 97-99).

For the participants, this positive advice they received from their teachers showed them that their teachers were also there to **support** and help them to remain positive and to focus on their future by starting at school and concentrating on their school work. Adolescents need people to tell them that they “can do it” and support or **encourage** them in everything that they do. Teachers letting adolescents know that they have faith in them and that they “can do it,” provides adolescents with positive support and a chance to grow, which enables resilience (Nadge, 2005:30). Most of the participants said that their teachers were very **supportive**. For example, Topsy said:

My Maths teacher, she also supported me a lot. She noticed that I was not working so she told me to close my book and come outside and I

told her. She then told me that I should actually perform with my school work instead of giving up because I want to be a better person (Int. 6 part 1, lines 89-91).

Through providing advice and encouragement, teachers were able to support and inspire some of the participants to remain focused on the positive aspects of their lives. The participants felt capable of handling their current situations and felt comfortable in discussing their problems and receiving advice from their teachers. Various studies (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:582; Howard & Johnson, 2000) have shown how important it is for the teachers to provide adolescents with protective resources so that the adolescents can hold on to their resilience when having to cope with family adversities.

- **Friends**

Friends were said to be very important during this difficult time as they **encouraged** the participants by giving them **pep talks** (spirit boosting conversations) to help them cope resiliently. For example, Shorty said:

She always tells me everything will be fine, um I must not worry, just focus on your studies you are a strong person and you can get through it (Int. 1 part 2, lines 184-185).

Another manner in which the participants' friends helped them was to **normalise divorce** by making the participants realise that there are other adolescents in the same situation and that they have survived. For example, Pippa said:

One thing I can really remember, it was my best friend X, he said it's not your fault man, and he said I must remember I am not alone that there are plenty other children who are having their parents go through a divorce and they make it through (Int. 7 part 1, lines 34-36).

In summary, friends enabled the participants by providing a sense of normality through advice and encouragement, which in turn motivated them (**pep talks**) and encouraged them to cope resiliently.

5.2.3 Perennial Support (“**always**”)

The third theme relates to a sense of perennial support from friends and teachers. A sense of perennial support emerged in all of the above-mentioned themes through repetition of the word “always.” For example, the participants mentioned that they could “**always**” talk to a teacher, friend or people in their community. They conveyed that they “**always**” received advice and encouragement from friends and teachers.

Most of the participants said that they could **always** go to a friend when they were feeling really down and that they were thankful that they had someone who could just listen to them. The availability of friends formed a stable platform from which the participants could communicate. For example, Cutie said:

Um, they would just say to me don't worry they will always be there for me no matter what. I can always call them or go to them and talk to them about the things that are bugging me. I don't know my friends just always had positive things to say to me that really helped me. I am very glad I have such good friends that listened to all my problems (Int. 2 part 3, lines 24-27).

Most of the participants not only mentioned the word “always” when talking about their friends; the word “**always**” was also mentioned when talking about their teachers. The participants believed that certain teachers would take on a compassionate role and were **always accessible** when it came to providing **advice** and **support**. For example, Scones said:

Teachers just understand us and know how to help us when we are struggling. They work with us the whole day and they are very caring and want to help wherever they can and this really helped me to cope

*because I knew there was **always** someone I could go to and speak to her about anything that I needed to (Int. 3 part 2, lines 9-12).*

In a similar manner, Topsy felt that his teachers provided continuous positive advice and motivation when he said:

Um when she told me that I actually thought to myself it could be true and I must not worry about it so much and I felt much better after I spoke to my teacher. She always said good things to help me (Int. 6 part 2, lines 36-37).

The fact that participants typically used the word 'always' when referring to the accessibility of friendship spaces in which to talk freely, and to the availability of teachers as sources of support, suggests that they were convinced that there were no limitations to these spaces. Given that one of the risks of divorce is that parents are often emotionally unavailable (Rodgers & Rose, 2002:1024), the notion of continuously available others (teachers and friends) seemed to protect participants and encourage their resilience. Although previous studies have noted that continued support (i.e. support systems that are not interrupted by moving or other divorce-related changes) encourage resilience (Sandler *et al.*, 2003: 227), these studies have not emphasised that the perception of perennial support or knowing that others (like friends and teachers) are continuously ("always") available mitigates the risks of divorce for (black) adolescents.

5.2.4 Extra-curricular Activities

The fourth theme that can be linked to antecedents of resilience among the participants in my study was taking part in extra-curricular activities at school. This theme was very easy to identify as most of the participants gave the same reason as to why they took part in sport and how it helped them cope. In Cutie's words:

Um, I would say it has because I enjoy being with my friends and talking to them and when I play a hockey match or even when we

practice it helps me to sometimes forget about it and I think it is very good to have something to do that will take your mind off the divorce (Int. 2 part 3, lines 49-51).

When an adolescent experiences parental divorce, it is often very difficult to stop thinking about it (Bryner, 2001:201). This may be because some adolescents may find it very difficult to accept the fact that they have to let go of the “old” family life that they had when their parents still stayed together and cared for each other. Most of the participants felt that taking part in extra-curricular activities at school helped them by **taking their mind off** the divorce.

In addition to extra-curricular activities providing a different focus, the adolescents were able to **laugh** with their friends during extra-curricular activities and this made them feel better. I came to this conclusion when Lebza said:

Wow in so many ways actually, firstly just to help me to stop thinking about this whole problem of the divorce, and um just by being able to sit and laugh with my friends during sport feels so good (Int. 8 part 1, lines 118-119).

Extra-curricular activities give adolescents an opportunity to develop their skill in a specific activity and allow them to form relationships with caring friends and adults (Brooks, 2006:72). This boosts the adolescents’ self-esteem and creates opportunities for success, which are associated with resilience (Alexander, 2002:22; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Masten & Reed, 2005:84). A recent study by Johnson and Lazarus (2008:27-29) suggested that although it is well known that schools that encourage participation stimulate resilience, many South African schools can place stronger emphasis on creating opportunities for learners to participate.

5.2.5 Cultural Rites

The fifth theme that related to antecedents of resilience among my participants was certain cultural rites that provided the participants with support to cope resiliently.

More recently, resilience researchers have begun to investigate the cultural antecedents of resilience (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004:28; Kim-Cohen, 2007:278; Kümpfer, 1999:198-200; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005:32; Ungar, 2008:218–219). Accordingly I investigated whether there were any cultural rites that had enabled my participants to cope resiliently with their parents' divorce. None of them volunteered information on cultural processes spontaneously. In response to a direct question from me in this regard, most referred to a family gathering or family meeting. I concluded from the interviews that this related to families from both sides (i.e. from the father and mother) coming together and having a meeting or gathering. At this gathering they typically discussed logistical matters arising from the divorce, including matters concerning the children. For example, Nash said:

Um the only thing that I know we did was we had like a family gathering where they discussed all the things, like where we must live and money stuff (Int. 5 part 1, lines 136-137).

For many participants this gathering seemed to enable resilient functioning. It encouraged resilience by **reassuring the participants of a sense of belonging**. The participants realised that people still care and worry about them. For example, Lindo mentioned:

It made me strong because they asked me a lot of times what I want first and then they decided what was best. I actually felt important in the meeting, 'cause it was about me and what was the best for me (Int. 4 part 2, lines 20-21).

For Topsy, it was not just about being reassured: the family gathering helped her to feel **respected and valued**:

Um because they don't just treat me like any little toy or animal, they respect me and make sure that they do the best for me (Int. 6 part 3, lines 18-19).

For others, like Lebza, the value of this meeting lay in her **not feeling isolated**:

I felt ok 'cause I knew they still cared about me. It helped me because sometimes I felt alone and now I know they do care about me and that I would not be alone (Int. 8 part 2, lines 15-16).

In summary, the family gathering helped the participants to cope resiliently because they were recognised as important and this made them feel less lost and less isolated. It reinforced a sense of belonging and of support. Current literature (Howard & Johnson, 2000:326) emphasises that a sense of belonging and support enable resilience. Ungar *et al.* (2008:8) emphasised that adherence to cultural traditions encouraged resilience among Aboriginal youth. Dass-Brailsford's study (2005:583) suggested that cultural beliefs like ancestor worship encouraged resilience among black South African students. As far as I am aware there are no previous resilience studies that have suggested that traditional cultural rituals such as a family gathering ("Mokete") to finalise divorce logistics enable black adolescents to cope with the risks of divorce.

I found it very interesting as only Scones mentioned a different ritual that his dad went through with him when his parents divorced:

I remembered my dad took me to a place where there were lots of trees and there was cow blood in a bowl, mixed with "Mogalakana" I don't know the English word for it, but it's this green stuff, like a medicine that's very itchy. They mix this together with the blood and pour it on the children's heads (Int. 3 part 1, lines 134-136).

The reason why they performed this ritual was protective because of the belief that by pouring this medicine over their heads, children would be free from any evil spirits or, in Scones' words: "*They believe it keeps the evil spirits away*" (Int. 3 part 1, line 140). This seemed to be his father's way of trying to protect him from harm, also harm that might come his way as a result of the divorce. Scones conveyed that this ritual helped him cope. I came to this conclusion when Scones said:

Um, well yes because I was so young when my mom and dad divorced, I was scared of the evil spirits so knowing that it was going to keep the evil spirits away I think it helped me then (Int. 3 part 3, lines 46-47).

One definition of “culture” is: The knowledge that is carried over from one generation to the other within a culture. Culture has a positive function when it provides clarification of the world by rituals, explanations for the world by way of rituals and important rules that need to be followed (Carter, 1999:12; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005:40; Reber & Reber, 2001:170). Some African people believe that traditional medicines and potions as well as ancestral practices or rituals will keep them safe (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:583). For Scones, his father’s ritual to invoke protection for him was enabling in that it provided a sense of safety.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure 5.2 below summarises the antecedents of resilience among the resilient black adolescents in my study who were coping well with their parents divorce.

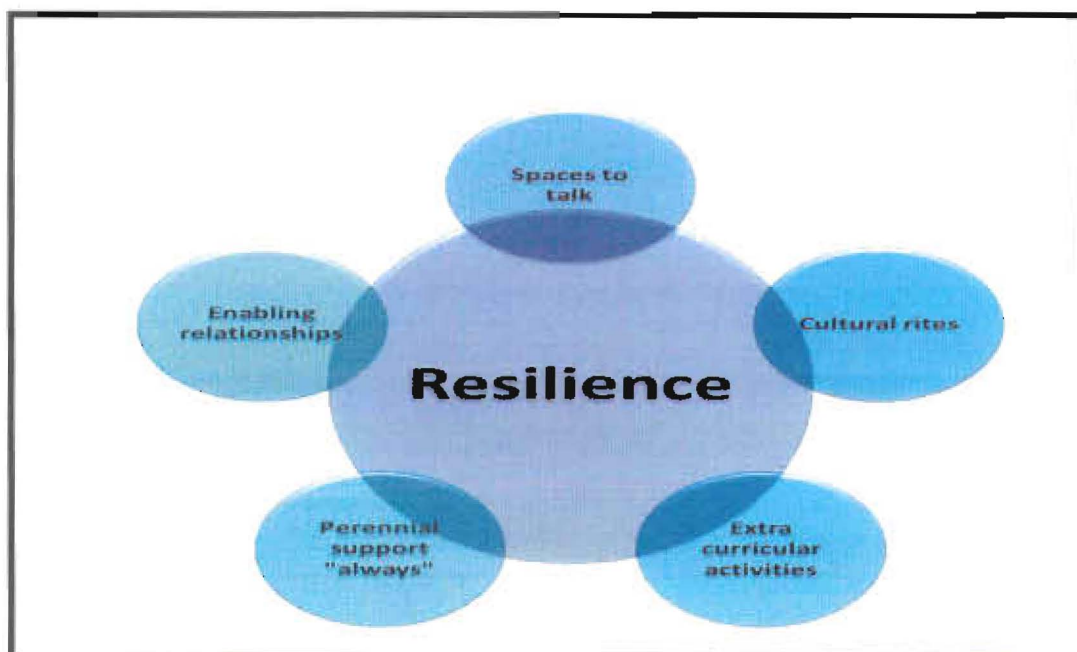


Figure 5.2: Summary of findings

The finding that **caring teachers** encourage resilience was in line with previous studies (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:582; Howard & Johnson, 2000) that suggested that adolescents faced with having to cope with a difficult home environment, were likely to display resiliency, if they had the opportunity of attending a school where there were teachers who really cared for the adolescents and provided them with a caring relationship through these difficult times, like coping with their parents' divorce. Teachers providing a caring relationship with the adolescents, allow the adolescents to feel comfortable around their teachers and they will therefore discuss their problems easily with their teachers. My finding differed from Dass-Brailsford's (2005:582) study that teachers encouraged resilience in part because they were from the same race as her participants. In my study the participants were black and the teachers referred to mostly white.

The finding that **friend-facilitated spaces** encouraged resilience was in line with previous studies (Bryner, 2001:203; Clapp, 2000:72; Duncan, 1994:451; Ehrenberg *et al.*, 2005:42; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003:193; Howard & Johnson, 2000:326) which put forward that friends filled the space of parents not always being emotionally available. In other words, the adolescents could turn to their friends and ask for advice or even just to talk to them about their problems.

The finding that **caring friends** encouraged resilience correlated with earlier studies (De Chen & George, 2005:454; Ronen & Seeman, 2007:1054; Tansey, 2008) that suggested that when adolescents are going through family adversities, it is crucial to have friends, as friends encourage resilience. Adolescents are able to discuss their problems with their friends and listen to advice which may help them cope with their parents' divorce.

The finding that community members encouraged resilience, was parallel to previous studies (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 2003; Greene & Conrad, 2002; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Mannes, 2005; Masten & Reed, 2005; Williams, 2002; Wong & Lee, 2005) which propose that the community also plays an important role in the adolescent life, especially when coping with difficult life circumstances. The **community** provides the adolescent with the necessary extra

support, like expressing their feelings or talking to other people, creating a sense of belonging for the adolescent which can all enhance resilience.

The finding that **cultural rites** encouraged resilience, correlated with earlier studies (Blackburn, 2000; Boyden & Mann, 2005:8; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Killian, 2004:46; Kümpfer, 1999:199; Myers, 2000:56; Smith, 2005; Solomon & Laufer, 2005:239; Williams, 2002:200) that suggested that resilience was enhanced when adolescents had faith or trust in their cultural beliefs. Trusting and believing in their culture allows the adolescents to feel safe and secure because they are supported by their traditions and community.

The last finding that links to previous literature studies (Alexander, 2002:22; Brooks, 2006:72; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Masten & Reed, 2005:84) is that adolescents who take part in **extra-curricular activities** develop positive self -esteem, experience success, and also form relationships with friends and older people within their community.

In summary, my findings that caring teachers and friends, community members, cultural rites and extra-curricular activities function as resilience-promoting resources are not new. However, previous studies have not linked extra-curricular activities clearly to resilience among black adolescents whose parents are divorce.

My study makes a further contribution to theory by presenting the following new findings: the concept of support that was perceived as constant or 'always,' hostel-life as a community facilitated space, and family gatherings. These will be discussed briefly below.

The participants continuously brought up the word "always" during their interviews, constantly mentioning the fact that teachers and friends were **always** available to support them and give advice. I got the idea that they felt reassured by the fact that they could at any given time go to friends and teachers for support and advice when they felt they were not able to cope with their parents' divorce. This made the adolescents aware of the fact that there were no constraints when seeking support from teachers

and friends. Previous studies have mentioned the value of supportive relationships with teachers and friends, but have not stressed that this value may lie in the perception that the support of friends and teachers can be counted on at all times. In a way this is what one expects from a parent, and so constant availability and support might have meant more to these participants precisely because their parents were probably not constantly available when they were focused on their divorce.

Another conclusion that I drew from the interviews with the participants was that at school the **hostel** was also seen as a protective space where the adolescents had friends and teachers around them the whole day, and could express their feelings with them when they felt really down. They felt that by being at the hostel they were safe from all the trouble at home that related to the divorce, such as the constant fighting. In other words the participants felt that the hostel created a safety zone for them and this helped them deal with the disturbance caused by the divorce. In addition to this safety zone, the hostel environment distracted the adolescents in a positive way.

From a cultural point of view most of the adolescents mentioned a “**Mokete**” that was held because their parents were getting divorced. In its turn this family gathering helped them cope with the trauma of the divorce because they felt loved and realised that their family still cared for them. During these gatherings most of the questions related to the well-being of the adolescents. This gave them a sense of belonging and they also felt reassured about their future. Ungar (2008:219) emphasises that the processes which contribute to resilience include processes that are specific to a given culture and that these are often overlooked in Western-dominated resilience theories. To my knowledge, such family gatherings are not traditional when white South African parents divorce, let alone American parents. It is therefore important to note that the cultural tradition of families gathering to decide jointly on the way forward, also for children, should be recognised as a resilience-promoting process for black youth whose parents are getting divorced.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The participants I interviewed told me of many different protective resources which they felt helped them to cope resiliently with their parents' divorce. Support from friends and teachers were valuable in helping these black adolescents to cope. Being able to talk to them, vent emotion and receive advice helped the adolescents in my study to cope resiliently. Furthermore, it was important for my participants to know that their friends and teachers were perennially available to support them. Extra-curricular activities at school and hostel life also came up as supportive, as the adolescents felt that they were able to forget about the divorce while concentrating on the sport or when they were away from home. Finally, the cultural practice of holding a family meeting which also ensured the well-being of the adolescents following the divorce, enabled them towards resilience.

Chapter Six will focus on a detailed summary of the empirical and literature study. Based on the findings of my study, I will provide recommendations for Life Orientation teachers to encourage resilience among black adolescents whose parents are divorced.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 6

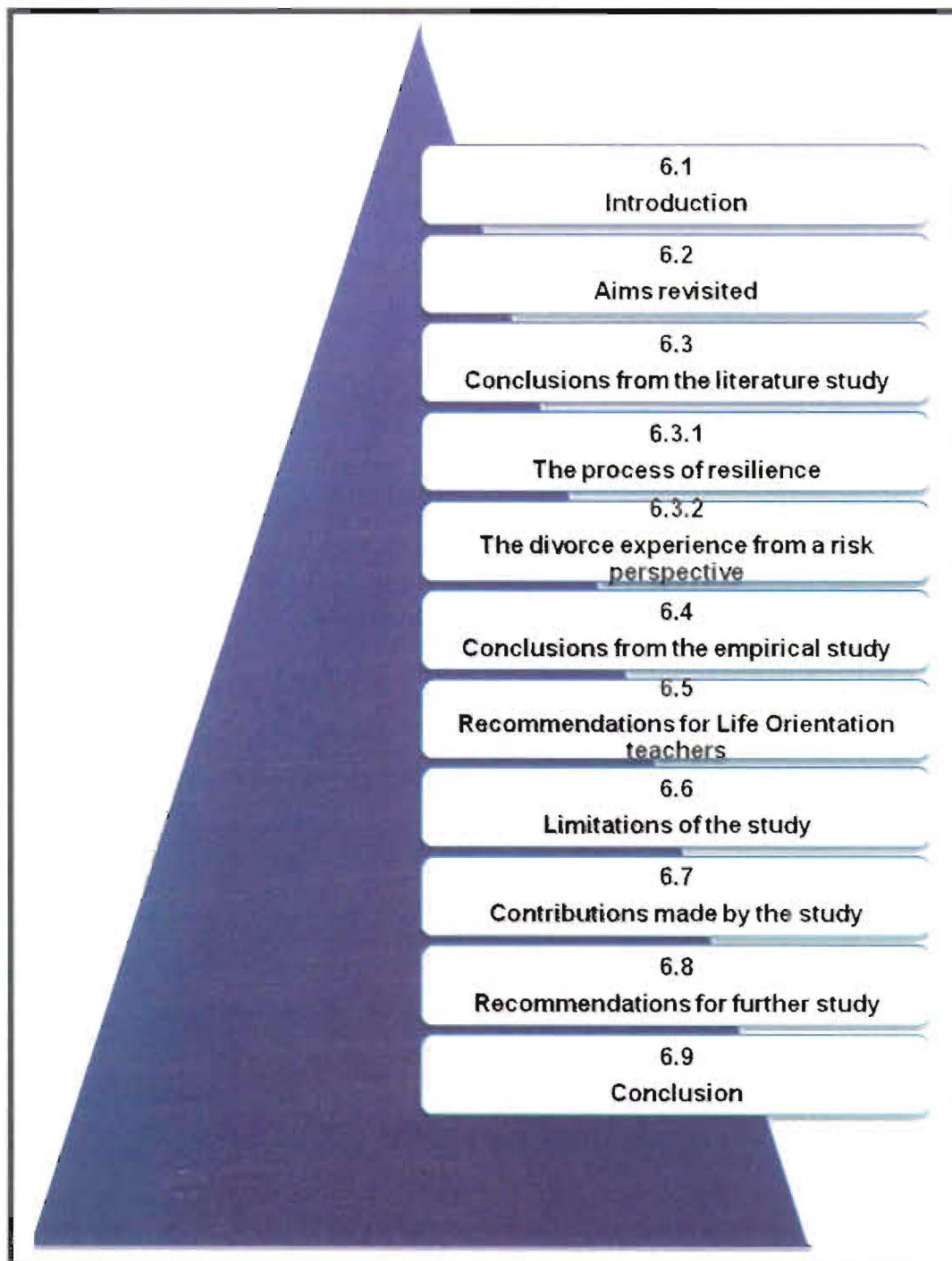


Figure 6.1: Overview of Chapter 6

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem I investigated in this study, was what contributed to some black adolescents coping resiliently with the divorce of their parents. What enabled them to be resilient despite the adversity of their parents getting divorced? With the divorce rate being so high and ever growing, I believe that it is important to understand what the antecedents of resilience are when black youth cope resiliently with their parents' divorce, so that, among others, guidelines can be given that will encourage Life Orientation teachers and other service providers to promote resilient functioning among black youth from divorced families. I found many sources that discussed resilience, but there were hardly any that focused on black adolescents coping resiliently with their parents' divorce.

This chapter will summarise the literature and empirical study, relating to how black South African adolescents cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents and then provide guidelines for Life Orientation teachers so that more black adolescents coping with divorce can be encouraged towards resilience. Finally, I note the limitations of my study and provide recommendations for further study.

6.2 AIMS REVISITED

Table 6.1 summarises the aims of this study, and whether or not these aims have been achieved.

AIMS	ACHIEVEMENTS
A literature study on divorce and how it impacts on adolescents.	A thorough literature study was conducted to give explanations of the effects of divorce on adolescents, emphasising the losses that the adolescents were faced with during the six stations of divorce. This literature study was documented in Chapter

	Three.
A literature study on the phenomenon of resilience.	A thorough literature study was conducted to clarify all that is incorporated in the process and outcome of adolescent resiliency. This literature study was documented in Chapter Two.
An empirical study on the antecedents of resilience among black South African adolescents whose parents are divorced.	Ten phenomenological interviews were conducted with black adolescents who were identified by an Advisory Panel as resilient in order to determine what the protective resources were that played a part in them behaving resiliently. The ten interviews were coded using a process of inductive content analysis to identify the antecedents of the participants' resilience. The coding was influenced by current resilience theories. The emerging findings were documented in Chapter Five.
Recommendations for Life Orientation teachers to encourage resilient functioning among black learners challenged by their parents' divorce.	Based on the findings of my study, I provided guidelines for Life Orientation teachers on how they can help black adolescents cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. These guidelines are documented in 6.5. in this chapter.

Table 6.1: Aims governing the study

From Table 6.1 above it is clear that the aims governing my study were achieved.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

The literature study was documented in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Chapter Two concentrated on the process of resilience and Chapter Three concentrated on the effects of divorce on adolescents, as well as factors and processes that buffer the risks of divorce. Protective factors and processes can be identified as resources that are accessed via dynamic, interactive and person-context relationships, and rely on adolescents navigating themselves towards these protective resources as well as on their ecology making such resources available (Benard, 1999:270; Boyden & Mann, 2005:9; Cameron *et al.*, 2007:285; Greene & Conrad, 2002:33; Koller & Lisboa, 2007:342; Schoon, 2006:6; Siqueira & Diaz, 2004:150; Ungar, 2008:221; Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2).

6.3.1 The Process of Resilience

Resilience can be defined as a dynamic developmental process of young people adapting well to adversities (Boyden & Mann, 2005:9; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:401; Greene & Conrad, 2002:37; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003:16; Masten & Reed, 2005:76; Wright & Masten, 2005:19).

Throughout the literature study various protective resources were identified that can assist adolescents in coping resiliently with adversity, including the divorce of their parents. Because resilience is a dynamic interaction, I not only discussed the individual factors that encourage resilience but also relational, community and cultural resources that play a role in an adolescent's resiliency. These are summarised below. Although I summarised each individually, it is important to remember that they interact and rely on one another.

- **Individual protective factors and processes**

There are numerous individual factors that enhance resilience among adolescents, including being the **first-born** and maintaining **good health** (Hultman *et al.*, 1999:421; Westergaard *et al.*, 1999:993). Some **personality traits** are also associated with

resilient functioning, including enthusiasm, good self-esteem, sense of self-worth, confidence, internal locus of control and a good -natured temperament (Armstrong *et al.*, 2005:392,394; Bersthorn, 2005:123; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:399; Hirayama & Hirayama, 2001:77; Masten & Reed, 2005:77; Schoon, 2006:76; Wright & Masten, 2005:19). Additional individual factors or processes that were established as protective were **problem-solving skills**, (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004:251; Dumont & Provost, 1999:343; Fergusson & Horwood, 2003:132; Masten & Reed, 2005:83; Reed-Victor, 2003; Theron, 2004:319), **scholastic capability** (Kingsley & Gowers, 2005:30; Kramer, & Hodes, 2003:180), **cognitive competence** (Fergusson & Horwood, 2003:132; Horowitz & Garber, 2003:578; Luthar, 1991:600; Owen & Shaw, 2003:272), and **good social skills** (Boyden & Mann, 2005:8). By having good social skills, adolescents can **form positive relationships** with members within their community, for example family members, adults from the immediate community, peers and role models, which further encourages resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Charney, 2005; Greene & Conrad, 2002:30; Killian, 2004:43; Leon & Cole, 2004; Mannes, 2005; Masten & Powell 2003:13, Neher & Short, 1998:154; Riley, 2002:179; Starzynski, 2005; Williams, 2002:200). Adolescents coping with divorce go through many drastic changes, but having a support system in place that provides support and guidance can foster resilience (Schoon, 2006:1; Solomon & Laufer, 2005:235). However, adolescents need to be willing to navigate towards, negotiate for and make the most of these resources – the ability and willingness to do so is partly dependent on the adolescent's personal qualities (Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2).

- **Family protective factors and processes**

Relationships, also within the family, play a vital role in enhancing resilience in adolescents. Resilience-promoting relationship factors and/or processes include **love, guidance, security, advice** and **support**, and a **close bond** with parents, the extended family and other caregivers (Kümpfer, 1999:189-191; Masten & Reed, 2005:82; Schoon, 2006:9-15; Ungar, 2005:xxv; Wong & Lee, 2005:316). Parents that show **consistency**, spend **quality time** with adolescents and those who clearly state **parental expectations**, can enhance resilience in adolescents (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996:289; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Kim-Cohen, 2007:277). One way of creating and

maintaining consistency and continuity, is by ensuring that **family routines** still occur in the family setting. This is also helpful during and following divorce.

- **Community protective factors and processes**

It is very important for the neighbourhood and communities to play a part in an adolescent's life as they can provide **extra support**, for example in the form of **caring adults, mentors** and a variety of different opportunities (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Charney, 2005; Greene & Conrad, 2002:30; Killian, 2004:43; Leon & Cole, 2004; Mannes, 2005; Masten & Powell 2003:13, Neher & Short, 1998:154; Riley, 2002:179; Starzynski, 2005; Williams, 2002:200). In addition, communities can also give the adolescents the opportunity to **interact** with **positive peers**, who in turn can give them advice and support (Boyden & Mann, 2005:7; Masten & Powell, 2003:13; Williams, 2002:200). Peers who are going through the **same experience** give the adolescents the opportunity to **ask questions** and **express how they really feel** by providing a **space to talk**. This makes the adolescents realize that they are **not alone** and that there are other **people experiencing the same trauma** (Copeland, 1997:55; Walker, 2001:7).

Because adolescents spend a lot of time at school, school is a potential resilience-promoting resource. School factors or processes that contribute to an adolescent's resiliency included **good teachers** who are **caring** and **available**, **school counsellors**, a **positive school climate**, **effective teaching methods** and a **variety of school-based activities** (Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:29). Teachers who are able to form **enabling relationships** with the adolescents by being **sympathetic**, showing **empathy** and letting the adolescents see that they are **aware of their problems**, promote resilience in adolescents (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:97; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008:19; Vakalisa, 2002:17-23). A teacher who is **willing to listen** to adolescents' problems, encourage them to **open up** and **talk freely** because the adolescents get the impression that the teacher wants to help by listening to their problem (Velazco, 2006:75). Schools also equip the adolescents with **skills, knowledge** and **attitudes** necessary for an adolescent to develop through life holistically. These include **problem-**

solving skills, critical and creative thinking, ways of coping, emotional and communication skills (Donald *et al.*, 2006:273).

- **Cultural protective factors and processes**

There are multiple cultural resources that can encourage resilience. These include **cultural and ethnic pride** (also found in family rituals and traditions) which are taken over by the next generation and which help youth to feel grounded and give them a way to understand and cope with their worlds (including adversity) (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:583, McCubbn & McCubbin, 2005:40; Ungar *et al.*, 2008:8; Walsh, 2006:51).

Culture provides a sense of **support** and **security**, often relating to traditions and community or family-based rituals. A sense of **identity** is formed when adolescents experience that their cultural rituals and routines persist (Blackburn, 2000) and when they are able to identify with these cultural rites and practices. Resilience is further encouraged when adolescents have **trust in their cultural beliefs and rely on spiritual traditions** (religion, faith, ancestral worship) as they feel this enables them to cope (Boyden & Mann, 2005:8; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Killian, 2004:46; Kümpfer, 1999:199; Myers, 2000:56; Smith, 2005; Solomon & Laufer, 2005:239; Williams, 2002:200).

6.3.2 The Divorce Experience from a Risk Perspective

Risk factors can be summarised as intrapersonal and interpersonal risk factors or processes that heighten the adolescent's chances for maladaptive outcomes. Intrapersonal risk factors or processes are found within the adolescent and include **chronic illness, poor health** and **difficult personal qualities**, like being **short-tempered** or having an **external locus of control** (Bundy *et al.*, 2004; Donald *et al.*, 2006:298; Isaacs, 2002:330; Riley, 2002:181; Boyden & Mann, 2005:6). Adolescents also experience a sense of **isolation** when they are unable to form relationships, and also cannot express their emotions (Thomas & Menampampil, 2005:335). Interpersonal risk factors or processes are found within the adolescent's family, community and cultures and include a lack of support from parents, teachers, peers or

damaging relationships with people in their ecologies. With **no support and guidance** from their parents, adolescents may have increasing **discipline problems** at school and **lower academic results** (Sandler *et al.*, 2003:227). Schools that **do not have teachers that are easy to approach** can be seen as placing the adolescent at risk because adolescents who lack the love and support at home might turn to a teacher at school (Gouws *et al.*, 2000:97).

Typically, divorce is a phenomenon that does not encourage resilience. In most instances it is associated with putting children and adolescents at risk. In Chapter Three the divorce process was described as consisting of six interlinking stations (Bohannon, 1970:29-55; Hall, 2005; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:361; Shaub, 2002; Williams, 2005). All of these stations have potential risks for adolescents and the adolescent may go through trauma and loss throughout the divorce process (Morgan & Coleman, 2001). When an adolescent experiences trauma and loss it places him at risk (Afifi & Keith, 2004:66; Clapp, 2000:152). Risk can minimise an adolescent's chance of resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005:20; Cox & Desforges, 1987:56; Empson & Nabuzoka, 2004:40; Schoon, 2006:15; Thomlison, 2004:384-387; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2004:4).

When faced with divorce there is often a **dramatic change in an adolescent's lifestyle and living circumstances**. When parents remarry, this may mean that the adolescent moves to a new residence, another school, and even a new community which means **losing previous supportive networks** and having to make new friends (Anderson, Greene, Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1999; Basson, 2003). Divorce typically impacts negatively on the emotional functioning of adolescents. Most adolescents feel a **deep sense of loss** – of their family, security, as well as their daily routines and family traditions (Clapp, 2000:71). Some adolescents **may no longer feel loved** and often experience feeling of **powerlessness** to do something about the situation (Clapp, 2000:72). Divorce is also associated with **scholastic problems** and **negative changes in behaviour at school** (Cox & Desforges, 1987:96; Cummings & Davies, 1994:5). **Boys often act out** to cope with emotions (including using drugs) whereas **girls internalise their emotions** and often become depressed or anxious (Wodarski, 1982:315).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, for resilience to occur within an adolescent there needs to be risk, so an adolescent cannot be resilient if he has not experienced any risk (Masten, 2001:228; Ungar, 2008:220). Many adolescents cope resiliently with the risks that they face (Hetherington, & Elmore, 2003). Therefore, the empirical research that I conducted was aimed at identifying different factors or processes that would help or encourage black adolescents going through their parents' divorce, to function resiliently.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In this study data were collected and analysed by conducting a phenomenological study, to understand what contributes to black adolescents being able to cope resiliently with the divorce of their parents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten adolescents whose parents were divorced and who were identified as resilient by an advisory panel (Cf. 1.4.2.1.2). The interviews focused on the antecedents of the resilient functioning of black adolescents coping with divorce. Content analysis of the data obtained through the interviews led to the following emerging themes as explanations of what encouraged the participants to be resilient:

- Spaces to talk.
- Enabling relationships.
- Perennial support "always."
- Extra-Curricular activities.
- Cultural rites.

Table 6.2 summarises the protective processes inherent to the above five themes that were identified as antecedents of resilience:

Protective factors/processes	More than five	Fewer than five	Previous resilience studies	Previous resilience-focused divorce studies	Not noted in previous resilience studies	Not noted in previous resilience-focused divorce studies
Spaces to talk:						
Teacher-facilitated spaces	☺		☺	☺		
Friend-facilitated spaces	☺		☺	☺		
Community-facilitated spaces (hostel)		☺	☺			☺
Enabling relationships:						
Teachers	☺		☺	☺		
Friends	☺		☺	☺		
Perennial support “always”:	☺				☺	☺
Extra-Curricular activities:	☺		☺			☺
Cultural rites:	☺		☺			☺

Table 6.2: Summary of empirical study

As evident from Table 6.2 above, most of the factors noted by participants as contributing to their resilience (i.e. teacher-facilitated spaces to talk; friend-facilitated spaces to talk; community-spaces to talk; enabling relationships with teachers and enabling relationships with friends) were identified as resilience-promoting in previous studies (Barter, 2005:348; Masten & Reed, 2005:85; Theron, 2006:198-200; Ungar, 2008:225; Ungar, *et al.*, 2008:2; Ungar, 2005:xxv). The resilience-promoting resource not noted in previous resilience studies related to participants being encouraged by their perception of perennial support from friends and teachers.

Previous resilience studies have not noted community-facilitated spaces (specifically hostel residence), extra-curricular activities and cultural rites (specifically a family gathering) as antecedents of resilience in youth coping with divorce.

Figure 6.2 below summarises the dynamic interaction between black adolescent participants in coping with their parents' divorce and their ecology that ultimately made up their resilience-promoting protective resources. In summary, the findings of my study suggest that black adolescents whose parents divorce are resilient when they navigate towards the protective resources of spaces to talk; enabling relationships; perennial support ("always"); extra-curricular activities; and cultural rites. In addition they are resilient when their ecologies make teacher-facilitated spaces, friend-facilitated spaces, community-facilitated spaces (hostel), enabling relationships with teachers and enabling relationships with peers available (Ungar *et al.*, 2008:2).

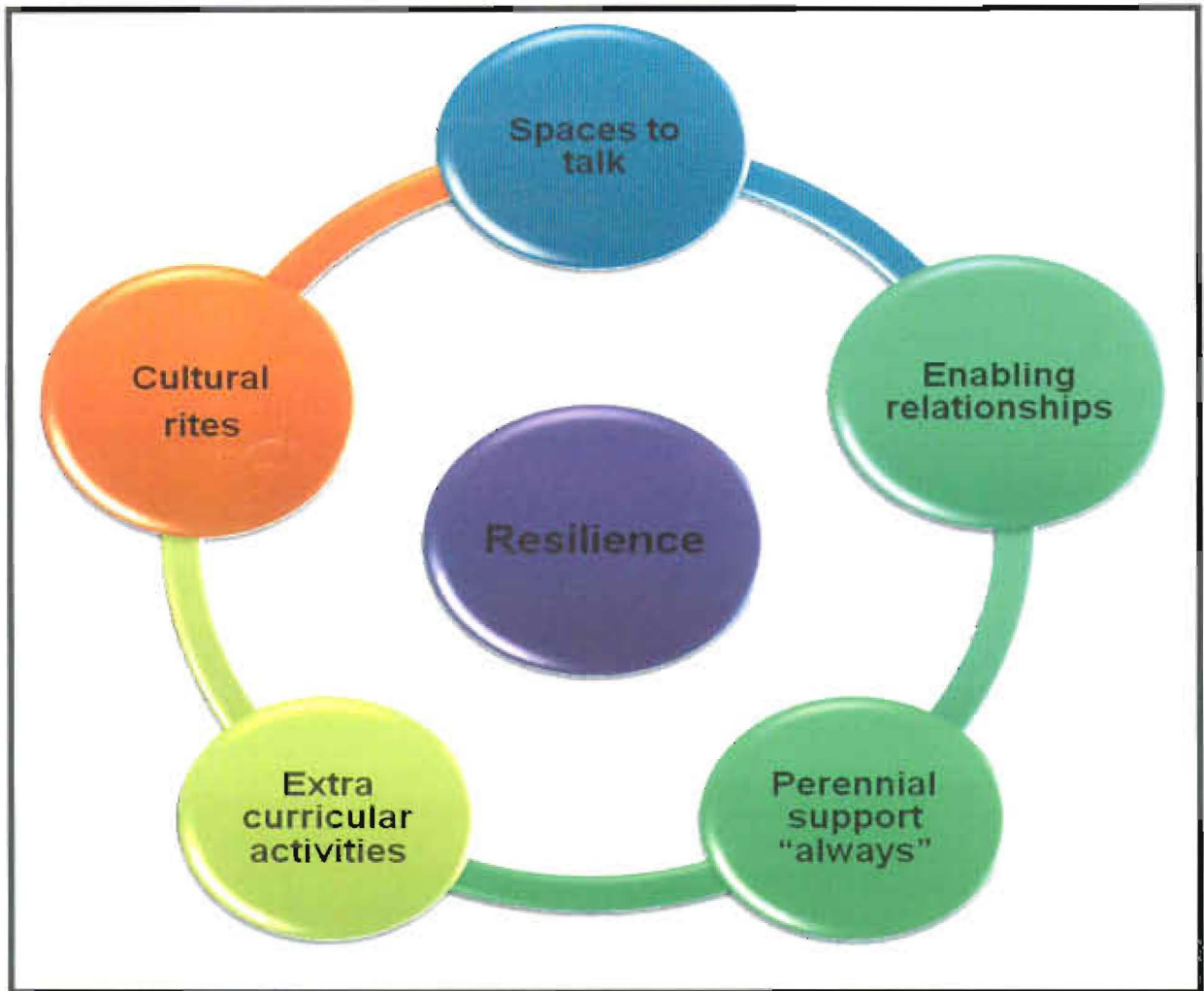


Figure 6.2: Interaction of protective factors/processes that enable black youth coping with divorce towards resilience

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS

The recommendations for Life Orientation teachers are based on the findings of my empirical study and include the following suggestions:

- ✓ As a Life Orientation teacher you should provide learners with a safe and comfortable classroom environment in which they feel encouraged to express their emotions and ask for help.
- ✓ Encourage other teachers to be easily approachable so that adolescents facing or coping with parental divorce feel comfortable talking about their feelings.

- ✓ Encourage learners to be more accepting and sensitive towards those learners who come from a broken home or an unpleasant home environment.
- ✓ Educate learners as well as educators to be culturally more open to what others might be experiencing and to accept that cultural practices are often wellness-promoting. Encourage cultural pride.
- ✓ Help educators and peers to understand that when youth face parental divorce, they are comforted when teachers and peers offer consistent support and are always available to provide encouragement, support and advice. In other words, emphasise that support and showing interest should not be inconsistent or erratic.
- ✓ Facilitate workshops in which the community can learn to become more involved in supporting adolescents in a culturally acceptable way (for example, encourage schools to provide well-run hostels as safe spaces for vulnerable youth; encourage community members to talk to youth whose parents are divorcing and encourage them; encourage communities to make therapy more accessible to youth in general as many adolescents can only access therapeutic spaces if their parents have a medical aid).
- ✓ Facilitate one-on-one interventions where you as a teacher encourage parents to become more actively involved in their child's emotional and scholastic well-being, especially when parents are divorcing or divorced.
- ✓ Encourage learners to take part in extra-curricular activities that might help take their mind off whatever their home circumstances are.
- ✓ Because many of the learners who come from divorced homes live in the hostel, it often becomes their main source of support. Therefore it is important to make sure that the above-mentioned recommendations are facilitated within the hostel among the peers as well as the hostel educators.

In addition to sharing the above guidelines with Life Orientation educators, it would be useful to share some excerpts (anonymously of course) from the interviews that emphasise how wonderful youth perceive teachers to be in encouraging them towards resilience.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations were identified:

- ✓ Some adolescents' parents divorced when they were still very young; others were more recently divorced. My study did not explore whether the length of time since the parents' divorce played a role in these youth coping resiliently.
- ✓ All the black adolescents came from one school in the Vaal Triangle. This suggests that the findings of my study (e.g. enabling relationships with teachers; a good hostel) may be influenced by the specific context of my study.
- ✓ Although my study specifically wanted to understand the antecedents of resilience for black learners, this aim means that my findings cannot be transferred to white, Indian or Coloured youth.
- ✓ The black youth in my study were Sotho, Xhosa and Zulu and I engaged with ten participants only. It is possible that the findings cannot be transferred to youth from other black cultural groups.

6.7 CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE STUDY

The study made the following contributions:

- ✓ The antecedents of resilience that encourage some black South African adolescents to cope with the divorce of their parents were identified. This fills a gap in current literature and provides insight into the process of resilience, especially for black youth coping with divorce.
- ✓ My study contributed to theory, in that it suggested a new resilience-promoting resource for black youth whose parents are divorced, not noted in previous resilience studies, namely faithful support (support that is 'always' there) from friends and teachers.
- ✓ My study also contributed to theory, in that it suggested resilience-promoting processes not previously noted as antecedents of resilience in (black) youth coping with divorce. These included community-facilitated spaces (specifically hostel

residence), extra-curricular activities and cultural rites (specifically a family gathering).

- ✓ By being made aware of these resilience-promoting processes, my study contributed to practice in that guidelines can be given to Life Orientation teachers based on the findings of this study to help black learners coping with divorce, to be able to do so resiliently.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

My study was not without limitations (Cf. 6.6). I therefore trust that this will encourage other researchers to continue with further studies such as:

- A larger study that explores the antecedents of resilience among resilient black youth, including a larger number of black adolescents from different ecologies and from all cultural groups coping resiliently with divorce.
- A study that explores the antecedents of resilience among resilient youth whose parents divorced many years ago and then comparing the findings of these youth to resilient youth whose parents have recently divorced.
- A study that explores the antecedents of resilience among resilient white, Indian or Coloured youth coping with their parents' divorce so that the antecedents of resilience can be compared with those noted in black youth.
- More robust studies that explore how black traditional cultures help adolescents cope with divorce.

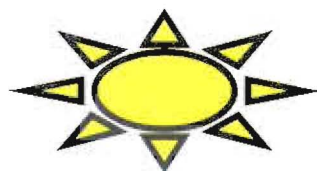
6.9 CONCLUSION

Through my experience of being an educator I was shocked to see how many children and young people are going through life having divorced parents. There are various processes that affect adolescents' resilient coping with their parents' divorce. In my study it emerged that these processes are not extraordinary, just as Masten noted (2001:227). Instead, the antecedents of resilience among the black participants in my study related to commonplace processes like enabling relationships and cultural traditions, structures like healthy hostels and practices like extra-mural activities. In

other words, the findings of my study instil hope: by taking care to make sure that communities, schools and peer groups offer enabling relationships, spaces and practices, black youth faced **with** divorce can be enabled towards resilience. When youth have these supportive structures in place this enables them to see the positive and look on the 'bright side of life.'

Looking on the bright side does not make you blind to
the problems around you but helps you to see them in a
positive light

unknown



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1 ADDENDUM A

2
3 INTERVIEW FIVE

4 PART ONE

5 PARTICIPANT - NASH

6
7
8 **Interviewer:**

9 Nash can you tell me how old were you when your parents got divorced?

10 **Participant:**

11 *I was about seven.*

12 **Interviewer:**

13 And how old are you now?

14 **Participant:**

15 *I am 15 years old.*

16 **Interviewer:**

17 The first question that I want to ask you is who are the people that support or supported
18 you during the divorce of your parents?

19 **Participant:**

20 *Most of the times it was my teachers at school because they will always ask me why*
21 *am I so down cause usually I am a jolly person who always smiles and stuff, and then I*
22 *explained to them the situation of what was going on at that time. And then they helped*
23 *me and talked to me.*

25 **Interviewer:**

26 You have mentioned people at school that helped you? Is there anybody at home that
27 supported you through this difficult time?

28 **Participant:**

29 *Not really because they thought that I was too young and so I don't know anything and it*
30 *won't have an impact on me because I am so young*

31 **Interviewer:**

32 Many black children mention that their parents say that they are too young. Do you think
33 that this is maybe a cultural thing?

34 **Participant:**

35 *Not really a cultural thing but they believe that as a young person you don't really know*
36 *anything, you must just believe in school and stuff so this divorce they don't even think*
37 *that you know the meaning of divorce and your parents being separated.*

38 **Interviewer:**

39 Is there anybody in your community that supported you through your parent's divorce?

40 **Participant:**

41 *Um I never really told anyone in the community because they believe in being the whole*
42 *family together and at that time my family from my mother's side and from my father's*
43 *side they did not want anything to do with each other so it was useless to really tell the*
44 *people at the church or the community.*

45 **Interviewer:**

46 Do you know the real reason why your parents got divorced?

47 **Participant:**

48 *My mom.. okay this is what I heard. My mom left for England in 2000 and something*
49 *and then my dad did not agree to the fact that she left but then she had to go because*
50 *she wanted a better lifestyle for me and stuff and my dad did not really agree and stuff.*

51 *So my mom got fed up and my dad was like no I am going to get married again because*
52 *who do you expect me to be with here and all that.*

53 **Interviewer:**

54 Now I am going to ask you questions more about yourself. Can you tell me what kind of
55 a person you are, in other words your inner strengths?

56 **Participant:**

57 *Um I am a very sensitive, emotional, shy, outgoing person. I love talking to people.*

58 **Interviewer:**

59 What kind of a person did the divorce make you?

60 **Participant:**

61 *A very emotional person, because when I see my parents I cry a lot.*

62 **Interviewer:**

63 Now I want to find out more about your school environment. What about school made it
64 easier for you to cope on a bad day?

65 **Participant:**

66 *Actually the story was, I was not in this school at first, I was in an all girls school. When I*
67 *told my parents I don't think I can cope with their fighting and stuff they brought me here*
68 *to *** hostel. They thought it was better for me because I told them I can't stay with*
69 *them and that the best thing for me would be to move me into the hostel so they found*
70 *this school and now I stay here at the hostel and when we have to go home I go to my*
71 *mother's house.*

72 **Interviewer:**

73 Do you see your dad?

74 **Participant:**

75 *I don't see my dad as much no.*

76 **Interviewer:**

77 How does it make you feel that you don't get to see your dad often?

78 **Participant:**

79 *Sometimes it's hard because I want him to be part of my life and stuff but then I think*
80 *about the situation and realize that there is nothing I can do about it.*

81 **Interviewer:**

82 So are you saying that the hostel has helped you to cope?

83 **Participant:**

84 *It definitely has because when I am here I concentrate more on my books and stuff. At*
85 *first it was hard because I would think about the issues and stuff and I don't want to go*
86 *home and stuff but then here I am around people.*

87 **Interviewer:**

88 Can you think of a story at school one day when you were maybe feeling really down
89 and you went to a friend or a teacher and they helped you to cope?

90 **Participant:**

91 *My teachers most of all helped me. I never thought that teachers really want to get into*
92 *other people's business but then my one friend told my teacher and explained to her*
93 *what was going on. She was like "we are here for you, and will help you to deal with*
94 *things everyday and if you ever need someone to talk to we are here" and that made it*
95 *better for me. Better than me just keeping it inside and it eating me inside. If I talk to*
96 *people its better because I know that I am talking to somebody and it really just helps*
97 *me.*

98 **Interviewer:**

99 So your teachers are very supportive and helpful to you?

100 **Participant:**

101 *Oh yes they are.*

102 **Interviewer:**

103 Alright let's talk about your friends. Were there any friends at school that helped you in
104 anyway to cope with the divorce of your parents?

105 **Participant:**

106 *Oh yes they have helped me. It is just sometimes they have their own problems to deal*
107 *with and I don't want to bring my problems on top of theirs. But they really do talk to me*
108 *and if I ever need anything from them they are there to help.*

109 **Interviewer:**

110 Have you spoken to them about the divorce?

111 **Participant:**

112 *Yes they do know that my parents got divorced.*

113 **Interviewer:**

114 When talking to a friend about the divorce of your parents is it easier for you to talk to
115 someone who is going through the same problems as you or can you just talk to anyone
116 about it?

117 **Participant:**

118 *When you talk to someone who has like divorced parents, sometimes their situation is*
119 *different from yours, so it is much better talking to a person whose parents are getting*
120 *divorced because they know how it is, living in two homes sometimes and just being*
121 *confused. Talking to a person whose parents are not divorced they will not really*
122 *understand how it feels.*

123 **Interviewer:**

124 Did you show any emotions when your parents got divorced?

125 **Participant:**

126 *Oh yes I sure did. I cried a lot at school at home every time I thought about it I cried. I*
127 *was so angry and did not know what to do.*

128 **Interviewer:**

129 From what culture are you from?

130 **Participant:**

131 *I am Sotho*

132 **Interviewer:**

133 Is there any specific ritual that the Sotho culture believe in doing when people get
134 divorced?

135 **Participant:**

136 *Um the only thing that I know we did was we had like a family gathering where they*
137 *discussed all the things, like where we must live and money stuff.*

138 **Interviewer:**

139 I have heard some people saying that I is not so bad for the children if their parents get
140 divorced. How do you feel about that?

141 **Participant:**

142 *Well they don't know really how we feel so they can't say that. It makes me cross*
143 *because they just think what they want to.*

144 **Interviewer:**

145 Okay well **this** is the end of our interview is there anything else that you want to tell me
146 that you feel is important?

147 **Participant:**

148 *No.*

149 **Interviewer:**

150 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you. I just want to check how are
151 you feeling now (...debriefing done).

1 INTERVIEW FIVE

2 PART 2

3 PARTICIPANT – NASH

4 **Interviewer:**

5 You mentioned that it is sometimes hard when you don't see your dad why do you
6 feel this way about your dad?

7 **Participant:**

8 *Because I still love him no matter what. Even though I don't see him everyday and*
9 *we don't live in the same house anymore I still love him.*

10 **Interviewer:**

11 You seem to really still love and care for your dad, did he show any support or
12 concern towards you after the divorce?

13 **Participant:**

14 *Yes he did.*

15 **Interviewer:**

16 Can you tell me a bit more about why you feel that way?

17 **Participant:**

18 *My dad was very concerned because he knew I was very upset and sad about the*
19 *divorce so he always asked how I was doing and said I must tell him if I need or want*
20 *anything which really helped cause I knew that he was still there for me and that he*
21 *still loved and cared for me.*

22 **Interviewer:**

23 You said that your friends really helped you by talking to you, how did this make you
24 feel?

25 **Participant:**

26 *Um by talking to my friends it helped me to stop always worrying about the divorce*
27 *and sometimes I just did not know what to do anymore and then I would ask them*
28 *and they had good answers that helped me.*

29 **Interviewer:**

30 What did they say that helped you?

31 **Participant:**

32 *They just said things like I must not worry about it there is always a way to solve all*
33 *problems like this one time my friends saw that I was really upset the one day and*
34 *they actually stopped what they were doing and sat down with me and just let me*
35 *talk to them until I felt better again.*

36 **Interviewer:**

37 You mentioned that your teachers helped you because you could talk to them, how
38 did this help you and make you feel?

39 **Participant:**

40 *My teachers helped me because when I was really down they always reminded me*
41 *that I am unique and a very strong person. They also told me that I am never alone*
42 *and I will always have them supporting me and I can talk to them anytime that I need*
43 *to which helped because sometimes I can't talk to anyone at home and then I can*
44 *easily go to a teacher and they would help me. Just having someone to talk to and I*
45 *know that I can really trust them really helped me a lot.*

46 **Interviewer:**

47 You said in your first interview that in your culture after a divorce you had a family
48 gathering where you spoke about where you must live as well as money etc, how did
49 you feel about this meeting?

50 **Participant :**

51 *Um.. (pause), I think it made me feel scared but also happy because at least they*
52 *were worried about what was going to happen to me.*

53 **Interviewer:**

54 So how did this meeting help you?

55 **Participant:**

56 *It made me realize that I am not alone and that some people still care.*

57 **Interviewer:**

58 You mentioned in your first interview that you stay at the hostel, can you explain how
59 the hostel has helped you cope?

60 **Participant:**

61 *In the beginning I wanted to go home to try and see if I could get my mom and dad*
62 *back together again but after the first holiday I realized there was nothing that I could*
63 *do, it was like they didn't even listen to me. Now I am glad that I could rather be at*
64 *the hostel than there.*

65 **Interviewer:**

66 Have you ever gone to see a therapist to help you cope?

67 **Participant:**

68 *No I never went.*

69 **Interviewer:**

70 Thank you Nash for allowing me to interview you again.

INTERVIEW FIVE

PART 3

PARTICIPANT – NASH

Interviewer:

You said in your second interview that you are so glad to rather be at the hostel than at home. Can you tell me why you feel like that?

Participant:

Well here at the hostel I am always around people and can talk to them and there is someone here to always help me with my work and I can just think more about my school work and make sure that I can become better one day.

Interviewer:

I forgot to ask you in your first interview if you have any hobbies, things that you like doing in your free time?

Participant

Um I like spending time with my friends and I would also say doing sport I enjoy that.

Interviewer:

You taking part in sport do you think this has helped you cope with your parents divorce?

Participant:

Um, yes I do think that it has helped me.

Interviewer:

Can you maybe think of a story of how sport helped you?

Participant:

Um this one day I was really upset I think I just came back from visiting my mom and I was not feeling so good and my friends and I went out and played some hockey

26 *and it helped me. Made me feel good again.*

27 **Interviewer:**

28 Why did it make you feel good when you went out with your friends and played
29 hockey?

30 **Participant:**

31 *It helped because when I am feeling down I can just forget about some things that*
32 *are bundling up inside of me.*

33 **Interviewer:**

34 Thanks once again for all your time Nash. I think I have all the information that I
35 need. You have been a great participant. Good luck with school and keep strong.

ADDENDUM B
AUDIT TRAIL
PROCESS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

Excerpt from Interview 5

(part 2)

Nash

Interviewer:

You mentioned that it is sometimes hard when you don't see your dad why do you feel this way about your dad?

Participant:

Because I still love him no matter what. Even though I don't see him everyday and we don't live in the same house anymore I still love him.

Comment [A1]: Unconditional love towards dad

Interviewer:

You seem to really still love and care for your dad, did he show any support or concern towards you after the divorce?

Participant:

Yes he did.

Interviewer:

Can you tell me a bit more about why you feel that way?

Participant:

My dad was very concerned because he knew I was very upset and sad about the divorce so he always asked how I was doing and said I must tell him if I need or want anything which really helped cause I knew that he was still there for me and that he still loved and cared for me.

Comment [A2]: Caring dad- positive relationship

Comment [A3]: Dad always there for support

Comment [A4]: Reassurance – dad still loves her

Interviewer:

You said that your friends really helped you by talking to you, how did this make you feel?

Participant:

Um by talking to my friends it helped me to stop always worrying about the divorce and sometimes I just did not know what to do anymore and then I would ask them and they had good answers that helped me.

Comment [A5]: Friends="numb" stress

Comment [A6]: Ask friends for advice

Comment [A7]: Friends give positive advice

Interviewer:

What did they say that helped you?

Participant:

They just said things like I must not worry about it there is always a way to solve all problems like this one time my friends saw that I was really upset the one day and they actually stopped what they were doing and sat down with me and just let me talk to them until I felt better again

Comment [A8]: Friends give advice

Comment [A9]: Friends could pick up stress

Comment [A10]: Friends always available

Comment [A11]: Can talk to friends

Interviewer:

You mentioned that your teachers helped you because you could talk to them, how did this help you and make you feel?

Participant:

My teachers helped me because when I was really down they always reminded me that I am unique and a very strong person. They also told me that I am never alone and I will always have them supporting me and I can talk to them anytime that I need to which helped because sometimes I can't talk to anyone at home and then I can easily go to a teacher and they would help me. Just having someone to talk to and I know that I can really trust them really helped me a lot.

Comment [A12]: Teachers give positive advice

Comment [A13]: Will always have support from teachers

Comment [A14]: Teachers always accessible

Comment [A15]: Teachers to talk to

Comment [A16]: Trusting teachers

Interviewer:

You said in your first interview that in your culture after a divorce you had a family gathering where you spoke about where you must live as well as money etc, how did you feel about this meeting

Participant :

Um. (pause), I think it made me feel scared but also happy because at least they were worried about what was going to happen to me.

Comment [A17]: family gathering-helped

Interviewer:

So how did this meeting help you?

Participant:

It made me realize that I am not alone and that some people still care.

Comment [A18]: meeting takes away sense of being isolated or alone

Comment [A19]: realization that there are still people that care-not alone

Interviewer:

You mentioned in your first interview that you stay at the hostel, can you explain how the hostel has helped you cope?

Participant:

In the beginning I wanted to go home to try and see if I could get my mom and dad back together again but after the first holiday I realized there was nothing that I could do, it was like they didn't even listen to me. Now I am glad that I could rather be at the hostel than there.

Comment [A20]: hostel helped

Preliminary coding: open

Unconditional love towards dad

Caring dad- positive relationship

Dad always there for support

Reassurance -dad still loves her

Friends-"numb" stress

Ask friends for advice

Friends give positive advice

Friends give advice

Friends could pick up stress

Friends always available

Can talk to friends

Teachers give positive advice

Will always have support from teachers

Teachers always accessible

Teachers to talk to

Trusting teachers

Cultural meeting-helped

Hostel helped

Meeting takes away sense of being isolated or alone

Realization that there are still people that care -not alone

Grouped codes: axial

Supportive relationships	Cultural meeting/family gathering	Always available	School hostel
Unconditional love towards dad. Caring dad- positive relationship Dad always there for support Can talk to friends Will always have support from teachers Teachers to talk to Trusting teachers Reassurance -dad still loves her Friends-"numb" stress Friends could pick up stress Ask friends for advice Friends give positive advice Teachers give positive advice	Cultural meeting- helped Meeting takes away sense of being isolated or alone Realization that there are still people that care –not alone	Teachers always accessible Friends always available	Hostel helped

ADDENDUM C

ASSENT/CONSENT FORM ¹

VOLUNTARY informed consent form

THE *HOW SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH NEGOTIATE RESILIENCE* STUDY:

If you agree, please place an “X” in the ‘yes’ box to show that you understand and agree with each statement:

1. I understand the information about the study in the Information Letter. Any questions I had were answered.	Yes, I understand
2. I realize that the participation is completely voluntary and that I can stop being part of the study at any time. If I am uncomfortable answering any question, I may choose not to answer.	Yes, I understand
3. My participation will be confidential. I understand that my full name will not be used, nor will specific details of where I live be shared, when information from the interviews is used by researchers.	Yes, I understand
4. I understand that what I say may be quoted at great length in publications, presentations and the final report. If I become concerned with anything I said, I can ask for parts, or all, of what I said not to be quoted. I may also have deleted any parts of the interview I want deleted.	Yes, I understand
5. I understand that even if my parent or guardian consents to my taking part in this study, it is my decision whether I want to participate. If I do not wish to participate, or want to withdraw from this study at any time, my wishes will be respected without penalty. My parent's or guardian's	Yes, I understand

¹ Assent forms were given to youth younger than 16. Their parents/guardians co-signed.

consent does not make me have to participate.	
6. I understand that if something troubles me while participating, the researcher will provide me with information about community resources (e.g. a local psychologist) that might help me. I understand that I will be responsible for the payment of such a professional in the event that I should follow up the referral.	Yes, I understand

I agree to take part in this study.

Research Participant's Signature

(Date)

I agree to allow my child to participate.

Parent or Guardian's Signature

(Date)

The study has been explained to the young person and this form signed voluntarily.

Researcher's Signature

(Date)