

FACTORS PROMOTING RESILIENCE IN HIGH RISK YOUTH

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Magister Psychologiae degree (Mpsych) in the department of Psychology, University of the



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ABSTRACT

FACTORS PROMOTING RESILIENCE IN HIGH RISK YOUTH

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The following study aimed to explore the development of resilience within male youth, despite exposure to numerous factors traditionally classified as high-risk. The research focussed on the developmental process of six male youth who engaged in positive coping through actively seeking protection in a high-risk environment, in the form of a non government organization within their community. The study assumed that the active seeking of a protective environment by high-risk youth is an indication of resilience. A phenomenological approach was used to understand the processes that aided the development of resilience within the individuals, through semi-structured in-depth interview guides. Qualitative thematic analysis was utilized to attain and understand common themes. An ecosystemic approach was used in conceptualizing the findings of this research. Indications of resilient development within male youths, relating to systemic factors, which contributed to resilience were explored. The major findings of this research were congruent with past research, both in South Africa and internationally. Three primary themes of support, control, and security emerged from the analysis. The research findings indicated that individuals possessing an internal locus of control were able to cope with adversity and had hence developed resilience. The participants in this sample were confident in their abilities, possessed motivation and belief in success. Systemic factors that were elicited as important in the optimal development of resilience were belief in the youth's ability, and faith in their capacity to achieve, as well as providing support and guidance to youth when needed. The research found that if youth were faced with factors understood as high-risk, and were able to overcome them, these risk factors served to further enhance resilience. This research offers researchers and community organizations further insight into effective intervention programs to promote optimal youth development in high-risk areas.

NOVEMBER 2008

Keywords:

Resilience; Coping; Adaptation; Risk factors; Protective factors; Ecosystemic;

Thematic analysis; Male youth; Phenomenology; Hanover Park.

DECLARATION

I declare that 'Factors promoting resilience in high risk youth' in my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree of examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Peta Ricketts

Signed:



Date:

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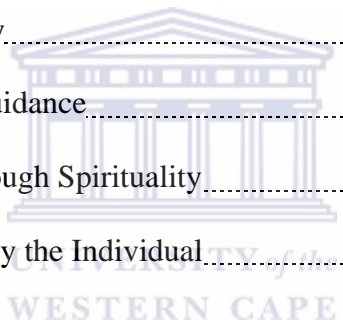
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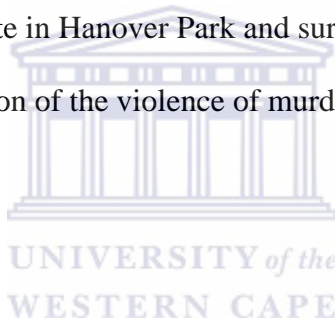
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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The present study focuses on an area within the Western Cape of South Africa. A country characterised by a brutal history of oppression and violence. South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world (Reckson & Becker, 2005), a democracy emerging from a tumultuous and oppressive past. The area under study is Hanover Park, situated about fifteen kilometres from the city centre and isolated from its productivity. Hanover Park is an area characterised by crime, gangsterism, and drug use (Tomlinson, Swartz & Landman, 2003). The crime rate in Hanover Park and surrounds seems to have created an “almost normalised perception of the violence of murder, robbery, rape and hijacking” in the area (Pillay, 2005; p27).



1.1.1 Apartheid South Africa:

The word Apartheid literally means ‘separateness’. In South Africa it was characterised by the forced separation of individuals due to skin colour through the implementation of laws (Duncan, 2005). In South African history the year 1948 marks the beginning of majority rule of the Afrikaner National Party (NP), the masterminds behind the application of the Apartheid system in South Africa. Apartheid laws resulted in the denationalisation of ‘non-whites’ in order to create a white majority South Africa.

In the 1950s two crucial acts were passed in South Africa, the population registration act, and the Group Areas Act. The population registration act served to classify individuals as

‘white’, ‘black’, ‘coloured’, or ‘Indian’ based on their skin colour (Duncan, 2005). Those classified ‘white’ were granted vast privileges, whilst other races were left destitute (Pillay, 2005). The passing of the group areas act meant the legal separation of racial groups geographically. Forced removals of individuals were systematically implemented throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. The relocation procedure was labelled ‘the garden city project’, the removal of non-whites to the ‘countryside’ – a mass expanse of barren, sandy, scrubland – on the outskirts of the city (Steinberg, 2004). This is the origination of the Cape Flats, the location of Hanover Park.

By the early 1990s discriminatory laws of the Apartheid system were finally discarded. In 1994 South Africa officially began the shift towards Democracy. Although over ten years have past the destructive power of the Apartheid system is still felt vividly in South Africa today. The regime “wrenched thousands from their homes and dumped them into barren, overcrowded or windswept wastelands” (Pillay, 2005; p19). Violent laws in a violent and unjust society have created violent and angry generations of people, who are unsure of where they belong in a history of relocation and oppression (Duncan, 2005).

The ‘pockets of poverty’ created through the relocations, such as Hanover Park, are generally crime infested areas marked by disease and malnutrition (Pillay, 2005). During the Apartheid years there were little, or no, health systems, poor education, unemployment, and overcrowded schools (Dissel, 1997; Duncan, 2005). Although improvements have been made over the years the socio-economic status of areas created through Apartheid relocations are well below international living standards.

1.1.2 The ‘Cape Flats’: Hanover Park

Hanover Park is an area engulfed in poverty, drugs, and violence (Tomlinson, et-al, 2003). A survey published in the Cape Argus, sited in Standing (2003), stated that 97% of youth surveyed on the Cape Flats have heard gunshots previously. Almost half have witnessed a corpse of either a stranger or relative who had died from unnatural causes. What we see now – an area that is overcrowded and divided into gang ‘turfs’, where gun shots are a common sound in the background – is undoubtedly one of the many devastating legacies of apartheid. For many young residents the boundaries between right and wrong, legal and illegal, are blurred and unpredictable (Standing, 2003).

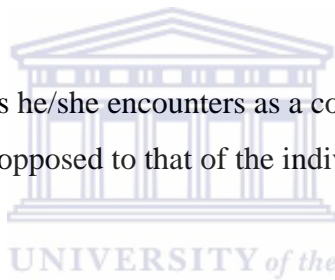
Forced removals, as well as migrant labour policies, resulted in the disintegration of the family system (Pillay, 2005). The relocations resulted in the breaking up of the extended family, a loss of familiarity, and fear in individuals. Groups of people came together to protect one another. The area in which they were placed became the only place they knew. It became an area to be protected and defended from strangers. The anger at the injustice of relocation was placed on those ‘outside’ their ‘turf’. It was during this time, the 1970s, that the divisions of turf in Hanover Park began, initiating gang formation. Hanover Park is one of the most gang violent areas in the Western Cape, so much so that the gangs create and control the community (Standing, 2003).

Individuals growing up in Hanover Park are at high risk for criminal and deviant behaviours, due to poverty and exposure to violent crimes (Standing, 2003). In spite of this youth often emerge as successful individuals, able to cope and adapt in times of

adversity. Coping and adaptation in difficult times seems to be positively correlated with one's psychological well-being (Barends, 2004). Greeff (2005) links one's ability to cope with and adapt to changing situations with the concept of resilience. She defines resilience as "the ability to bounce back from adversity or hardship, to overcome the negative influences that block achievement" (Greeff, 2005; p3).

Resilience can be understood as one's ability to cope and adapt in challenging times, which in turn links with one's psychological well-being. Barends (2004; p3) links the importance of resilience to successful coping, underscoring that a person who is able to overcome adversity is:

More resilient to the stresses he/she encounters as a consequence of the strength of his/her coping resources as opposed to that of the individual who surrenders to adversity.



Resilience and coping ability work together in a dialect, as one strengthens the other improves and becomes more functional.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

There is international concern for the well-being and protection of youth, especially those exposed to harsh conditions, with developmental health being a priority (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Youth growing up in communities, such as Hanover Park, are being denied basic needs such as personal safety and health. This is in direct contravention of the United Nations convention of the rights of the child act endorsed by South Africa (Dawes & Donald, 1999). Research exploring primary factors that serve to enhance developing youths' quality of life and promote resilience allows for increased protection of

individuals in high-risk areas. Through understanding and interpreting the narratives of youth living in high risk areas contextual and individual resiliency indicators can be more readily identified (Rausch, Lovett, & Walker, 2003). The importance of understanding resilience through the interpretation of individual perceptions is echoed by Boyden and Mann (2005) who state that “meaning is a profoundly important mediating factor in children’s experiences of adversity, and yet it has been largely ignored in the literature” (p15). The current research aims to fill this void in South African resiliency research in order to increase understanding.

Youth are central to society’s functional growth and development. Dissel (1997; p9) elaborates on the importance of youth as a focus:

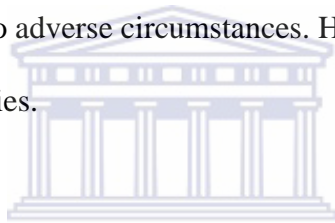
The fact that youth are both the primary perpetrators of violence, and its primary victims, makes it crucial to find effective ways to prevent these young people from becoming involved in cycles of crime and violence.

This study aims to establish the factors during the life of a group of male youth that have helped to promote individual resilience, allowing them to cope in a violent society and overcome adversities. The provision of insight into the crucial aspects that promote resilience will allow for more efficient intervention programs. Through an increase in knowledge, regarding factors that promote competent development, intervention strategies can become more effective, both in their implications and costs (Dawes & Donald, 1999). This will allow for society to more effectively equip others to succeed in their community through the incorporation of similar strategies.

1.3 Aims of the study

The aims of the study are to:

- Understand the primary protective factors in individuals' environments, which allow for the development of resilience amongst male youth.
- Explore individual belief systems and character traits that are indicative of the development of resilience in male youth.
- Understand what meanings individuals create within their environments that may encourage non-deviance.
- Explore the dominant aspects that the individual identifies as allowing for the development of resilience to adverse circumstances. Hence allowing for functional coping and adaptive strategies.



1.4 Significance of the Study

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Individuals face a vast amount of choices and decisions throughout their development. These are often influenced by the beliefs of the community, family, and schools, in which the individual is brought up. Those who grow up in an area defined by violence, criminality, and drug use, make their future decisions on an unstable and non-ideal base. South Africa is unable to change all aspects of a so-called high risk community instantaneously, due to the mass scale of such an operation. Through the identification of the primary aspects that allow youth from Hanover Park to make positive choices regarding their future we can begin making strategic and meaningful changes. Through understanding the meanings individuals attribute to events we can begin to understand factors that allow for their unique and functional realities to exist (Moore, 2003).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The researcher has utilised an ecosystemic understanding, which focuses on the individual within various contexts, or systems. The ecosystemic approach provides a holistic approach to the study of the individual (Moore, 2003). The individual is viewed as being part of a greater network or suprasystem, in which various systems exist, such as the community, the family, and peer groups (Moore, 2003). A change in any one system causes the equilibrium of the suprasystem, the totality of all systemic factors which influence the individual, to destabilise (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). One's ability to regain a sense of equilibrium is linked to one's ability to cope and adapt.

Oplatka (2001; p2) states, when explaining the systemic concept, that:

All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish one element and study its nature without taking into account its linkage to the other elements consisting of the phenomenon.

The ecosystemic approach takes into account the ecological nature of human interactions (Fourie, 1998). It is understood that all aspects in an individual's suprasystem are linked and related in meaningful ways. Behaviour is viewed as a circular interaction between the various systems, which all effect and act upon one another (Dowling, 1985).

The ecosystemic approach acknowledges the interlinked nature of interactions and the importance of various systemic influences. The concept of cybernetics is utilised, emphasizing that all communications are a two-way process (Moore, 2003). This necessitates the need for all phenomena within a context to be acknowledged. Traditional systems theory postulates that the researcher can remain once removed from the systems

under study. The ecosystemic approach differs in this regard, utilising second order cybernetics which emphasises the importance of acknowledging researcher influence (Fourie, 1998). In the process of researching the researcher creates a new and unique system within a greater suprasystem. The researcher observations are effected by his or her behaviours within the system as well as his or her interpretation of communications (Moore, 2003).

To utilise an ecosystemic approach necessitates a constructivist epistemology, implying that people create and assign unique meaning to all occurrences in their systems (Fourie, 1998). Individuals create unique meanings for events that occur within their lives, depending on their unique interpretations (Moore, 2003). The ecosystemic approach takes into account individual perspectives whilst acknowledging contextual and dynamic factors within individual systems (Rausch, et-al, 2003). Interactions and behaviours are concurrently influenced by the characteristics of the individual, those involved in the interactions, and the contexts in which the interactions occur (Dawes & Donald, 1999).

1.6 Plan of Thesis

The current research aims to increase understanding of factors which allow for the development of resilience amongst male youth. Chapter one provided a brief history of South Africa in order to illustrate the origins of the sample under study. The rationale and significance of the study was outlined, as well as providing an understanding of the studies aims. Additionally chapter one provided a description of the theoretical framework to be utilised throughout the study.

Chapter two is a review of past research relating to resilience and youth, focussing primarily on high-risk individuals in the South African context. A description of the terms used throughout the research is provided and the links between the concepts are outlined in relation to the ecosystemic theoretical approach.

Chapter three outlines the methodology used to generate, understand, and interpret the data. Qualitative research is discussed, specifically in relation to thematic analysis and interpretation. The participants selected and the tools of analysis are explained. This chapter explores ethical issues that may arise due to the research, as well as mechanisms to ensure the validity of the findings.

Chapter four illustrates the process of data analysis and interpretation. The transcribed interview data is collated into various themes and sub-themes which are outlined. A discussion of each theme is provided. These are related to information gathered from the data as well as that from past research.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the thematic findings, outlining the impact the results have on future research and current theory. Recommendations for future research are provided, as well as the limitations of the current study.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The current research aims to identify factors that serve to promote resilience in male youth. An ecosystemic approach understands that an individual's development is dependent upon the various systems within an individual's suprasystem. To utilise this approach necessitates the need to explore youths' various systems of influence in order to achieve maximum understanding of the concept of resiliency. The ecosystemic perspective understands that:

“The psychosocial outcome of exposure to adversity varies from individual to individual and population to population and is mediated by an array of personal, family, and broader environmental factors or processes that interact with each other in a dynamic manner (Boyden & Mann, 2005; p17-18).

In order to achieve a relevant understanding of the development of resilience within youth it is crucial that these primary factors be accounted for and understood.

The current chapter will explore the primary systemic factors of person, process, and context, in order to understand the development of resilience within youth (Dawes & Donald, 1999). Person factors relate to intra-individual and interpersonal systems, such as temperament, verbal communications, and non-verbal interactions (Moore, 2003).

Process factors are primarily the family and small group systems and the interactions within and amongst these systems. Context factors are the greater family systems, peer groups, the school, and the neighbourhood or community. Each factor influences the individual and together make up the individual's suprasystem. The various systems will

be explored in relation to current research focussing on youth and resilience, specifically in the South African context.

2.2 Youth

A conceptual understanding of the term ‘youth’ is elusive, with ill-defined age classifications being utilised to concretise this group of individuals. Internationally youth fall into the age category between sixteen and twenty-four years (Everatt, 2000). South Africa has taken an even broader perspective, justified through the negative effects of apartheid on the development of its younger generation (Everatt, 2000). The South African Youth Policy (1997) indicates that any individual aged between fourteen and thirty-five years may be classified as a youth. Chapter 2.3 of the National Youth Policy (1997) clarifies the reasons for this broad age classification. The policy states that “young people in this age group require social, economic and political support to realise their full potential”. It seems that youth within society are those individuals who require support, in various forms, to complete their journey towards adulthood.

The concept of youth seems to be most usefully understood as a time of transition between ‘childhood’ and ‘adulthood’ (Dissel, 1997). Dawes and Donald (1999) speak of ‘developmental epochs’, wherein people are classified into categories through their physical and psychological maturity as opposed to their chronological age. Individuals currently in the realm of ‘youth’ seem to be shifting their world views and expanding their areas of engagement, a time of developing adult maturity. The dominating system of influence seems to shift from the family to that of peers during this developmental stage

(Dawes & Donald, 1999). During the journey into adulthood youth are faced with vast choices and options, various systems which they may join or depart from. Dawes and Donald (1999) speak of early adolescence as a period of increased risk taking and, in high risk communities, increased exposure to gang influences and drug use. One's youth is a time where support and guidance from the community is crucial in order to allow for successful transformation into adulthood (Dissel, 1997).

Youth seem to be journeying across the divide between childhood and adulthood, deciding on their path into the future. The categorisation of youth seems to cut across both early and late adolescence, as a person begins to question beliefs and choose pathways into adulthood. McAdams (1993) speaks of adolescence as a period in which one develops a personal ideology, a time where beliefs and morals are personalized. Erikson's theory of personality development speaks of adolescence as a period of identity formation and the establishment of a stable self-concept (Weiton, 2001). Youth are those who are shifting towards an independent and unique identity through establishing personal ideologies, rather than individuals in a specific age classification. Commitment to their established ideology marks entry into adulthood (McAdams, 1993).

A positive developmental approach sees the category of youth as representing potential within a society (Damon, 2004). In the past youth have been portrayed as the 'problem generation' and this negative perception has permeated popular culture and media portrayals of young people shifting towards adulthood (Damon, 2004). It seems more beneficial to adopt a perspective which focuses on the value of youth, individuals with

the resources to promote change. Youth in a country are the individuals that represent the potential progress or instability of the country (Van Zyl Slabbert, Malan, Marais, Olivier, Riordan, 1994). The resilient youth in South Africa represent those that have developed a positive sense of identity in their journey towards adulthood, which allows them to positively add to the potential of the country.

2.2.1 Youth and Resilience

The concept of resilience provides a construct for understanding differences across individuals in relation to resistance and recovery from stressful life events (Ong, Bergeman, Bisconti & Wallace, 2006). Youth is understood as a period of transition. A shift comprising of increased exposure to potential stressors. Resilience focuses on one's ability to adapt to systemic changes as well as one's feeling of internal well-being (Rausch, et-al, 2003). Resilient youth are more capable during threatening or traumatic situations, and are more able to recover from these situations (Boyden & Mann, 2005).

All youth have a capacity to be resilient, hence to adapt and successfully cope with challenges (Yellin, 2007). The successful development of resilience is dependant upon various factors provided within an individuals suprasystem, such as the school, family, and community. Mampane & Boucher (2006; p445) define resilience as:

Having a disposition to identify and utilise personal capacities, competencies (strengths) and assets in a specific context when faced with perceived adverse situations.

A resilient youth is one who is able to adapt in a functional manner when faced with adversity or change (Dawes & Donald, 1999). The ability to cope and recover when systemic equilibrium is destabilised is an indication of resilience within youth.

2.2.2 Resilience and Coping

The concepts of resilience and coping are closely intertwined, aiding in the growth or stunting of psychological development. To cope and be resilient is related to one's ability to adapt, heal, and grow from both positive and negative experiences (Greeff, 2005).

Coping is a conscious action taken in an adverse or dangerous situation with the intention of alleviating a stressor (Alvarez-Castillo, Okuonzi, Chabikuli, Lomorro, Atuyambe, Silva, 2006). More specifically problem-focussed coping is an action oriented method of taking control of a situation and attempting to better it (Govender & Killian, 2001).

Coping encourages the actualisation of both the individual and his or her community through successful adaptation to systemic changes.

Alvarez-Castillo, et-al (2006) identify three primary aspects as influencing one's ability to overcome adversity:

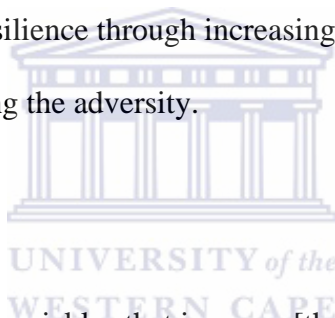
Coping is the specific response to a threat or adversity, while adaptation is the process of coping with the physical or biological or social environment to meet the fundamental requirements for survival. Resilience on the other hand refers to the capability to cope with adversity and recover (p79-80; emphasis added).

If one is able to cope effectively and adapt to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social challenges one's resourcefulness is increased, which in turn increases resiliency. The ability for an individual to reach his or her full potential regarding resilience and coping

is linked to protective and risk factors. These factors determine the strategies youth utilise in order to withstand and overcome stressful situations (Boyden & Mann, 2005).

2.3 Risk and Protective factors

Literature has defined various factors that promote or hinder the development of resilience within individuals (Howell & Egley jr., 2005). The factors can be seen as polarities on a continuum ranging from protective factors to risk factors. Factors of influence can be located within various systems and the impact of its influence may be dependent on the age of the individual. As an individual becomes more able to cope, risk factors can serve to promote resilience through increasing sense of adequacy and competency through overcoming the adversity.



2.3.1 Risk Factors

Risk factors can be defined as “variables that increase [the] individual’s likelihood of psychopathology or their susceptibility to negative developmental outcomes” (Boyden & Mann, 2005; p6). Rausch, et-al (2003) interprets risk factors as adverse circumstances that occur in one’s life sphere. These adversities are seen to increase the probability, or risk, of negative developmental outcomes for youth. To define a youth as high-risk is to imply that his or her life experiences consisted of a higher than average exposure to various factors that have been shown to negatively affect youth development.

Exposure to violence, poverty, lack of parental supervision, lack of family structure, and poor school achievement are examples of previously identified risk factors for developing

individuals (Howell & Egley, jr., 2005). Masten, Garmezy, Tellegen, Pellegrini, Larkin, & Larsen (1988) found that low socio-economic status, as well as poor parenting practices, were related to decreased individual competence and increased disruptive behaviours in times of stress. A sense of incompetence and poor coping strategies, such as disruptive behaviours, are indications of low resiliency in youth (Greeff, 2005).

Research in South Africa indicates that many youth are negatively affected by violence they are directly and indirectly exposed to. Studies have found that those who reside in violent communities report increased levels of anxiety, behavioural problems, and increased aggression (Bility, 1999; Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007). Standing (2003) reported that children in low socio-economic status areas in the Western Cape exhibited symptoms of escalated distress levels, disturbed sleeping and eating behaviours, as well as problems in concentration and attention due to constant exposure to incidences defined as traumatic.

Youth who live amongst violence and collective criminality are at increased risk of being influenced into a deviant lifestyle, through modelling and external pressures to conform for acceptance. Collective violence is common in areas of poverty, such as Hanover Park, and results in the limited functioning of others through the unequal attainment of power and privilege (Duncan, 2005). Activities involving exposure to or involvement in violence and crime tend to act as potential risk factors in communities. Collective violence seems to have a dual effect on the community and the individual. Material gain, through violence and crime, often results in the partial actualisation of the individual to

the detriment of the community as a whole (Standing, 2003). Material wealth, achieved through violent mechanisms, often leads to approval and acceptance by others.

Additionally material wealth allows for a feeling of mastery over the self, which contributes to the development and maintenance of resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005).

In spite of the apparent positive aspects that material wealth achieved through violent mechanisms seems to provide these aspects may be detrimental to positive development and hence resiliency. Research seems to indicate that youth involved in deviant peer activities are more likely to experience feelings of depression and possess lower levels of self-esteem than more functional members of their society (Dumont & Provost, 1999). Findings have emphasised the importance of youth developing functional coping skills and the learning of appropriate behaviours in order to facilitate resiliency (Werner, 1995; Yellin, 2007). This developmental process is often incapacitated through the identification with a deviant peer group. Thus it may be more beneficial to understand the partial, short term, benefits of involvement with deviant peer groups in relation to a need for social acceptance and support. Acceptance is established in a dysfunctional manner through membership with a deviant peer group.

Engaging in group criminality and deviance in order to achieve the desired acceptance and support leads to further alienation from functional society, as acceptable social skills and norms are not learnt. The result is an eventual feeling of entrapment and alienation, which may then lead to feelings of depression and isolation.

2.3.2 Protective Factors

One must acknowledge that many individuals emerge from high-risk communities without choosing the deviant lifestyle assumed from exposure to violence and instability. This indicates a resilience to life adversity's through an ability to cope with and rebound from challenges. Within systems there are factors which seem to shield youth from becoming involved in high-risk behaviours. Factors that increase resilience allow for positive outcomes amongst youth despite high-risk status. These variables can be viewed as 'protective factors'.

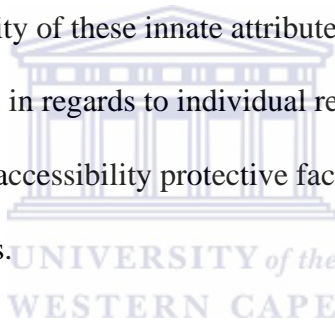
Protective factors serve to increase one's resilience to challenging or high risk situations. Research finds that supportive relationships within the family and the community, positive peer relationships, and a sense of belonging and safety have all been indicated protective factors contributing to resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Howell & Egley jr., 2005). As an individual learns to successfully overcome adversity, through adaptation in challenging times, internal protective factors, such as self-esteem and a sense of confidence, increase (Rausch, et-al, 2003).

The ecosystemic perspective views the individual as being a part of a greater suprasystem, or network of systems (Moore, 2003). Interactions and behaviours are concurrently influenced by the characteristics of the individual, those involved in the interactions, and the contexts in which the interactions occur (Dawes & Donald, 1999). Protective and risk factors can be classified into the various systems within an individuals suprasystem. Systems such as the intrinsic characteristics of the individual, the family,

the school, the peer group, and the conditions of the community can be utilised (Howell & Egley jr, 2005).

2.3.3.1 The intrinsic characteristics of the individual

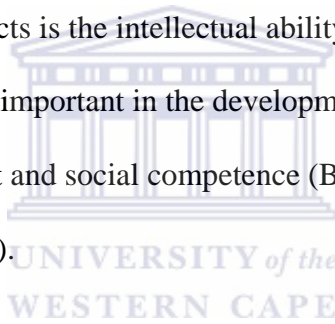
Research has indicated that the intrinsic characteristics of the individual contribute to determining the development of resilience and hence the ability to cope and adapt in times of adversity (Rausch et al, 2003; Yellin, 2007). All individuals have an innate ability to overcome and adapt to challenging circumstances. One's external life circumstances, such as exposure to protective and risk factors, serve as determinants to the development and accessibility of these innate attributes (Yellin, 2007). Hence factors that have emerged as protective in regards to individual resilience seem to develop and become actualised through the accessibility protective factors within the family, community, and school systems.



The concept of cybernetics, utilised in the ecosystemic approach, is apparent in the manner by which the individual affects the responses of the caregiver and vice versa (Moore, 2003). For example Werner (1995) indicated that children with more effective coping mechanisms tended to exhibit a more positive temperament, which elicited a more positive response from their caregivers. Thus if a child was good natured, warm, and affectionate, his or her caregiver tended to respond in a similar manner creating an environment conducive to the effective development of resilient traits. Cybernetic theory speaks of 'feedback loops' between systems of influence, where each communication

elicits a response based on the initial communication and other external influences (Moore, 2003).

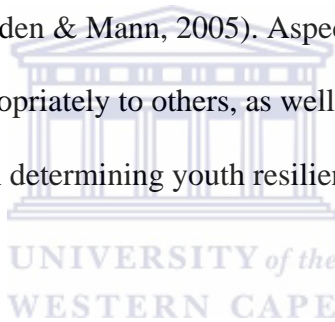
Individual factors both promote resilience directly through improving individual functioning, and indirectly through eliciting factors in other systems which encourage resiliency. Past research has indicated that youth who exhibit the capacity to learn and problem-solve competently seem more likely to develop higher levels of resilience (Rausch, et-al, 2003; Werner, 1995). Yellin (2007) defined competence as the ability of individuals to plan a course of action, whilst maintaining a functional level of flexibility. Linked to these individual aspects is the intellectual ability of the individual, which has been flagged across cultures as important in the development of resilience, often indicating improved adjustment and social competence (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Masten, et-al, 1988; Rausch, et-al, 2003).



The ability to think critically, and autonomously access one's available resources when needed, have been identified as important indicators of resilience (Yellin, 2007). The ability to think critically and access resources is effective in conjunction with the ability to accept when one's personal resources are depleted and assistance in coping is required. Werner (1995) speaks of individuals who are resilient as possessing the ability to both think and act autonomously whilst being able to utilise external resources for assistance when the need is identified. Although actual intellectual capacity does encourage resilience, one's perceptions of self also seem relevant (Dumont & Provost, 1999). Rausch, et-al (2003) found that one's perceived capacity to successfully perform, as well

as one's concept as a competent individual, becomes crucial in relation to resilience and ability to cope in times of adversity. Thus intellectual ability is not paramount in the development of resilience.

Research by Yellin (2007) has indicated that pride and pleasure in one's work and hobbies is highly protective, regardless of intellectual capacity. To possess special interests and activities that are valued by both the self and others, regardless of exceptional talent, seems to foster the development of resilience in youth (Werner, 1995). Additionally one's perceived and actual social competence contributes to resilience, despite intellectual ability (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Aspects such as ability to communicate and respond appropriately to others, as well as the capacity for empathy by the individual are key factors in determining youth resilience (Werner, 1995; Yellin, 2007).



Yellin (2007) defined autonomy within the individual as important in the development and maintenance of resilience. His research found that individuals who possess a positive sense of self, as well as an awareness of themselves as impacting on the world, tend to cope and adapt more effectively. The recommendations stipulated in research conducted by Ong, et-al (2006) focussed on increasing individual resilience through the teaching of mindfulness amongst youth to allow for an awareness of the complexity of emotions within others and themselves. With the development of an awareness of self comes the understanding that the self can effect the external environment, and hence the development of an 'internal locus of control'.

To possess an internal locus of control – the belief of ability to change or influence external circumstances – as well as an individual’s “ability to understand and relate to aspects of their lives in a realistic manner” (Rausch, et-al, 2003; p9), has been found to be a positive indication of resilience and coping ability in youth (Yellin, 2007). Confidence in one’s own ability leads to the belief in one’s capacity to influence the external world, providing the individual with the skills to realistically utilize functional tools, such as problem-focussed coping and a feeling of optimism regarding one’s capacity to succeed. Ong, et-al (2006) defined these functional tools as ‘positive emotions’.

The study by Ong, et-al (2006), which conceptualised resilience as one’s ability to adapt and recover in times of stress, focussed on the importance of individuals utilising positive emotions. Coping strategies that focus on achieving an attainable goal, such as problem-focussed active coping strategies, as well as the utilisation of optimism and humour, are examples of positive emotions (Ong, et-al, 2006). Self confidence, the belief that one can control his or her fate to a certain degree, and the ability to utilise coping strategies in an effective manner are all indicators of resilience in developing individuals (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Through the ability to utilise positive emotions to facilitate coping in times of change one’s resilience to adversity is predicted to increase (Ong, et-al, 2006).

As Ong, et-al (2006; p3) state from their findings:

The available empirical evidence suggests that psychological resilience is associated with resistance to and recovery from stressful life events, and positive emotions may be the underlying mechanism by which high resilient individuals achieve their adaptive outcomes.

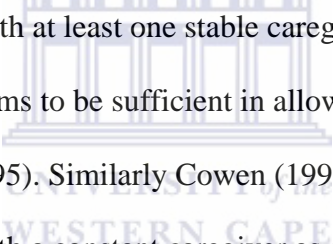
Another aspect identified within past research, as an indication of resilience within individuals, is that of sense of purpose or motivation (Werner, 1995; Yellin, 2007). This factor seems to overlap with the individual's belief in their own ability to affect the external world. If an individual possesses the belief in his or her own ability to impact on the world, they can believe that they have the ability to make a positive difference in their society (Werner, 1995). This allows for the creation of hope and optimism within youth developing in an area surrounded by crime and violence. Aspects such as hope and optimism can also be viewed in relation to faith and spirituality.

Rausch, et-al (2003) speak of church membership and religious affiliation as enhancers of one's coping ability. Yellin (2007) speaks of the importance of faith and spirituality in order to instil a sense of meaning in life for the individual. Spirituality seems to provide individuals with a tool to understand the world and have faith in the future. Findings have indicated that individuals who have future hopes and goals tend to cope better in difficult times (Rausch, et-al 2003). Thus religion or spirituality seems to provide hope and optimism for individuals, as well as a sense of belonging. Both of which are crucial in the development of resilience and the avoidance of deviant group membership (Howell & Egley jr, 2005; Yellin, 2007)

2.3.3.2 The family

The influences of the family on developing youth are significant, as this is the primary system utilised by the majority of youth in order to learn and model appropriate ways of

being and behaving. A study by Goldstein and Reiboldt (2004) attempted to elicit strengths and competencies within families in order to establish what aspects emerged as crucial for coping in a family setting. The research indicated that families gain much of their strength from one another, hence strong and functional family networks served as a protective factor. Families in which members encourage and support one another seems to promote the development of resilience, whilst high levels of discord within a family system seems to hinder this development, serving as a risk factor (Garmezy, 1985). Rausch, et-al (2003) found specifically that support from the family in relation to school achievement and competence was a significant predictor of resilience.



Close bonds within a family, with at least one stable caregiver who possesses the capacity to be emotionally available, seems to be sufficient in allowing the development of resilience in youth (Werner, 1995). Similarly Cowen (1991) emphasized the importance of early familial attachments with a constant caregiver as a significant factor in the functional development of resilience in individuals. For males developing within a family system the implementation of constant structure and rules seems to contribute positively to development (Werner, 1995). With family structure comes the importance of adequate supervision and guidance for youth within the family, allowing for functional social skills to develop (Masten, et-al, 1988).

When discussing individual indicators of resilience religion and spirituality were mentioned as mechanisms that seem to encourage and allow for personal growth. Research also indicates that religion and common spirituality within family groups seems

to improve family ties, increasing familial bonds, which contributes to resiliency (Rausch, et-al, 2003). In addition to this religion has been shown to increase family stability and provide meaning to the family system (Werner, 1995). Cohesion, which can be promoted through religion and family stability, seems to encourage the development of resilience in individuals (Garmezy, 1985; Masten, et-al, 1988). It seems that religion may serve a dual role through increasing sense of purpose, belonging, and optimism – allowing a medium for personal growth and spiritual well-being – whilst further increasing the development of resilience through enhancing family ties.

The family system seems to form a basis in the development of individual resiliency. Families which encourage self-initiative and autonomous behaviours tend to allow for the development of resiliency within individuals (Werner, 1995). A study by Rausch, et-al (2003) indicated that families with a strong work ethic tended to foster higher levels of resilience in their children. It is a possibility that through the modelling family of members' youth learn the benefits of setting and achieving one's goals. Werner (1995) emphasized the importance of the presence of a male figure, not necessarily the father, for developing male youth to identify with in order to guide appropriate development and emotional openness.

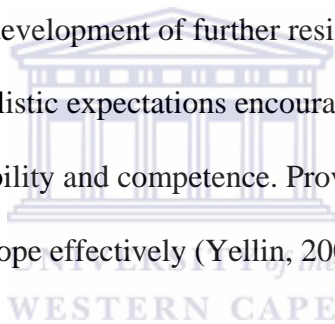
In a study by Goldstein and Reiboldt (2004) of low socio-economic status families the role of women as the leaders and providers of sustenance in the home was a significant indicator of effective coping ability within families. With this comes the need developing youth have for stability and basic care, which encourages trust in others and confidence in

the self as a competent individual (Werner, 1995). As one would expect good parenting practices, and positive relationships in early life, have been indicated as increasing resilience in developing youth (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Past research seems to indicate that children who receive positive and stable care when growing up are more likely to develop internal resilience (Rausch, et-al, 2003).

2.3.3.3 The School and Peer Groups

The school environment provides a multitude of factors for developing youth, which can foster the development of resilience. Alternately it can encourage deviance through increased exposure to risk factors. It is a system in which resilience can flourish if the developing youth has experienced exposure to protective factors within the home. An individual who feels capable and competent, with the ability to communicate and problem solve effectively, can do well within the school setting. Communication is important both in academic achievement as well as in the ability to be understood and accepted by peers. Peer groups seem to be an influential factor in positive youth development, with successful engagement with others seemingly contributing to the development of resilience (Rausch, et-al, 2003; Short & Meier, 1981). Those with poor self-concept and low self-esteem struggle to fit in with the more resilient and capable youth. They tend to veer towards more deviant and dysfunctional peer groups in order to gain a sense of membership and competence. Previous exposure to protective factors encourages functional school membership and hence further development of resilience. In spite of this youth coming from unstable families, rife with discord, are able to cope in school if provided with some factors deemed protective within the setting.

As with the family setting stability is important for optimal youth development within the school setting. Various school changes impacting negatively on the individual. If the individual possesses the capacity to adapt to the new school environment and engage appropriately with others at school the risk of school change is minimised (Rausch, et-al, 2003). The ability to adapt is included in the definition of resilience. Research by Rausch, et-al (2003) indicated that once an individual has established a resilient capacity his or her ability to overcome potential risk factors increases. Additionally an individual who enters the school system with the belief that he or she can participate in the classroom and effectively contribute aids the development of further resilience (Yellin, 2007). Teachers who are able to set high but realistic expectations encourage the development of resilience through increasing ability and competence. Provided the individual believes he or she possesses the ability to cope effectively (Yellin, 2007).



Within the school environment support, by both teachers and peers, and participation in after school activities play a central role in resilience and functional coping (Ward, et-al, 2007; Yellin, 2007). Teachers often become a role model for youth, and can serve as highly protective if youth feel that they were heard by their teacher and supported by them when needed (Werner, 1995).

Amongst the most frequently encountered positive role models in the lives of children, outside of the family circle, was a favourite teacher. For the resilient youngster a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills but also a confidant and positive role model for personal identification. (Werner E, 2000; sited in Yellin, 2007 slide 39).

2.3.3.4 The community

The community subsystem encompasses and effects all the previous subsystems discussed. Many factors defined as protective may only be able to emerge within a community which is stable and supportive. The extent to which support from the community is accessed and utilised, is decided by the family and the individual. Increased participation in community activities tends to positively contribute to one's coping ability. A study by Goldstein and Reiboldt (2004) indicated that families who were involved with the community tended to cope better in times of adversity. They were more resilient relative to families that tended to be more isolated from the community. Actual and perceived availability of elders, as well as peers, for support seems crucial in the development of resilience in youth (Werner, 1995). Of importance to note is that social support in isolation does not seem to be a significant protective factor in adolescents (Dumont & Provost, 1999). Early role models, friends, and family are strongly related to identity and sense of purpose in individuals (Reckson & Becker, 2005), and it is often the case that the community one lives in determines access to positive role models and supportive peer groups. If an individual is able to find role models within his or her community the resulting sense of self identity and purpose which develops increases resiliency during challenging times (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006).

Exposure to environments and situations considered 'high risk' does not seem to automatically equate to deviance in individuals (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Although violence, poverty, and limited community support place a strain on one's ability to cope with adversity (Alvarez-Castillo, et-al, 2006), some individuals possess greater resilience

and are thus better equipped to cope and adapt to demanding circumstances. The above outline of current research in relation to the development of resilience underscores all the systems as contributing to individual's well-being and coping capacity. Dawes and Donald (1999; p18) have begun to narrow the focus of research when attempting interventions to encourage the development of resilience in youth, stating that:

The evidence suggests that interventions in the microsystems like family contexts, peer contexts, and schools – by altering the proximal relationship of the child and other actors – are frequently most likely to succeed.

The findings of this research aims to further narrow down the scope of focus in order to adequately identify effective intervention programs in high-risk communities.



CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The current chapter outlines the methodological procedures that were utilised to explore the concept of resiliency within male youth. It commences with a description of the research design utilised to understand the concepts under exploration. A brief outline of the location of the study is provided, followed by a description of the participants who were included in the study. The chapter then explains the measure utilised and the process of data collection and analysis. Finally ethical aspects are considered in relation to this particular study, as well as the mechanisms used to ensure trustworthiness, or validity, in the research procedure.

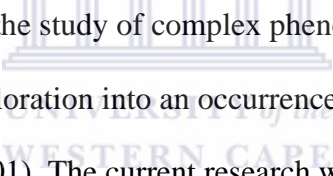


3.2. Research Design

The current research was an exploration of the development of resiliency in male youth. Resilience was identified through listening to the accounts of the participants and attempting to understand their realities. Through utilising a phenomenological approach individuals' experiences and interpretations of their reality were identified.

Phenomenology explores individual perspectives whilst taking systemic factors into account (Rausch, et-al, 2003). Through the phenomenological approach it is understood that individuals possess a 'filtered reality', allowing for the creation of unique meanings of events (Moore, 2003). All individuals possess a unique reality, allowing for a variety of valid perspectives.

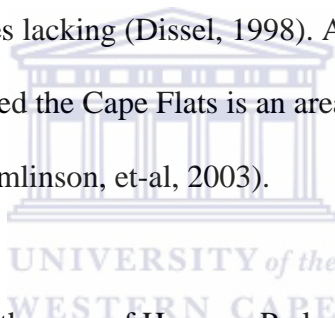
Research utilising a phenomenological paradigm aims to gain a rich understanding of participants' unique experiences or realities. This research used qualitative methods in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of the participants. Qualitative research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' subjective perspectives of reality in a contained environment, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the motivations behind choices of behaviours (Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). When utilising a qualitative design the researcher aims to locate him or herself in the natural setting of the phenomenon which he or she hopes to better understand (Hendricks, 2006). Qualitative research aims to explore and enrich societies understanding of specific phenomena as they naturally occur in the environment (Golafshani, 2003).



Qualitative research allows for the study of complex phenomena without the need for pre-defined hypotheses. It is an exploration into an occurrence that may be influenced by numerous sources (Oplatka, 2001). The current research will focus on the subjective experiences of individuals, which are assumed to be real, through listening and interpreting in order to deduce meaning. The researcher is viewed as the primary means to understanding participants' subjective truths, placing the integrity of data collection and interpretation within the researcher (McAdams, 1993). The overall aim of qualitative research is that of understanding or interpreting phenomena through the unique meaning individuals have attributed to their experiences (Hendricks, 2006).

3.3 Location of Study

The participants of this study were accessed from a community organisation within Hanover Park, on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape of South Africa. The Cape Flats is an area created through forced relocations that occurred during Apartheid. Although Apartheid laws were discarded by the 1990's the impact of its policies still affect South Africans today. Forced relocations resulted in the separation of families, the loss of jobs, and a sense of instability (Pillay, 2005). During Apartheid unemployment was rife, the threat of relocation was ever present, and abuse and racism was common experience (Duncan, 2005). Access to health and education in 'non-white' areas was minimal, with basic infrastructure and facilities lacking (Dissel, 1998). Although improvements have been made since Apartheid ended the Cape Flats is an area that is defined by violence, overcrowding, and poverty (Tomlinson, et-al, 2003).



Steinberg (2004; p104) depicts the area of Hanover Park as consisting of “concentric layers of streets, turned in upon themselves, forming tight, hermetic circles, each surrounded by a barren wilderness of no-mans-land”. Hanover Park is one of the most gang violent areas in the Western Cape, so much so that the gangs create and control the community (Standing, 2003). A survey published in the Cape Argus, cited in Standing (2003) states that 97% of youth surveyed on the Cape Flats have heard gunshots previously, almost half have witnessed a corpse of either a stranger or relative who had died from unnatural causes. Crime on the Cape Flats is a common and disturbing reality for all residents.

Organisations have been established on the Cape Flats, through international and government funding, in an attempt to rectify the crisis of poverty and criminality. Community Action for a Safer Environment (CASE) is one such non-government organisation and is located in Hanover Park. CASE focuses on equipping members of the community to recognise the causes and effects of crime through supportive trauma counselling, education, community awareness raising, and development programs. CASE aims to break the cycle of violence by creating freedom in communities through encouraging respect and knowledge regarding own and others' human rights. CASE was founded in 2001 in response to "the overwhelming need for crisis intervention for traumatised school learners who are exposed to ongoing violence in their community" (Benjamin, 2006; p5).



CASE is understood as acting as a protective factor for the individual through enhancing coping ability. The decision to become a member of CASE is a mechanism of active and functional coping by the individual. Membership further increases resilience through improving effective coping strategies. It is assumed that the current members of CASE possessed relatively high levels of resilience and some effective strategies of coping before joining the organisation, as they were able to make the active and functional decision to become members.

3.4 Participants

The selected participants consisted of six males, aged between sixteen and twenty-one years old who grew up in Hanover Park (See appendix A). At the time of interviewing

and follow-up all participants were involved with CASE, positively contributing to their community. Participants' membership to a community organisation was seen as indicative of resilience. Werner (1995) states that "individual dispositions led them to select or construct environments that, in turn, reinforced or sustained their active approach to life and awarded their special competencies" (p84). The selected participants had actively chosen an environment that would enhance coping and resiliency. They had utilised active, problem-focussed, coping mechanisms through their voluntary membership to CASE, indicating resiliency.

The participants in this study were selected on the basis of specific criteria. They needed to be males in the age classification range defined as 'youth'. It was necessary that they had grown up in Hanover Park and been exposed to risk factors during their lives. Additionally it was necessary that the participants were members of a community organisation as this was indicative of personal resiliency. These criteria resulted in the researcher utilising purposive sampling. This method of sampling ensured that the participants were valid and able to enrich the study with relevant and pertinent information (Patton, 1987). The sample was selected on the premise that if these participants achieved the ability to develop resilience others would be able to, if provided with similar protective factors (Patton, 1987).

A small highly defined sample of six male youth was particularly beneficial to this research as depth of understanding of concepts was prioritised. Boyatzis (1998) states that one must use "the minimum number of units of analysis and units of coding needed to

discover, establish, or prove the questions and/or hypotheses driving the inquiry” (p165). The use of six participants aimed to maximise the depth of the study without losing sight of the need to generalize the findings to similar populations (Patton, 1987). It is crucial in qualitative analysis that the researcher is familiar with all the data available, thus a smaller sample is beneficial as it decreases the risk of patterns or findings being overlooked by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.5 Measure

The measure utilised in this research was a structured, in-depth interview guide, which aimed to elicit valid information from the participants. It consisted of a basic checklist of topics or questions that need to be covered during the interview (see appendix B). Using a structured interview guide allows for similarity across interviews, whilst allowing for some process flexibility (Patton, 1987). The interview structure was open enough to allow for new, unprecedented, information to enter the discussion. Questions exploring dominant systems of individual, family, school, and community were included within the interview structure. Questions within systems were asked in an open-ended manner. For example, “How do you understand crime and gang violence in your area?” was asked when exploring the individual system. The interviews were focussed, revealing rich and valuable information, whilst providing some freedom to explore alternative individual perspectives (Patton, 1987).

The purpose of the interview guide was to gain a personal account from the participants, revealing potential factors of both resilience and risk. The phenomenological approach

explores individuals subjective realities in order to increase understanding of a specific phenomenon (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). The interviews aimed to assess perceptions of violence, coping ability, and protective mechanisms, in order to understand the phenomenon of resiliency. Through listening to individual accounts the researcher aimed to “inquire about one’s perceptions, values, and personal aims” to put together the subjective identity of the participant (Oplatka, 2001; p1). The interview guide aimed to achieve understanding regarding participants interpretations, opinions and feelings in regards to the events that have come to pass in their lives (Oplatka, 2001).

3.6 Data Collection

In-depth individual interviews were held with the participants in order to achieve a personal and unique understanding of the individual. The interviews were conducted at CASE in Hanover Park, which was viewed as a quiet, convenient, and non-threatening environment. This setting is essential for effective interviewing (Bility, 1999). All interviews ranged between sixty and ninety minutes and were audio recorded, with the consent of the participants in the study. Permission was obtained via CASE and signed consent forms were completed both by CASE and the participants, once they had been fully informed of the interview procedure and purpose (see appendix C).

Parental consent was achieved through CASE where needed, as parents had provided permission to the organisation to sign on their behalf. All participants in the study participated voluntarily and signed their assent to participation. CASE acted as guardian for those participants under the age of eighteen years. Telephonic follow-up sessions

were provided for all participants to ensure that they were not experiencing psychological difficulties due to the in-depth nature of the interviews. All participants were assured of counselling services if they felt it was needed following the interview process.

3.7 Data Analysis

This research aimed to elicit themes from the participants' accounts to further understand factors that may have contributed the development of resilience (Boyatzis, 1998). Moore (2003) states that "it is important to listen to the 'life stories' that people tell, as these stories are informed by their interaction with a particular social and cultural context" (p469). The interviews were an oral account of the past and present, constructed and understood by the individual. The subjective meanings and interpretations that the individual provided for his life were encapsulated within the data (Oplatka, 2001).

Gathering together themes in the process of analysis is the basis to many qualitative research methods, such as grounded theory, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The current research used thematic analysis in its process of interpretation. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clark, 2006; p3). The process of analysis was the identification of patterns of behaviour, or ways of living, within the data (Aronson, 1994). Pattern identification allowed for thorough interpretation by the researcher, through revealing the ideas and thoughts of the participants in an organised, functional, and manageable manner.

The thematic analysis involved interpretation and familiarisation of the data by the researcher, within individual interviews, then analysis across interviews. Finally interviews were integrated to reveal an in-depth understanding of the processes underlying the phenomenon of resiliency (Oplatka, 2001). Thematic analysis aims to identify themes that are meaningful to the description of the phenomenon being explored (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It is the creation of structure amongst bodies of text. This research aimed to extract common meanings between the participants to gain an in-depth understanding of processes behind the development of resilience (Gavin, 2006).

The process of analysis was initiated through the creation of codes, which were subsequently developed into themes (Boyatzis, 1998). A theme aims to describe information and organize it into classifications based either on directly observable phenomena or on the aspects and meanings underlying the participants words (Boyatzis, 1998). Through thematic analysis key themes that embody the participants' interviews were identified (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006).

There are two variant levels of analysis, the semantic level and the latent level. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasize the importance of focussing on one level of analysis in a given research study. The current research utilised the semantic level of data analysis, focussing primarily on the surface meaning of what was revealed in the participants' oral accounts. The research aimed to interpret what was spoken about in the interviews in relation to past theory, and through this establish broader meanings and their implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There have been few studies on resilience in the South African context and

the present research aimed to achieve a surface level understanding of concepts in order to provide a guide for further research in this area.

This research used a hybrid of the inductive data-driven approach and the more deductive prior-research driven approach in order to establish themes and interpret findings (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes from the data were derived in an inductive manner as opposed to attempting to elicit data to confirm a previous theory or coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The achieved themes were then compared to past research relating to resilience and coping strategies. Similarities and differences were identified and further explored. The reason for utilizing a hybrid approach is that both the inductive approach and the deductive data-driven approach possess benefits. The inductive style of thematic analysis allows for categories to emerge from the raw data gained (Patton, 1987). The benefit to this approach is the “previously silenced voices or perspectives inherent in the information can be brought forward and recognized” (Boyatzis, 1998; p30). Although this is highly relevant, using a data driven approach is also valuable. By having theory to guide questioning and interpretation, further progress can be made on existing research.

The present research utilized the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to ensure a thorough and transparent analysis procedure with potential for future replication. Through being explicit regarding the research procedures the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, as understood through the rigor of the interpretation, can be established (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The initial stage of the thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was for the researcher to thoroughly familiarize herself with

the data, through reading, re-reading, and transcribing all the spoken material. The recorded interview data was transcribed by the researcher to maximise familiarity, to ensure a thorough analysis, and for future reference. During this stage of familiarisation analysis began as the researcher searched for patterns of meaning within the data.

The second step of the analysis was the generation codes, which was the beginnings of the organization of data into meaningful clusters (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was open to all possibilities of emergence when coding data. Recognition of when an important moment has occurred within the data, which Boyatzis (1998) refers to as 'sensing a theme', was key to successful and meaningful interpretation. The initial stage of 'encoding the information' organised the data in order to identify and develop themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The third step in the analysis process was to classify the discovered codes into thematic groupings. When something deemed important to the researcher was discovered within the data it was immediately coded. The codes were then classified together and defined as themes. It is at this stage in the analysis that previous theoretical knowledge proved useful in the understanding of emerging themes. A thorough hybrid analysis entails linking the emerging pattern to past patterns as well as links between other interviews and previous research in the topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

Once basic themes have been established, Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend the process be reviewed. This entailed analysing the themes and what they represent as well as the coded items within them to ensure that there was a clear 'fit' amongst items. At this stage in the analysis the data were reviewed and reassessed to increase reliability.

The overall validity of the themes were questioned in relation to all the data available from the interviews. The researcher ensured that the themes adequately and clearly captured the meanings reflected within the data. It is common in this phase of analysis that themes be changed, merged, added, or rejected, in the light of further immersion within the original data, the coded data, and the current thematic interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was the case during the current research process.

Finally the meanings of the encoded patterns, or themes, established within the data were interpreted (Boyatzis, 1998). This was the process of 'producing the report' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was ensured that the themes discovered were each individual categories in themselves, which each linked in some manner to the original research question. Throughout the thematic analysis the researcher ensured a constant awareness of the original research questions for which answers were sought. Additionally it was important to remain open-minded in order to allow for new, emerging, or contradictory data to enter into the analysis.

3.8 Ethical considerations

As this study involved working with individuals from possibly traumatic backgrounds, exploration of their past and present was done with utmost sensitivity and caution. Many grey areas exist in defining the differences between interviews that aim to elicit information regarding an individual's past and the process of therapy (Oplatka, 2001). To minimize the possibility of individuals feeling overwhelmed by the research process and content the nature and purpose of the research was clarified at the outset. Informed

consent was required, as a signed document, informing each participant of the processes involved in participation, before initiating the interview. It was required that CASE provided their informed consent for the youth to participate. The parents of the youth at CASE have provided the organisation with the signatory guardianship for all activities relating to CASE and its programs. Participants were aware that their interviews were being recorded and provided consent in this regard. All were comfortable with being recorded and the interviews being transcribed, provided that any identifying information was removed from the transcripts.

The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized prior to the conducting of the interviews. The participants were aware that they could withdraw at any stage should they feel uncomfortable within the interviewing process. Additionally participants understood that support and counselling was available to them should they feel it was needed following the interview procedure. Any concerns the researcher had following the interviews were discussed with the relevant CASE leaders, with the consent of the participants involved. Additionally telephonic follow up with each participant occurred one week following the interviews to ensure that the research process had not negatively affected them in any way.

3.9 Mechanisms to ensure trustworthiness

Qualitative research varies from the more traditional quantitative research methods, which utilizes the constructs of validity and reliability to emphasize the objectivity of the researcher in relation to the research outcomes. A researcher working in the qualitative

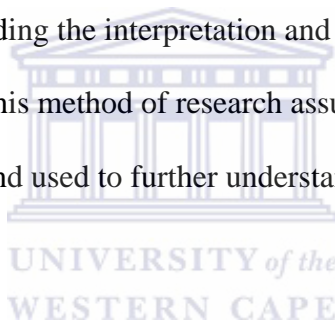
paradigm accepts that the subjective understanding and interpretation of the data will influence the conclusions reached in his or her study. This subjective understanding is incorporated into the research findings rather than dismissed as invalid.

Credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness of the researcher are the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Crucial to this is the researchers self-awareness of the possible influences he or she may create (Oplatka, 2001), and appropriate management of these influences during the research period (Gavin, 2006). During the interview process credibility of participants responses were strengthened through the rephrasing of questions during the interview, to ensure similar responses and gain a deeper understanding of topics (Oplatka, 2001). Bias was minimised and quality of interpretation maximized through the joint participation of supervisors during the interpretive process (Gavin, 2006), thus increasing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

In qualitative research reliability is related to consistency in the researcher's observations and interpretations, and can be established by assessing constancy of interpretations over time and place (Boyatzis, 1998). Consistency of the data was achieved through re-examining the extracted themes and ideas and ensuring that the codes and themes remain constant over time (Boyatzis, 1998). To ensure that the researcher's projections were minimised during the process of interpretation the acts of coding and establishing themes were clear and transparent. It is important to note that the themes established by the researcher were not only in the data obtained but also in the thought processes of the

researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore to ensure that the findings were valid, and transferable across research studies, the process of discovery within the transcripts were made explicit.

The researcher ensured that codes and themes remain reliable over time, through thorough and clear note taking, and relying only on the raw data supplied, as opposed to subjective assumptions (Boyatzis, 1998). This was crucial to the validity and reliability of the study as it related to the credibility and neutrality of the findings (Golafshani, 2003). Additionally reliability was attained through the use of a variety of professional and non-professional perspectives regarding the interpretation and creation of the codes (Boyatzis, 1998; Oplatka, 2001). Finally this method of research assumed contradictions in findings and these were accounted for and used to further understand the phenomenon under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).



3.10 Reflexivity

This study used qualitative research methods in its interpretive process, allowing for myself, as the researcher, to become completely immersed within the data. Qualitative research provides a richer and more complex understanding of individuals' behaviours. It is important that reflexivity is maintained throughout the research process to allow for reliable comparison with past and future research. Immersion with the data aimed to extract an in-depth understanding of the resiliency phenomenon within a high-risk context (Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The phenomenological approach states that meaning is created through individuals subjective understanding and interpretation. Thus the conclusions reached in this study were established through my own subjective lens of interpretation. Through constant self-reflection an attempt was made to maintain an awareness of my own feelings, impressions, and thoughts during the interviews and interpretation process (Flick, 1998). Through reflecting on my personal thoughts and feelings throughout the research process the findings were minimally influenced by factors pertaining to myself alone.

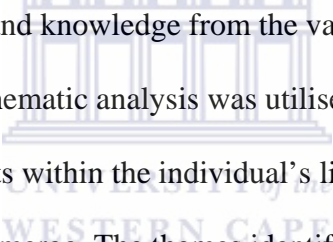
The data collected may additionally have been affected by my presence in the interview procedure, prior to the analysis process. My presence created a new system within the participants' suprasystem. This systemic shift may have influenced the participants' attitude towards me, affecting the interview process. Additionally me being a female may have influenced the responses of the participants. The male participants may have presented an inflated sense of self or repressed some of their emotional difficulties in order to be perceived as 'more masculine' to impress me.

CHAPTER 4

4. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The following section will discuss the findings that emerged from the interviews with the participants, and relate it to past research. This research understands that all individuals have the capacity to develop into resilient beings, and that this development is dependent on whether adequate opportunities are provided during their lives (Yellin, 2007). The themes extracted from the data aim to assist in identifying the factors within individuals that are indications of adequate resiliency.



In order to gain understanding and knowledge from the vast amount of data obtained through the interview process thematic analysis was utilised. The use of thematic analysis allowed for the dominant aspects within the individual's life to be identified and dominant protective factors to emerge. The themes identified have revealed broader systemic factors, within the family, school, and community, which may assist in the development of resilience, despite the overwhelming presence of risk factors.

4.2 *Emerging Themes*

A thorough and in-depth analysis of the data allowed for various themes to emerge. The themes identified were highlighted in regards to their relevance to the research aims.

The themes were placed in three overarching categories, under which sub-themes were placed. The three overarching categories which emerged from the interviews were:

4.2.1 Support

4.2.2 Control

4.2.3 Security

4.2.1 Support

4.2.1.1 Support of self by self

4.2.1.1.i) Confidence in self

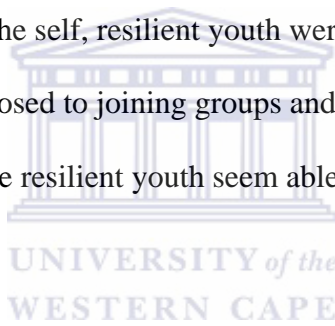
The participants in this study had learnt to support themselves and their aspirations through confidence in their own ability. They possessed a sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Yellin (2007) identified the ability to dependently adapt to setbacks as an aspect of resiliency. Similarly Rausch, et-al (2003) identified individuals' sense of competence as indicative of resilience within youth. Confidence regarding personal capacity, coupled with the ability to self motivate was apparent throughout the interviews. Through the ability to support oneself the capacity to succeed as an individual is enhanced. Belief in self-capacity minimises dependence on external systems such as peer groups, which decreases possible exposure to risk factors.

So like when people really try to get to me, and I just tell them ok, you need to understand something, this is me and if you don't like it then you need to go and mess with someone else (participant 6).

So if you don't like me you don't like me. I'm trying my best, so no-one can hold me back, I'm going to be who I want to be, and to hell with all you, I don't care
(participant 2).

It's not because I want to be the leader and in charge, it's just that I want things to be right and I want things to be done. If you are going to do it, do it, and I'll be there to make sure you are going to do it and do it right. Make sure that everything is in place
(participant 1).

Through the ability to support the self, resilient youth were more able to choose their systems of interactions. As opposed to joining groups and organisations indiscriminately for fear of being incapable alone resilient youth seem able to cope as an individual entity.



4.2.1.1.ii) Motivation of self

The youth in this study were able to motivate themselves to achieve their goals, through a firm belief in their personal capacity. They seemed to possess challenging aspirations and were constantly pushing themselves to succeed. High achievement orientation and the ability to hold onto personal hopes and aspirations have been indicated to contribute to resiliency (Bernard, 1991; Yellin, 2007). The participants were able to support themselves through identifying their past achievements and encouraging further achievement. Rausch, et-al (2003) highlighted the ability to plan for the future as a positive indicator of resiliency. It was apparent that all the participants possessed positive future expectations of themselves.

I want to try and build a centre. Not necessarily a centre, just buy an open space, like maybe so three or four stories high that I will just convert into a studio... My main drive I think is my music, and my dancing also comes into play. When I feel really stressed and things then I listen to my music (participant 6).

So my passion is dancing and singing and acting, since I was little... That's what made me stop [drugs], my friends and the music. It was actually the music that motivated me, and my friends being there for me (participant 2).

I want to become a scientist, chemical. I'm currently doing biology and physics at school and my points are quite high in those subjects (participant 4).

I always had a dream, everyone has a dream. I never gave up on my dream. I'm just following my dream, making it come true (participant 1).

I don't know, it's just me. I always want to be different, special, different from everybody else (participant 3).

Bernard (1991) identified this resilient trait as the possession of a 'sense of purpose'. Their belief in themselves to achieve, and sense of competence in their ability, allowed for the development of hope in the future. Their ability to support themselves through motivation allowed for them to overcome challenges.

4.2.1.2 Support of self by external systems

4.2.1.2.i) Support of capacity

Participants received support from others both during their childhood and presently.

Responsibilities were bestowed on the participants from an early age, and with this came a sense of trust in their capacity to achieve. Others supported the capacity of the individual through providing a sense of responsibility and belief in ability to successfully meet expectations.

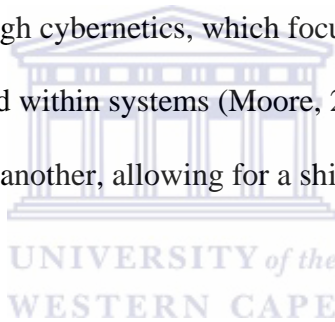
I was independent, she had to work and then I was alone so I got the key, I locked the house everyday. She'd just give me money when I was just a little boy I could get in the taxi, I could go to Mitchell's plain and get out and get safe there and safe home. For me that was like independence... (participant 1).

So [father] told me, you keep all the money, you keep all my money, and he just kept maybe a fifty rand on him. That time I couldn't tell him no you can't smoke. He just told me ok, this is my limits. He used to tell me, 'ok you keep all my money'. That's how I learnt to manage with lots of money. And he always told me don't be stupid, always save your money (participant 3).

Youths' belief in their ability to succeed seems to develop through caregivers and adults instilling a sense of trust in their capacity. Through assigning youth with clear, challenging, and accomplishable tasks or responsibilities the opportunity to develop a sense of capacity is created (Bernard, 1991). Resiliency research has highlighted the

importance of external systems, such as the community, acknowledging and supporting an individual's aspirations to allow for successful attainment (Werner, 1995). External support systems, that provide encouragement and reinforcement to youth, serve as important protective factors in relation to the development of resilience (Rausch, et-al, 2003).

Individual confidence and self-esteem results in positive appraisal from the community, and vice versa. Individual motivation to achieve is also increased through the support and encouragement of the community. The concept of a 'feedback loop' is incorporated into the ecosystemic approach through cybernetics, which focuses on relationships and interaction patterns between and within systems (Moore, 2003). Systems constantly interact with and influence one another, allowing for a shift in one system to create a shift in others.



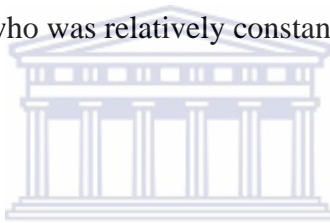
I don't want them (parents)... they are thinking high things about me now, and I don't want to let them down now (participant 5).

4.2.1.2.ii) Support through Guidance

The development of resilience in individuals is enhanced through individuals possessing a sense of independence and competence. At the same time the ability to request assistance and guidance when needed contributes to individual resiliency (Werner, 1995; Yellin, 2007). For many participants having a guiding figure seemed crucial as it allowed some reassurances that they were taking the correct path in life. A respected figure to look up to and gain guidance from was needed, and noticed by youth when lacking.

I have everything I want in life, but sometimes there isn't... how can I say... Someone who can guide me through life. Like my granny used to do, but not anymore because she is getting old. But I really need someone to guide me... 'Cause if you don't have someone to guide you how will you know where you are wrong and where you are right? (participant 4).

Interestingly this research indicated that this figure did not need to be a parent, a family figure, or even a figure of high stature. Of primary importance seemed to be the ability of the youth to identify someone who was relatively constant in their lives and who they were able to respect.



I learned a lot from my dad about life, behaving yourself when you are around other people. One thing I can say, I'm proud of my dad because if it wasn't for him talking to me about life... My father and my friends they are the people that was mostly there (participant 2).

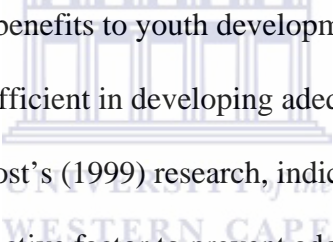
The teachers... supportive, especially the one, she got me the work, she got me into this work, not because of what I'm doing, my music and that, but because she knows my background and that my mom is alone (participant 1).

Access to an adult figure was not always possible, but it seemed that trusted peers were also able to provide some guidance. Peer support has been indicated as a protective factor

in past research (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Howell & Eglej jr, 2005), and this was further supported within the findings of this research.

We tell each other where we are wrong, where we are right (participant 4).

You can come with ten knives and we don't care, at least we are together, we will fight together, and you know there is someone at the back of you that will always cover you. And I know that about him, he will never leave me in a battle, just run away. You always know that there is a friend to cover you (participant 3).



Positive peer support had clear benefits to youth development, but this research indicated that peer support alone is not sufficient in developing adequate resilience. This finding is supported by Dumont and Provost's (1999) research, indicating that social support in isolation is not a sufficient protective factor to prevent adolescent behavioural problems, although it does contribute to resiliency.

4.2.1.3 Support of self through spirituality

Religion and spiritual belief systems seem to act as support systems for many youth, serving as a stable guide. The participants in this study all possessed a sense of faith or spirituality that assisted them in coping when unable to make sense of occurrences in their world. Werner (1995) speaks of religious beliefs as providing youth with a sense of stability, constancy, and meaning despite uncontrollable systemic changes. Spirituality allows for a sense of purpose in the world to remain, despite unexplainable adversity. The

participants indicated that religion provided a sense of hope regarding the future, instilling a sense of faith during challenging times. This finding concurs with that of Yellin (2007) who identified faith and spirituality as providing individuals with a sense of purpose and future despite facing numerous challenges.

Every Sunday I had to go to church, if I don't go to church, no pudding (laughs) I like bringing the message through. When I step on stage I don't just talk about anything, I talk about God and I bring the message (participant 1).

I failed grade 10. It was a very tough year. I had to choose between biblical studies and maths, so it was very hectic at the time. I chose biblical studies (participant 5).

That is why I feel this religious way because I don't understand, where does it all come from? (participant 1).

Spirituality seemed to provide a sense of support for youth, providing stability in an ever-changing environment. Religious affiliation allowed for the guidance of thoughts and understanding of the world, to allow for unexplainable traumas and occurrences to be accepted.

4.2.1.4 Support of others by the individual

The interviews conducted with the youth revealed a strong sense of responsibility towards the community. The youth felt a need to help others achieve their dreams.

Helping others provided youth with a sense of increased capacity through being a guide and a role model. The desire to support others was identified in a study by Kidd and Davidson (2007), which concluded that youth feel better about their own ability when helping someone else. Through helping others and the community sense of capacity seems to increase.

I see myself as a role model for the kids, especially at kids club. A lot of them look up to us, they know our songs (participant 1).

There is better ways, to get out of this place. But not like moving, improve yourself and improve others one by one... If it comes to a problem then I don't worry about me. See I'm there to help other people (participant 3).

And the other reason also I joined CASE is to try and make a difference in the community, to change their perception about Hanover Park. And to tell people not to repeat what's happening at the moment... To change the community... I can see Hanover Park changing, and myself becoming a successful person (participant 4).

To possess a sense of personal power over one's suprasystem has been identified as an important factor in the prediction of positive development (Winfield, 1994). The desire to give back to the community provided youth with a sense of power. Through the teaching and training of others the youth felt competent and powerful as leaders. Johnson (2005)

identified power as a necessary component to positive youth development and through guiding the community this power seems to be attained.

...tell them not to go in there and what's the consequences of doing that. Trying not to go into drugs and be a role model in the community. So that the small children look up to you. I set an example (participant 5).

I'm where I am now because these certain things helped me on this road. Now those kids are there and they maybe don't have the parents that I do, or they maybe don't have the people that I do, or knew the people that I did. And they maybe don't have the ideas that I have, so I'm thinking bigger (participant 6).

I'm an example, I lead by example, and they voted for me cause of my actions, my decisions (participant 4.)

4.2.2 Control

4.2.2.1 Of controllable surroundings by self – an internal locus

Many participants expressed the belief that they could, to an extent, control their surroundings and what happened to them. Through the belief that they were able to exert influence over what happened to them youth created a sense of autonomy and choice. Personal perception of a challenging situation is a strong predictor of coping ability. The ability to maintain the belief that personal actions may positively alter the situation aids in the individuals ability to cope with and adapt to the situation (Ong, et-al, 2006). Youth

created a sense of choice through the belief that they had some control of what occurred, allowing for disappointments and failures to be overcome. This belief in the ability to manipulate one's systems is known as the possession of an 'internal locus of control'. Dumont and Provost's (1999) research on resilience in adolescents identified the concept of an internal locus of control as a primary predictor of resiliency.

Because usually, even if I'm in dangerous areas, I either watch around myself or just like send around that vibe that says I'm safe. I don't need to worry about it. As long as I am confident I feel that other people can pick up on that. So that's why most of the time I never get robbed. It's just when I let myself off guard... (participant 6).

I did it in my time and my way, when I want to stop. And I did, I stopped. I knew I was able to stop, but I just didn't like someone to nag on me, to tell me what to do (participant 1).

When I got into high school yes, that's when I started to make... not my own decisions, but decisions that will help me through life... We had a choice in the end and we chose not to [use drugs] and that made us a better person (participant 4).

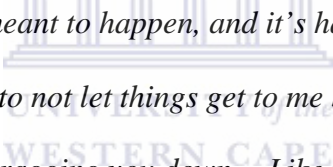
Werner (1995) linked the concept of an internal locus of control to positive self concept and the belief that one has the ability to exert an influence over his surroundings. To control one's external surroundings encourages the development of independence and

autonomy in decision making which are both indicators of resilience (Bernard, 1991; Johnson, 2005)

4.2.2.2 Of self in uncontrollable surroundings

4.2.2.2.i) Coping skills

Through utilising coping skills and functional problem-solving skills resilience is increased, as it allows for youth to cope and adapt in situations that are out of their control (Werner, 1995). Yellin (2007) speaks of problem-solving skills as the ability to be flexible and adapt in the face of change. This allows for one to cope with unpreventable adversity.



I just thought ok, that was meant to happen, and it's happened, its not like I can do anything about it now. I try to not let things get to me because once you do let things get to you it has its way of dragging you down... Like if I think I am incompetent in one thing, then I am competent in something else (participant 6).

The youth in this study utilised optimism as a strategy to cope with adversity and challenges. Ong, et-al (2006) defined optimism as a 'positive emotion' and an important indication of resilience in youth. Many of the participants were able to hold onto a sense of optimism despite difficult circumstances. They possessed an ability to overcome the odds through focussing on the positive aspects and attempting to forget, or see the benefits of, the challenges faced in life.

I just look past it because I know there is a brighter day for me. I know one day I'm going to be out of this place (participant 1).

Ja. Cause I have grown myself through it and look where I am now (participant 5).

There was days that were dark. But we coped through that, and it made us what we are today... I am an optimistic person, that's all, as you can see... I am always positive about things, I listen to what others have to say....Just to be optimistic about stuff, always see good outcomes (participant 4).

4.2.2.2.ii) Increased resilience through exposure to risk factors

The participants in this study had been exposed to various risk factors in their lives. Howell and Egley jr (2005) speak of exposure to drugs, violence, and poverty as risk factors in the positive development of individuals. The youth in this sample were exposed to these and other risk factors, on numerous occasions in their lives.

Research has suggested that the exposure to unfavourable conditions may allow for positive development provided the individual is able to cope with and learn from the experience (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Dawes and Donald (1999) identify this model of resilient development as the challenge model. Within this model the ability to cope with difficulties is strengthened by the exposure to some stressful experiences during development.

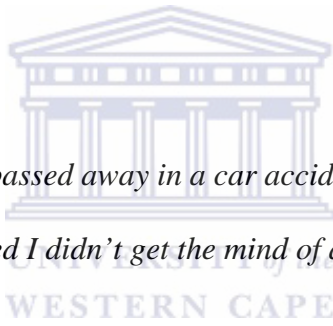
This research supports the assumption that negative influences, such as disappointment and loss, can serve to increase the coping ability of individuals. Barends (2004) states that exposure to adversity can increase one's resiliency through providing a sense of mastery over the future, provided the adversity is overcome. The youth in this study indicated that exposure to manageable adversity taught them self-reliance, independence, and autonomy, factors indicative of resilience (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006).

My dad always told me I'm going to buy you all that stuff, but there was never money for that. That's extra stuff. And he told me no man, I must just wait a little bit, I am going to put you in a team. Now I did it by myself (participant 3).

Every time I walk past my friends they are into drugs, I don't know why. They are looking dirty, their clothes, I don't know why. Because I grew up with this guys in primary school and look how he is now. They've changed a lot. And some girls are now pregnant. It's a shock because I knew this person from primary school, he was very clever in primary school, but he's now into drugs (participant 5).

That barber, he was like a role model to us because he made all his own money and stuff. When we found out he was on drugs, he was tikking, he told us no man, this was because of friends (participant 3).

In areas such as Hanover Park it is not possible to shield youth from all risk factors. The meanings youth provide for the difficulties that they are faced with allow for positive development. Ong, et-al (2006) identified the importance of personal perception in a challenging situation when determining ability to cope. To be able to ascribe some sense of meaning to adversity, and maintain a belief that personal actions may positively alter a situation aids in the individual's ability to cope with and adapt to the situation. This is indicative of resilience. Many of the participants had been exposed to loss of loved ones through violence and tragedy. They had managed to hold onto the experience and use it as an example of why they valued life and stood for what they believed in, such as non-violence and non-drug use.



When I was six my mother passed away in a car accident, I was in the car accident. The time when that happened I didn't get the mind of a big person, just stuff opened up for me (participant 2).

That day it was... it knocked me how quick you can lose a person. And he just died, just on that spot, he drowned (participant 3).

And you know also why I stopped with the drugs. My friend he did this drug and he got sick. But we didn't know of what. So he died... passed away... (participant 2).

4.2.3 Security

4.2.3.1 *Of sense of self*

4.2.3.1.i) Knowledge of self

The participants in this study exhibited a strong sense of identity. They were aware of who they were, where they wanted to be in the future, and what factors within their lives were of primary importance to them. Their secure and stable sense of self could be attributed to their sense of confidence in their capacity as individuals. Rausch, et-al (2003) identified a sense of social competence as an important indicator of resilience. This sense of capacity, and security on one's own beliefs and values, allowed for a sense of independence from others. Yellin (2007) identified this sense of autonomy from others in his research on resilience.



The moral steadfastness of the participants was clear in many cases, and this clear sense of self seemed to steer them past negative influences. The recommendations in Ong, et-al's (2006) study of resilience and adaptation emphasised the importance of mindfulness training to allow youth to understand and identify their emotions successfully in order to better express and understand themselves in times of adversity. The moral clarity of the participants seemed to stem from an understanding of who they were.

I didn't know who I really am. You know, your friends tell you this they tell you that, you know what's right and wrong, but still you do what they do....you must first learn yourself before you go with friends and that. Cause then you will know what is right and wrong (participant 2).

I always used to learn stuff about myself and self-motivation and self-confidence and all that stuff. They always told me it starts by your self. You can't go up into a community if you are not really yourself (participant 3).

And I said to him this is not to spite you, it's just that I don't feel that it's right that you are going to influence other children into drugs (participant 6).

A literature review of resilience by Bernard (1991) identifies the concept of self-awareness and moral steadfastness as the development of a sense of autonomy and sense of personal identity. Through increased self-understanding and insight the youth seemed able to feel adequately equipped when experiencing overwhelming emotions. The ability to self-reflect provided youth with the opportunity to question their morals and beliefs, allowing for better insight into their own beliefs and behaviours. This self-reflection increased youths' ability to stand by their beliefs when challenged.

4.2.3.1.ii) Independence of self

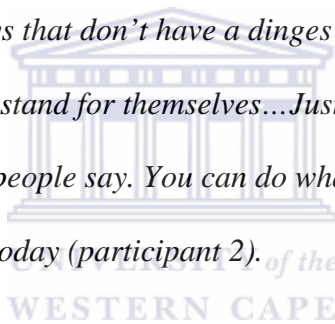
The youth in this study seemed to have a sense of comfort in their own company. The need to belong to a group seemed to be overruled by individual feelings of adequacy, importance, and competence. The participants possessed an air of self-satisfaction, not needing people to constantly increase their confidence.

No-one walks over me; no-one walks over my father either. That got me where I am today. See now, that's why I'm saying I can get quite far (participant 2).

I was a loner since I was young. I just do my own thing, if you didn't like that it's your problem not mine (participant 6).

I can now cope by myself. I'm trying to learn that, not to depend on other people. You see I'm trying to cope on my own, learning to be independent (participant 5).

Gangsterism, that is for guys that don't have a dinges (penis), they have a vagina. It's an easy way out, they can't stand for themselves...Just believe what you want to be and don't care about what people say. You can do what you want to do. So that is what made me where I am today (participant 2).



The participants sense of self-competence allowed for them to feel safe and comfortable when acting alone. They possessed a sense of hardness, at times a mistrust, of the community, which encouraged independence.

4.2.3.2 Of belonging within society

A sense of belonging was attained through various systems available to the youth, such as the school and the family. Boyden and Mann's (2005) research on risk, resilience, and coping in children noted the importance of individuals experiencing a sense of belonging and safety within their community. Dissel (1997) speaks of this need for belonging and

acceptance in her writing on street gangs in South Africa. For many youth gangs, and deviant peer groups provide the sense of acceptance and belonging youth desperately seek.

Rausch, et-al (2003) found that religion and church membership provided this sense of belonging for some individuals. The current research did not find religion as something that created belonging for youth, although spirituality did provide them with a sense of guidance and understanding. Bernard's (1991) review of resiliency identified the opportunity to participate and feel part of one's community as a primary indicator of resiliency. Youth seek to belong, and this was achieved through various means:

4.2.3.2.i) Being heard by society

A sense of normality and acceptance was created through youth experiencing a sense of belonging somewhere. When the youth did not feel heard feelings of isolation and exclusion were created.

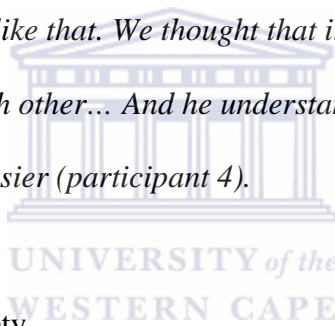
I have this problem, whenever I say something I know I am making sense but no-one listens. Since I am here by CASE I talk, they listen. So they are listening and we are starting to work towards what we want. That's why I am still here... I can't explain, since I am at CASE that darkness turned to light. They don't even know what you went through now, but what you are taught there makes sense to you and it opens you (participant 2).

Just to listen to somebody else's makes you feel good man, makes you feel like you are not the only one who has problems, someone, maybe your friend, problems are more severe than yours (participant 3).

4.2.3.2.ii) Being understood by society

To be understood by someone seemed to reduce the feeling of being alone and vulnerable, providing courage to stand for one's beliefs.

We just felt that it wasn't right to just go after everybody and do stuff that they do, if they are like cool and stuff like that. We thought that it was ok that we were friends because we understand each other... And he understands me and I understand him, that's what also makes it easier (participant 4).



4.2.2.iii) Being needed by society

If forgotten in one system, such as the school or the family, another seemed able to compensate for it. So long as the youth in question was noticed somewhere, or by someone, resilience was enhanced. The youth appreciated that they were needed within their community or home. Being remembered seemed to hold special value for many participants. A sense of not being forgotten, and of feeling important, seemed to develop within the individual, creating a sense of pride and confidence.

I think one of the reasons [mother] is scared if I have a girlfriend, it's going to take my love away from her.... That's what I do with everybody. I like to make them feel

close, like you can tell me... I would like make her sister feel like she was my own girlfriend, but just like a friend... I make her tell me everything, like when she have problems and all that stuff. Everybody think when I have a girlfriend that it's going to take me away from them (participant 3).

If I want to do extra things at school and it's maybe cutting in with what I do at home or the time that I am supposed to be spending with my family, then [mother] will completely go crazy. She'll say 'no, but you can't it's supposed to be a family time' (participant 6).



CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Resilience in Youth

This research aimed to identify the primary aspects of resilience within individuals and the protective factors within their environments that allowed for its development. The research aimed to explore the belief systems of male youth in order to increase understanding of the mechanisms resilient individuals utilize in order to cope functionally. The aspects of coping and resilience were understood systemically and explored through oral accounts of male youth residing in a 'high risk' area. The results of this research have allowed for the concept of resiliency in the South African context to be further clarified and understood. It has explored how resilience manifests itself within the individual and how it is enhanced through various systemic influences.

The research has indicated that youth are able to develop resilience in environments traditionally viewed as high-risk, if provided with adequate tools for this development. It seems that if an individual possesses adequate resiliency to cope with adversities, risk factors may in fact become manageable challenges that serve to further foster the development of resilience. The importance of the community, the family, and the school systems, to act as supportive agents through listening to, understanding, and acknowledging, youth seems invaluable in relation to the successful attainment of resilience within the individual.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The results of this research indicate that the ecosystemic perspective regarding the development of resilience within individuals is a valid one. The ecosystemic approach understands that the individual is part of a greater network or suprasystem, in which various systems exist, such as the community, the family, and peer groups (Moore, 2003). Successful development of the individual is dependant on the interactions between the individual and his or her systems of influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). This research found that external support from systems is essential for the development of resilience. Interestingly no individual system dominated in importance as an influence. It seems that for youth to perceive constant support and encouragement from any system is a significant predictor in the development of resilience and functional coping skills.

The findings of this research concurred with conclusions of past research, although has allowed for a slight narrowing of focus in regards to intervention programs. Although not ideal it seems that to have constant support from a minimum of one subsystem, such as the school or the family, can be enough to foster resilience within a developing individual. Of primary importance seems to be the support systems ability to foster a sense of agency within the individual. It is therefore recommended that intervention programs for high-risk youth focus on strategies that encourage the development of an internal locus of control for the individual. This research indicates that youth learn the ability to exert an influence over their external environment through the capacity to problem solve and plan.

This research found that resilient youth are overwhelmingly independent and confident, yet at the same time need to be assisted and guided through challenging times.

Individuals need to feel accepted and understood by the community in which they choose to belong. Thus interventions that encourage responsibility and autonomy to enhance resiliency are important. To trust the abilities of youth to live up to expectations, whilst at the same time providing guidance during challenging times is crucial to resiliency. If an individual is able to develop goals and dreams, and find others that support this focus, it seems sufficient to allow for the development of self-efficacy and hence resilience.

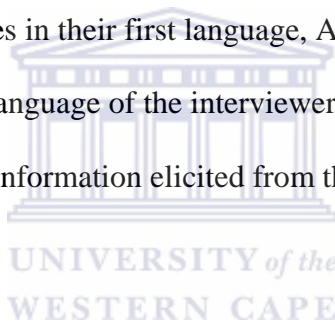
Intervention programs that encourage youth to embark on processes designed to enhance understanding of their selves and their spiritual beliefs may help individuals cope in times where adversities cannot be explained through coherent means. The results yielded from this qualitative research design were supported by past research on resiliency development in individuals. The results indicate that youth growing up in high-risk areas have similar needs to those in other parts of the world. Individuals seem to have a need to feel heard and understood in order to feel a sense of belonging and safety. Additionally people seem to need role models and guides to assist through challenging periods. At times one needs to turn to a spiritual guide to accept tragedies that cannot be explained.

5.3 Limitations of the study

This research was conducted with a highly specific sample in order to ensure relevance within the results. Due to this the generalisability of the findings may be limited. The research focussed specifically on high-risk male youth, to the exclusion of the female

population. Additionally my influence as a female interviewer may have affected the responses of the participants. The confidence and independence expressed by the majority of participants may have been inflated during the interviews as these aspects are traditionally viewed as 'masculine' in Western society. Thus their presentation as highly confident may have been a reflection of their insecurity within the interview situation.

Finally there were cultural and language barriers within the interviewing process. My presence as a distinct 'outsider' in Hanover Park may have affected the participants responses during the interviewing process. Additionally some of the participants were better able to express themselves in their first language, Afrikaans or Xhosa, as opposed to English which was the first language of the interviewer. This may have limited the interview process and thus the information elicited from the participants.



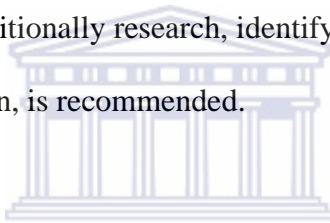
5.4 Significance of the study

This study has provided insight into factors of resilience within male youth. Systemic factors which assist in the development of resilience within the individual, were narrowed down to more specific and pertinent factors through the findings of this research. South Africa is a developing country and there is limited money to be spent on interventions to prevent youth engaging in deviant activities. This research has indicated that youth can overcome the numerous risk factors within their lives if they have developed adequate resilience to cope and adapt. These findings indicate that it may be more beneficial to focus on developing resilience within youth as opposed to attempting to prevent them from encountering challenging factors which are classified as 'risk'. With sufficient

initial resilience, factors that have traditionally been viewed as ‘risk’ can aid in the further development of resilience through allowing for a sense of capacity and achievement once overcome.

5.5 Recommendations

This research has focussed on a highly specific sample, utilizing a qualitative framework, in order to gain an understanding of the factors that may contribute to the development of resilience in youth. Due to the highly specific sample generalisability to other population groups may be limited. It is recommended that further research is undertaken with various population groups. Additionally research, identifying factors of resilience in relation to the female population, is recommended.



Utilizing various types of research techniques will aid in the successful identification of primary indicators of resilience in individuals and the factors that serve to foster their development. Studies utilizing quantitative methods may allow for additional data supporting past findings. Longitudinal research may allow for the emergence of other important systemic factors as well as a better understanding of those factors identified in past research.

Finally it is recommended that intervention programs for youth living in areas of high-risk emphasize the importance of all systems in providing support and encouragement to the developing youth. This research has indicated that anyone can serve as a guide and

role model for youth, provided they are able to take the time to listen and understand in order to create a sense of safety and belonging.



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APPENDIX A:

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

PARTICIPANT	AGE	RACE*	LANGUAGE	EDUCATION	CASE INVOLVEMENT
1	19	Coloured	Afrikaans	Completing School, grade 12	Group leader at CASE since 2006
2	17	Coloured	Afrikaans	Completing school, grade 11	Focussing on teaching music and dance at CASE since 2006
3	16	Coloured	Afrikaans	Completing School, grade 10	CASE Community Leader since 2006
4	16	Black	Xhosa	Completing school, Grade 10	CASE community leader since 2007
5	19	Coloured	Afrikaans	Completing school, Grade 12	CASE community leader since 2004
6	21	Coloured	Afrikaans	Currently art & drama Student	CASE community leader since 2006, focussing on arts & dance.

**Race of the participants is defined through South African classifications, being 'White', 'Coloured', 'Indian', or 'Black', depending on skin colour (Duncan, 2005).*

APPENDIX B:

STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

This outline was utilised in all interviews with the participants as an interview guide during the research process.

1. Introductions

- a. Who I am and the purpose of the study.
- b. Permission to record and consent document
- c. Nature of the interview and follow up next week.
- d. Length, structure (start with self, then family, then school, then community), encourage openness.

2. Present self

- a. Purpose at CASE
- b. What brought you to CASE
- c. Where did you come from?
- d. Are you still in school, where? What grade?

3. Past self

- a. How do you see your past and your childhood? What was your life like?
- b. What memories do you have of your past and how have they shaped who you are today?
- c. How do you see yourself as a person? e.g. strong, leader, follower, And who/what do you think helped to shape this?
- d. Have you been exposed to crime, or a victim of crime? How did this affect you and how did you understand it.
- e. How do you understand crime and gang violence now. What meanings have you attributed to the crime in your area?

- f. What helped you become who you are today, in relation to your unique personality?
- g. What beliefs do you hold about people and society – inherently good? Worth trying to help? Lost causes?
- h. What are your present hopes and dreams?

4. Family

- a. Who is in your family.
- b. What is your relationship like with family members now? And in the past?
- c. Tell me a bit about you family, when you were growing up and now.
- d. Did you feel safe at home? Was there someone to talk to when you needed?
- e. Did your family help you become who you are today, and how?

5. School

- a. How old were you when you started school, where were you, and do you remember your first day? What was it like?
- b. How did you experience school?
- c. What memories do you have of school, good and bad?
- d. Does anything or anyone at school come to mind as shaping who you are and your beliefs today?
- e. How were your grades at school?
- f. Do you see yourself as popular? Outcast? Safe at school?
- g. How do you, and your circumstances, differ from those boys at school who engage in criminal activity?

6. Community

- a. Where did you grow up, describe it to me, what are some of your experiences in your community and how have you come to understand them.

- b. Were there aspects of your community that shaped who you are today, be it people or things?
- c. Did you enjoy the community you grew up in? How did you cope with violence and crime? Was there violence and crime?
- d. What aspects of your community shaped who you are today?

7. Wrapping up

- a. Is there any one thing that has guided you throughout your life, to help you in your decision making regarding your future?
- b. Is there anything you feel you haven't mentioned about yourself, school, family, or community, that you feel played a role in shaping who you are and hence allowing you to become a member of CASE?
- c. How are you feeling? Are you ok to finish up in a bit and have a follow up next week? Acknowledge difficulty and thank for participation – valuable contribution.
- d. Have you got any questions about the research I am doing?

APPENDIX C:

CONSENT FORM SIGNED BY PARTICIPANTS

I,, the undersigned hereby consent to participate in the research study being carried out by Peta Ricketts through the University of the Western Cape. I am fully aware of the nature of the study and have voluntarily agreed to participate honestly and to the best of my ability.

I am aware that participation is entirely voluntary and I can leave the study at any stage if I so decide. Additionally I am aware that any identifying information obtained about me during the study will remain confidential, although I am aware of exceptions to this confidentiality. If I feel that the nature of the research is affecting me in any manner which concerns me I am aware that the researcher is obliged to provide me with adequate support to assist me.

By signing below I indicate that I have read, and fully understand the above and have asked any questions relating to the research to clarify any doubts I may have had regarding the nature of this study.

Participant Signature

Participant Name

Researcher Signature

Researcher Name