The Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in Group Therapy to Assist Pre-Adolescents in Dealing with Bereavement after Divorce

By

Vicky Bernadette Downing

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education with specialisation in Guidance and Counselling

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Professor Deirdre Kruger

November 2013
DEclaration of OWN work

Student number: 32501072

I declare that

The Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in Group Therapy to Assist Pre-Adolescents in Dealing with Bereavement after Divorce

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

________________________  1 November 2013

SIGNATURE                DATE

(Mrs Vicky Bernadette Downing)
SUMMARY

Bibliotherapy has been used as a therapeutic technique to assist clients to deal with a range of different issues in group as well as individual contexts. In this study, bibliotherapy has been used as an intervention to help six pre-adolescent children in a group setting deal with bereavement following their parents' divorce. A qualitative research design has been implemented in which an individual pre-therapy interview was conducted with each participant to determine their issues related to their parents’ divorces, coping strategies employed as well as level of English proficiency before an appropriate book was selected. After five group sessions in which bibliotherapy and associated activities were used, each participant was interviewed individually to determine the success of the use of bibliotherapy in this intervention. According to the results, bibliotherapy can be successful in a group context to help pre-adolescents deal with their parents’ divorce.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GDE: Gauteng Department of Education

SGB: School Governing Body
DEDICATION

To my husband and children: thank you for your love, support and encouragement, for listening to my ideas and always believing in me. You are my inspiration!

To Mom and Dad: Dad, even though you didn’t get to finish this journey with me, I dedicate this to you as I know you will be proud of me for finishing what I started 15 years ago. To Mom, thank you for always helping me see the glass half full, for your belief in me and for always being such a wonderful role model.

To my other family and friends: thank you for your patience and understanding. I look forward to spending more time with each of you in future.

To Professor Deirdre Kruger from UNISA: thank you for pushing me to do my very best at all times. I value your guidance and support.

To my heavenly father: thank you for calling me to your purposes and for making it possible. Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you... plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF OWN WORK ii

SUMMARY iii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS iv

DEDICATION v

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIM OF THE STUDY AND CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM 5
1.2.1 Initial Awareness 5
1.2.2 Relevance of the Study and Rationale 5

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 7

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT 10

1.5 RESEARCH AIMS 10
1.5.1 General Aim 10
1.5.2 Specific Aims 11
1.5.2.1 Research Questions 11
1.5.2.2 Literature Study 11

1.6 DELIMITATION OF RESEARCH FIELD 12

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS 12
1.7.1 Concrete Operational Stage 12
1.7.2 Bibliotherapy 13
1.7.3 Loss 13
1.7.4 Group Therapy 13

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 14

1.9 PLAN OF STUDY 15
1.9.1 Chapter Two 15
1.9.2 Chapter Three 15
1.9.3 Chapter Four 16
1.9.4 Chapter Five 16

1.10 IN CONCLUSION 16

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE STUDY 17

2.1 INTRODUCTION 17

2.2 USES OF BIBLIOTHERAPY 17
2.2.1 Application of Bibliotherapy 17
2.2.2 Theories about How Bibliotherapy Works 19
2.2.3 Students’ Experiences of Bibliotherapy 20
2.2.4 Conditions when Caution Should be Exercised 21
2.2.5 Optimal Conditions for Bibliotherapy 22

2.3 PROCESS OF BIBLIOTHERAPY 23
2.3.1 Important Factors for the Success of Bibliotherapy 23
2.3.2 The Stages of the Bibliotherapeutic Process 25

2.4 COPING STRATEGIES OF PRE-ADOLESCENT CHILDREN 29

2.5 PREVALENCE OF DIVORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA 32
2.6. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS OF PRE-ADOLESCENTS TO DIVORCE

2.6.1 The Experience of Divorce as a Crisis

2.6.2 Emotional and Behavioural Reactions in the Divorce Process

2.6.3 Divorce as Bereavement

2.6.4 Children’s Belief that they are to Blame

2.6.5 Changes in the Parent-Child Relationship

2.6.6 Other Changes Related to the Child’s Psychological Well-being

2.7 IN CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Design

3.3.2 Interpretivistic Research Paradigm

3.4 PLAN OF RESEARCH

3.4.1 Site Selection

3.4.2 Sampling Method

3.4.3 Obtaining Consent and Assent

3.4.4 Data Collection

3.4.4.1 School report as a mode of data collection

3.4.4.2 Initial communication with parents

3.4.4.3 Pre-therapy interview

3.4.4.4 Focus group therapy sessions

3.4.4.5 Post-therapy interview

3.4.4.6 The use of field notes

3.4.5 Selection of an Appropriate Book

3.5. ANALYSIS OF DATA
3.6. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA 59
3.6.1 Researcher Bias 59
3.6.2 Trustworthiness 60
3.6.3 Reflexivity 61
3.6.4 Bracketing 62

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 62
3.7.1 Informed Consent 62
3.7.2 Risks and Benefits 63
3.7.3 Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity 64
3.7.4 Voluntary Participation 66
3.7.5 Other Aspects 66

3.8 IN CONCLUSION 68

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND RESULTS 69

4.1 INTRODUCTION 69

4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR RESPONSES 71
4.2.1 Sandy 71
4.2.2 Cameron 72
4.2.3 Luke 73
4.2.4 Sophia 74
4.2.5 Jayden 75
4.2.6 Jemma 77

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE ABILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS 78

4.4 SELECTION OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE BOOK FOR THE GROUP 79

4.5 GROUP SESSIONS 79
4.5.1 Session 1 80
4.5.2 Session 2 81
4.5.3 Session 3 83
4.5.4 Session 4 85
4.5.5 Session 5 86
4.6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS
4.6.1 Themes
4.6.1.1 *Coping strategies employed by the participants*
4.6.1.2 *Behavioural and emotional reactions in the divorce process*
4.6.1.3 *Experience of divorce as bereavement*
4.6.1.4 *Changes in the parent-child relationship*
4.6.1.5 *Other changes related to the child’s psychological well-being*
4.6.2 Evaluation of Bibliotherapy as a Therapeutic Technique
4.6.2.1 Evaluation by the Participants
4.6.2.2 Evaluation by the Researcher

4.7 IN CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.2 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

5.3 LITERATURE FINDINGS
5.3.1 What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Bibliotherapy in a Group Therapy Context?
5.3.2 Can Bibliotherapy be used in a Mixed Boys and Girls Group in the Pre-adolescent Stage to Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce?
5.3.3 Can One Selected Book be Suitable for a Group of Pre-adolescents in Helping Them Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce?
5.3.4 Is Bibliotherapy Alone Effective as an Intervention Strategy in Helping Pre-adolescent Children Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce or Would Incorporating Additional Techniques into the Intervention Programme be more Successful?

5.4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH
5.4.1 What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Bibliotherapy in a Group Therapy Context?
5.4.2 Can Bibliotherapy be used in a Mixed Boys and Girls Group in the Pre-adolescent Stage to Deal with Their Parents' Divorce? 109

5.4.3 Can One Selected Book be Suitable for a Group of Pre-adolescents in Helping Them Deal with Their Parents' Divorce? 109

5.4.4 Is Bibliotherapy Alone Effective as an Intervention Strategy in Helping Pre-adolescent Children Deal with Their Parents' Divorce or Would Incorporating Additional Techniques into the Intervention Programme be more Successful? 109

5.5 SHORTCOMINGS IN THE RESEARCH 110

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 110

5.7 IN CONCLUSION 111

BIBLIOGRAPHY 113

ADDENDA 118

ADDENDUM 1: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule 118
ADDENDUM 2: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule 121
ADDENDUM 3: Incomplete Sentences Blank Questionnaire 124
ADDENDUM 4: Request for Participation in a Research Study for Children from Divorced Homes 127
ADDENDUM 5: Interview Schedule: Initial Communication With Parents 129
ADDENDUM 6: Letter of Consent 134
ADDENDUM 7: Letter of Assent 137
ADDENDUM 8: Letter Requesting Permission from GDE 139
ADDENDUM 9: Letter Requesting Permission from School 141
ADDENDUM 10: Letter Requesting Permission from SGB 142
ADDENDUM 11: Permission Letter from GDE 143
ADDENDUM 12: Ethical Clearance Certificate 145
ADDENDUM 13: Permission Letter from SGB  146
ADDENDUM 14: Permission Letter from School  147
ADDENDUM 15: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Sandy  Disk
ADDENDUM 16: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Cameron  Disk
ADDENDUM 17: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Luke  Disk
ADDENDUM 18: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Sophia  Disk
ADDENDUM 19: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Jayden  Disk
ADDENDUM 20: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Jemma  Disk
ADDENDUM 21: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule: Sandy  Disk
ADDENDUM 22: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule: Cameron  Disk
ADDENDUM 23: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule: Luke  Disk
ADDENDUM 24: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule: Sophia  Disk
ADDENDUM 25: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule: Jayden  Disk
ADDENDUM 26: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule: Jemma  Disk
ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy  Disk
ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron  Disk
ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke  Disk
ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia  Disk
ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden  Disk
ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma  Disk
ADDENDUM 33: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Sandy  Disk
ADDENDUM 34: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Cameron  Disk
ADDENDUM 35: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Luke  Disk
ADDENDUM 36: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Sophia  Disk
ADDENDUM 37: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Jayden  Disk
ADDENDUM 38: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Jemma  
ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-Therapy Interview: Sandy  
ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-Therapy Interview: Cameron  
ADDENDUM 41: Transcription: Pre-Therapy Interview: Luke  
ADDENDUM 42: Transcription: Pre-Therapy Interview: Sophia  
ADDENDUM 43: Transcription: Pre-Therapy Interview: Jayden  
ADDENDUM 44: Transcription: Pre-Therapy Interview: Jemma  
ADDENDUM 45: Transcription: Session 1  
ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2  
ADDENDUM 47: Transcription: Session 3  
ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4  
ADDENDUM 49: Transcription: Session 5  
ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Jayden  
ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Cameron  
ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Sophia  
ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Luke  
ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Jemma  
ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Sandy  
ADDENDUM 56: Observation Checklist: Post-Therapy Interview: Jayden  
ADDENDUM 57: Observation Checklist: Post-Therapy Interview: Cameron  
ADDENDUM 58: Observation Checklist: Post-Therapy Interview: Sophia  
ADDENDUM 60: Observation Checklist: Post-Therapy Interview: Jemma  
ADDENDUM 61: Observation Checklist: Post-Therapy Interview: Sandy  
ADDENDUM 62: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule: Jayden  
ADDENDUM 63: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule: Cameron  
ADDENDUM 64: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule: Sophia
ADDENDUM 65: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule: Luke
ADDENDUM 66: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule: Jemma
ADDENDUM 67: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule: Sandy
ADDENDUM 68: Summary of Results from the Pre-Therapy Interview Schedules
ADDENDUM 69: Summary of Results from the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire
ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedules
ADDENDUM 71: Researcher’s Personal Assumptions
ADDENDUM 72: Researcher’s Reflexive Journal
ADDENDUM 73: Rules of the Group
ADDENDUM 74: Examples of Pictures of Animal Families
ADDENDUM 75: An Example of a Picture of a Family
ADDENDUM 76: Examples of Photographs of Puppets
ADDENDUM 77: Questions to be asked during “ASK THE EXPERTS” Talk Show
ADDENDUM 78: Examples of Photographs of Collages
ADDENDUM 79: Review of Books
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Schematic Outline of Research 44
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Number of divorces including couples with and without children by population group, 2010 3

Table 1.2 Number of divorces by sex and type of occupation of the plaintiff, 2010 4

Table 2.1 Comparison of steps of the bibliotherapeutic process as suggested by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) and Prater et al. (2006) 27
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIM OF THE STUDY AND CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Bibliotherapy has been recognised since 1916, according to Detrixhe (2010:58,60), as a psychotherapeutic and cognitive therapy technique to aid patients who may be suffering from depression, social phobia and childhood anxieties among other conditions. As a treatment intervention for adult psychiatric patients in mental institutions, it first appeared in the Atlantic Monthly in 1916 when it was described by Ireland (Harper 2010:14). Initially it took the form of self-help books and was suggested by librarians. Using books as a coping mechanism to help students compare their problems with others’ and to then effectively deal with their own personal problems has since been used to help adults and children cope with “a myriad of stresses that envelope students” caused by social, economic and family-related issues (Thompson 2009:1,2). She cites Middlebrooks’ (2008) finding that stress may be related to divorce, poverty, drugs and obesity among others. Bibliotherapy has been successfully used to help children and adolescents overcome depression (Ackerson, Scogin, Smith & Lyman in Harper 2010:17), aid assertion training (Marrs in Harper 2010:20), lessen anxiety (Marrs in Harper 2010:20) and prevent and treat chemical dependency among other issues (Pardeck in Harper 2010:17).

Loss involves more than death. According to Athanasiou (2009:1,88-90), loss can be experienced as a result of separation, moving, loss of income and livelihood, loss [lack] of food [as during war-time], divorce, deployment of a parent and any other event which involves the child experiencing loss in some way. Athanasiou (2009:1) states that children “are not immune to these issues and do not always have the necessary support to deal with them”. As a result, many of the experiences of loss and grieving are related since grieving has been described as one’s own thoughts and emotions related to loss. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines grief as “deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement” and “a cause of such suffering” (Merriam-Webster Dictionaries Online: 2012). According to the National Association of School Psychologists, also known as NASP (2010:1), there is no correct or incorrect way to react to losses. The authors list the following
as common expressions of grieving in children: confusion, sadness and anxiety. Emotions which may also be associated with grief include anger, helplessness, mood swings, shame and relief (Broadway 2008:44). NASP in addition records signs which could indicate further attention is needed in helping the pre-adolescent child come to terms with the loss as difficulty or inability in concentrating, withdrawal, sleep disturbances, depression, anger and guilt (National Association of School Psychologists 2010:1).

Heath, Leavy, Hansen, Ryan, Lawrence and Sonntag (2008:259) suggest that children experience a mixture of emotions in response to their parents' divorce as a form of loss. However, as Morgan and Roberts (2010:206) explain, one of the most challenging situations exists when adults need to support a grieving child. The authors refer to Webb (2005) stating that this may occur because many adults may have their own personal anxieties regarding loss, they could attempt to protect the child from emotional pain and they may also be unsure of how to assist a child who is grieving. Thus it may be difficult for many adults to meet the emotional needs of their own children through the changes associated with divorce as they themselves adjust to changes and loss.

According to Oxford Dictionaries Online, bibliotherapy is “the use of books as therapy in the treatment of mental and psychological disorders.” Over the years, bibliotherapy has been defined as “the use of reading materials for help in solving personal problems or for psychiatric therapy” (Merriam-Webster Dictionaries Online:2012). According to Pardeck and Pardeck (1992:1), the simplest definition of bibliotherapy is “helping individuals through the use of books”. Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:1) state that using bibliotherapy in therapy “literally means to treat through books”. Thus, bibliotherapy is used in conjunction with other therapies to influence people’s personal adjustment but also as an aid in assisting them to work through their emotional and behavioural problems. The authors elaborate that by helping clients face and work through their presenting problems by reading about characters who have done so successfully, they realise that others have faced similar dilemmas, experienced similar emotions of failure and inadequacy but still managed to succeed by some measure and develop an awareness of their situation (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:2). In this manner, bibliotherapy is meeting the child’s needs at this crossroad in his life.
Bibliotherapy meets many other needs of people including free expression of problems and concerns, the ability to analyse their problems in relation to themselves and the characters in the books by identifying similarities between their own behaviour and thoughts with those of characters in the books; providing information to children allowing them to solve their own problems and reducing anxiety and promoting relaxation (Orton in Prater, Johnstun, Dyches and Johnstun 2006:6). These specifically may be areas in which bibliotherapy can help children cope with their parents' divorce.

Divorce is a common occurrence in our society. Statistics South Africa (Statistics SA 2010:4) indicates that 22 936 divorces were granted in 2010. According to Statistics South Africa, “in 2010, 12 486 (54,4%) of the 22 936 divorces involved children younger than 18 years” (Statistics SA 2010:6) (see Table 1 below). This table details how, with the exception of Mixed and Unspecified population groups, the majority of divorces occur between couples with children as opposed to couples without children. Thus, many children have to adjust to the changes that occur after their parents have divorced.

**Table 1.1 Number of divorces including couples with and without children by population group, 2010 (Statistics South Africa 2010:39)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population group</th>
<th>Total divorces</th>
<th>Divorces without children</th>
<th>Divorces with children</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22 936</td>
<td>10 448</td>
<td>12 486</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>8 169</td>
<td>3 430</td>
<td>4 738</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>3 189</td>
<td>1 119</td>
<td>2 070</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian/Asian</td>
<td>1 294</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6 995</td>
<td>3 496</td>
<td>3 499</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>3 258</td>
<td>1 807</td>
<td>1 450</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The statistics also show how the majority of divorces are initiated by economically inactive spouses (refer to Table 2 below: Statistics South Africa 2010:38). This may imply that the children of divorced people could have limited access to adequate services and may be vulnerable. The economically viable use of bibliotherapy may then prove beneficial under such conditions.

**Table 1.2 Number of divorces by sex and type of occupation of the plaintiff, 2010**
*(Statistics South Africa 2010:38)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of occupation</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22 936</td>
<td>7 999</td>
<td>11 309</td>
<td>3 628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Semi-Professional and Technical Occupations</td>
<td>1 734</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>1 121</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers and Administrators</td>
<td>2 201</td>
<td>1 165</td>
<td>1 036</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and Sale Occupations</td>
<td>2 764</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>2 149</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Delivery and Communications</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Occupations</td>
<td>1 644</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming and Related Occupations</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans, Apprentice and Related Occupinations</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Foreman, Mine and Quarry Worker</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Economically Active</td>
<td>3 460</td>
<td>1 114</td>
<td>2 346</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>9 263</td>
<td>2 234</td>
<td>3 401</td>
<td>3 628</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to a study by Robinson, Butler, Scanlan, Douglas and Murch (2003:77), children experience the disruption associated with their parents’ divorce as “a form of crisis”. This crisis is characterised by the children’s attempts to regain a sense of balance in their lives.
through whatever coping mechanisms they have available (Thompson 2000 as cited by Robinson et al. 2003:77). The authors elaborate that initial responses to the news that their parents are divorcing include disbelief, emotional distress and a sense of shock. It seems the most difficult issue children have to deal with thereafter, according to the authors, is when children are not prepared for the divorce and information is withheld from the children in an effort to protect them. It was found by Robinson et al. (2003:78) that children felt “information was vital in helping them understand, cope with and adapt to the crisis of family breakup”. Children also expressed the wish to have information and explanations shared with them through the process of their parents' divorce. This would enable to children to “restore a sense of ‘normality’ and balance in their lives”.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Initial Awareness

In my teaching career I have seen various students who have been able to cope well with the various challenges they face, including loss and divorce. As an English Home Language teacher I have noted the influence books can have on students. Characters in books may be motivational to children as they are able to identify with the characters and their dilemmas. I have often thought about the value of selecting one book from others solely on the basis of how it can help students cope with future predicaments. My own biological children have been able to cope with change better after we have read books related to the envisioned change before it occurs. We also then explore how the characters’ situations are similar to theirs to help them identify ways in which they can cope better. Related to this idea is the possibility or potential value of bibliotherapy in helping children cope with loss, specifically the divorce of their parents. The question I would like to answer is: How effective can bibliotherapy be in helping pre-adolescent children cope with loss, specifically their parents’ divorce?

1.2.2 Relevance of the Study and Rationale

According to Rubin (1978) in Roodt (2006:9), bibliotherapy was first used with delinquent boys in the 1930s and 1940s. Although this was non-experimental, it set the scene for bibliotherapy to be used within the researching community. Harper (2010:16) furthermore explains that during these two decades “fictional stories began to reflect the problems of society – drugs, divorce.” As a result, bibliotherapy specifically for children was established.
As one of the most versatile approaches to assist children to cope with life’s challenges, bibliotherapy has the following positive effects inter alia on readers: the promotion of empathy, creation of positive attitudes, production of positive adjustment and social adjustment. Furthermore it adds to the relief of emotional pressure, gaining insight to problems as the reader identifies the universality of his problems and revelation that problems may have alternative solutions and that, as a result, individuals have choices in solving these problems (Agnes 1947, Smith 1948, Herminghaus 1954, Martin 1955, Livingoof 1961, Weiss 1961, Fisher 1965, Tauran 1967, Schulteis 1969 as well as referred to but un-named personal testimonies in Cornett & Cornett 1980:15-16). In addition, bibliotherapy has been heralded as a “cost-effective, successful treatment intervention” which can be used across cultures as it is versatile in its application (Stekoll 2011:7).

Thompson (2009:2) states that research has been conducted determining the efficacy of bibliotherapy in the following scenarios: a non-recurring crisis as experienced by “gifted children (Nugent, 2002), bullying (Brinson, 2005), abuse (Pardeck, 1990), issues of divorced parents (Nuccio, 1997), suspended children (Schreur, 2006), and handicaps (Beardsley, 1982)”. Extensive research has been done on bibliotherapy as a technique to aid adolescents through the process of loss and its associated elements such as an investigation in the United States of America by Stekoll (2011:3) who has examined the effectiveness of bibliotherapy as a tool to assist children with their parents’ divorce. However, there seems to be a void in information relating to the pre-adolescent age group of 7 to 11-year olds concerning how they cope with their parents’ divorce with the assistance of bibliotherapy in South Africa. This study aims to add to the limited information available for this group of children. Because from pre-school years to adolescence “there are significant developmental differences in how children experience grief” (Morgan & Roberts 2010:207), understanding how children in this pre-adolescent age group cope with grief related to their parents’ divorce will guide educational psychologists in effectively using bibliotherapy to assist children through this traumatic life process.

Using group therapy will be helpful in the context of using bibliotherapy as envisioned in this study. The group, according to Lawrence and Sundel (1972), Lazarus (1966), Wodarski and colleagues (1971) and Rose (1977) in Rose (1977:4-6) has the following advantages: the client is allowed the opportunity to practise many learned behaviours, the norms which arise can serve as a control for individual members, peer reinforcement is present, assessment is
more accurate, it is less costly to participate in and the group “serves as a control on the therapist’s value imposition.” Thus, working in a group has many benefits for the children participating in the intervention.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Children from seven to eleven years of age fall within the concrete operational stage according to Piaget as cited in Woolfolk (2010:34-35). During this stage, children learn to recognise logical stability of their physical environments, realise that elements can be manipulated or transformed and still maintain many of their original traits and that these changes are reversible (also known as conservation). For children dealing with divorce, this has important consequences as they are not able to fully comprehend their environments as stable and they may experience that conservation may not hold true for all aspects of their lives if they lose contact with loved ones.

In a study by Amato and Keith (1991) cited by Grych and Fincham (1997:164), “elementary school-aged children evidenced the strongest deficits in social adjustment” when compared to children of other ages whose parents had also divorced. In this same study small differences were found when comparing children from divorced parents to children from intact families regarding a slight increase in children from divorced parents externalising problems through displays of aggression or delinquency inter alia, poorer academic achievement, less social adjustment, lower self-concept and greater internalisation of problems such as anxiety and depression. However, the authors further state that no clear evidence exists that children’s age makes them particularly vulnerable to the consequences of divorce. When I was growing up it was believed that children from divorced parents are disadvantaged tremendously by their parents’ divorce. However, many researchers do not agree with this view. For example, Hetherington (1988) and Hetherington, Stanley-Hagen and Anderson (1989) in Grych and Fincham (1997:161) are of the opinion that there is considerable variation in the functioning of children from divorced parents and that many of these children may be as well-adjusted as children from intact families. Individual factors may be responsible for the children’s functioning post-divorce (Garmezy in Grych & Fincham 1997:171). I agree with this view as not all divorces are perceived by children as detrimental to their well-being. Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:34) explain that some children of divorced
parents experience a sense of relief when their parents initially separate as their home life may become more peaceful as their parents are not in constant conflict with each other.

Another relevant theory was proposed by Erikson who suggested that there are eight stages that individuals pass through as they progress towards old age. Each stage consists of a crisis which needs to be resolved in order for the person to reach the next stage and subsequent crisis (Woolfolk 2010:84). Each stage is characterised by two opposing poles, each indicating a choice that is made by the individual. Woolfolk furthermore describes the poles as “a basic framework for understanding the needs of young people in relation to the society on which they grow, learn and later make their contributions” (2010:83). An example of a choice to be made by the concrete operational child is the choice between being industrious (hard-working and creating something thus experiencing success as a result) or not engaging with tasks and then feeling a sense of inferiority.

Children of the ages of seven to eleven years fall in the category: Industry vs. Inferiority during which they must learn to master new skills which will equip them to handle adult life. One of these skills could involve dealing with loss and grief. Should the relevant skills not be learned, the child may experience a sense of inferiority, incompetence and failure (Learning Theories Knowledgebase 2012:internet; Woolfolk 2010:83). Children of this age are usually in the school environment in which they may be given opportunities to encounter success and hence, avoid the feeling of inferiority. If a child, for example, blames himself for his parents’ divorce as many children do (Stekoll 2011:8), he may experience a feeling of inferiority. The child in this age bracket may play with and compete with friends, mostly of the same sex. The child becomes competent in being able to “move between the worlds of home, neighbourhood, and school and to cope with academics, group activities, and friends” (Woolfolk 2010:85). It is during this phase that children perceive the relationship between the pleasure of a completed task and perseverance.

Grych and Fincham (1997:159) have examined research on how children adapt to their parents’ divorce. Research by these two authors suggests that children from divorced families are at greater risk to develop symptoms of psychological maladjustment. However, they do caution that many children whose parents have divorced are as well-adjusted as their peers from intact families. They have identified several factors which are crucial in
influencing how well children cope with changes associated with divorce such as gender and age. It was determined that inter-parental conflict (Amato 1993 in Grych & Fincham 1997:170), environmental changes (Grych & Fincham 1997:169) and economic hardship (Guidubaldi et al. 1984 in Grych & Fincham 1997:170) associated with divorce increase the stress experienced by children when their parents divorce. They argue that it is just as important to consider factors that defend children from the negative effects related to divorce or to augment their functioning (Grych & Fincham 1997:171). These will be explored further in Chapter 2.

Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:35) suggest that bibliotherapy can “hold out hope for children whose parents are separated or divorced without being unrealistic”. They also outline the following functions of bibliotherapy in assisting children whose parents have divorced: helping children deal with problems of coping with everyday life post-divorce such as financial hardship and changes in environment, outlining the familial breakup and separation of parents, adjusting to occasional visits with the non-custody parent and adjusting to their parents’ divorce and new situation. These functions will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

Since children spend a great deal of their time in school and engaging with books, using these books to help children cope with their parents’ divorce may be beneficial. Part of the reason for the success of bibliotherapy lies in the fact that it utilises projection as part of its technique. According to Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (1997:70), projection is “an attempt to keep unconscious psychic material unconscious by subjectively ‘changing’ the focus to the drives or wishes of other people”. During the first phase of bibliotherapy, the client identifies with a character in the story and forms a perception of affiliation with that character. During this process, he may admire aspects of the character and may even imitate this character’s behaviour (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2). In this process, the child attributes his own motives and emotions to the character in the book and may even allocate blame to this character instead of himself, thus using projection as a defence mechanism. Through this process, catharsis is experienced as an emotional release which lowers his psychic tension and facilitates healing (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2).
Bibliotherapy often involves the child imitating behaviour of a character; therefore the social learning theory of Bandura can be applied to the technique. Maddi (1996:448) explains that social learning theory emphasises a process of learning from experience which is rational. Sometimes this experience may be watching a model perform behaviour and imitating his behaviour as “persons can observe someone else behaving in a particular way in response to a given situation and learn just by seeing what happens to them” (Bandura & Walters 1963 in Maddi 1996:450). According to Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:3), fictional characters in books offer the client models showing positive, adaptive behaviours to replace his own ways of coping. He may then imitate the character's behaviour to some extent if the consequences of the character's behaviour are favourable. Likewise, if the outcome of the character's behaviour is negative, he may be persuaded to avoid the same outcome by rejecting the modelled behaviour. Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:3) further suggest that providing good models as characters is especially beneficial for children who do not have positive role models in their immediate environment.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

*Can bibliotherapy be used in group therapy to support pre-adolescent children to deal with their experience of their parents’ divorce?*

1.5 RESEARCH AIMS

1.5.1 General Aim

The aim of this research involved exploring the success of bibliotherapy in a focus group therapy setting for pre-adolescent children in helping them cope with their parents’ divorce.

A literature study was also conducted to establish a theoretical framework for the empirical study of how children experience their parents’ divorce and how bibliotherapy may be of assistance.

Aspects addressed in this literature study include bibliotherapy, prevalence of divorce in South Africa, pre-adolescent children’s experiences of their parents’ divorce, coping strategies employed by these children and factors enhancing children’s coping after parental divorce.
1.5.2 Specific Aims

The specific aims were to:

1. Establish the advantages and disadvantages of bibliotherapy when used in a group therapy context.

2. Conclude whether bibliotherapy could be used in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal their parents’ divorce.

3. Determine whether one selected book was suitable for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents’ divorce.

4. Establish whether bibliotherapy alone was effective as an intervention strategy in helping pre-adolescent children deal with their parents’ divorce or whether additional techniques should be incorporated into the intervention programme.

1.5.2.1 Research Questions

The following questions were answered through this study:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using bibliotherapy in a group therapy context?
- Can bibliotherapy be used in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal their parents’ divorce?
- Can one selected book be suitable for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents’ divorce?
- Is bibliotherapy alone effective as an intervention strategy in helping pre-adolescent children deal with their parents’ divorce or would incorporating additional techniques into the intervention programme be more successful?

1.5.2.2 Literature Study

A comprehensive literature study was conducted to explore how pre-adolescent children react to their parents’ divorce. Information was garnered regarding uses of bibliotherapy in
the group therapy context with pre-adolescents. The literature study underpinned the study in terms of theoretical orientation upon which to base conclusions.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF RESEARCH FIELD

Pre-adolescent (aged seven to eleven years) children were researched in terms of how they experienced loss following their parents’ divorces.

The divorce needed to have occurred no more than six years before the planned research.

Children worked in a group of similar-aged children who had experienced loss relating to their parents’ divorce. Equal gender distribution would also be ideal for this investigation.

Experience of loss specifically associated with divorce was the focus of this study.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

A number of concepts are defined below for the purposes of this investigation.

1.7.1 Concrete Operational Stage

In this study, concrete operational stage refers to a cognitive stage in children between the ages of seven and eleven years in which they begin using thought processes that are real but limited to concrete objects (Woolfolk 2010:34-35). Thus one will often find a child in this stage counting fingers to add things together. Children’s experiences relate to objects they have primarily encountered in the real world. Louw (1993:77) states that children in the concrete operational phase are “now capable of thought processes (operations) that are reversible, but only regarding real and concrete things”. The processes are based on objects and not ideas which are abstractly expressed in words. Thinking at this stage becomes logical and the children in this stage become aware that thinking and dreaming occur in their
heads and, therefore, internally (Louw 1993:319). This term is used interchangeably with the term “pre-adolescent” as it is the period of childhood which precedes adolescence.

1.7.2 Bibliotherapy

According to Prater et al. (2006:6), bibliotherapy is “the use of books to help people solve problems.” Heath et al. (2005) in Stekoll (2011:3) define bibliotherapy as the use of books in the therapeutic context to facilitate emotional change and growth by providing different viewpoints and ideas for emotions, behaviours and thoughts. Willies (1993:13) states that the aim of bibliotherapy should include “an approach to the understanding of life’s crises and meanings by recognising the on-going processes of story in acts of human existence.”

1.7.3 Loss

Loss is defined as “the state of no longer having something because it has been taken from you or destroyed” and “the state of having less of something than before because some of it has gone” (MacMillan Dictionary 2012:internet). It also refers to a feeling of sadness experienced when somebody leaves or dies or when you no longer possess something. The Rostum Study Dictionary concludes that loss occurs when “a person, thing or amount is lost or taken away” (Alexander 1984:357).

1.7.4 Group Therapy

Group therapy involves the use of a small, carefully selected group of individuals who meet regularly with a therapist to “assist each individual in emotional growth and personal problem solving.” (Stemberg 2012:internet). Rose (1977:4) suggests group therapy allows the client the opportunity to practise many learned behaviours and it also simulates the “real world of most clients” more than the “situation consisting solely of a high status therapist and a low status client” as found in individual therapy. The group context allows the client to interact with others experiencing similar dilemmas. In the context of the study, participants were afforded the opportunity to interact with peers who were also experiencing their parents’ divorces and assessed how they coped with their losses. In the safety of the group setting
with the guide of a suitable book as a model, the children were free to practise their coping mechanisms and reactions to their experience of loss.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study followed an interpretivistic research. Interpretivistic research relies on considering “multiple socially constructed realities” (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:6) in which the researcher uses professional judgement and perspective when interpreting data. Using an interpretivistic approach involves the use of qualitative data collection. Cohen and Swerdlik (2010:265) describe qualitative data as that which relies “primarily on verbal rather than mathematical or statistical procedures” and includes data collection methods such as field research, historical-comparative research and case studies. For this particular unit of research, interviews, open-ended questionnaires and projection media were used.

An interpretivistic research paradigm was employed alongside a qualitative method.

As this was a qualitative method research study, a situation analysis was used to determine the children’s experience of loss. Thereafter an intervention was conducted comprising five group therapy sessions with pre-adolescent children experiencing loss after their parents’ divorce. After the intervention, a series of interviews were carried out to determine the success of using bibliotherapy in assisting these children cope with their experience of loss.

The research techniques were in the form of interviews, suitable open-ended questionnaires and projection media such as Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire and Three Wishes. An equivalent interview session was conducted once the intervention had been completed.

Purposive sampling was conducted to select the most suitable candidates for the study. Purposive sampling involves selecting “cases with a specific purpose in mind” (Neuman 1997:206). This sampling method was chosen to select children within the concrete operational phase who were experiencing loss and bereavement related to their parents’
divorce. Purposive sampling also enabled the researcher to investigate equal gender distribution to gain a clearer understanding of how bibliotherapy can help boys and girls in the concrete operational phase deal with loss associated with their parents' divorce. Children attending a state primary school were used in this study.

The study was conducted in the context of the group setting. Using a group allowed the children to interact in a more relaxed environment and to learn from each other's experiences. In addition, using the group approach facilitated sharing of information.

Data were analysed qualitatively to determine changes in children’s experiences of loss and their identification with characters’ situations. Qualitative data analysis involved studying participants' responses to projective media such as Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire and interviews.

Research had been conducted from various sources. Unfortunately there are not many recent published books on the subject of bibliotherapy, hence the use of peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations for research. Where possible, research from the internet had been verified against older sources of information. Internet library databases such as UCTD, Oasis, ProQuest and NEXUS were consulted.

1.9 PLAN OF STUDY
1.9.1 Chapter Two
Chapter Two explores the prevalence of divorce in South Africa, how children experience their parents' divorce, coping strategies in pre-adolescent children, the uses of bibliotherapy and the process of bibliotherapy.

1.9.2 Chapter Three
Chapter Three outlines the research programme for this study. The research design, sample selection, data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations, are explained in full.
1.9.5 Chapter Four
The results of the research and analysis form the basis of this chapter.

1.9.4 Chapter Five
Chapter Five outlines findings of the research, conclusions on the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in assisting pre-adolescent children as they cope with their parents’ divorce, limitations of this study and further recommendations for subsequent studies.

1.10 IN CONCLUSION

Although divorce and loss have been studied extensively, not much research has been conducted on using books in the group context to help South African children in the concrete operational phase cope with their parents’ divorce. Using books for therapy has been of benefit in various other areas of assisting children and adults. This study explored the development of the pre-adolescent child and how bibliotherapy could assist the child in coping with his parents’ divorce. The children’s styles of coping were useful in this regard.

It is implied that children in this phase of their lives will benefit from identifying with characters and situations from the selected book. Children may learn from the way the characters deal with their losses and are able to face their uncertain futures.

According to Willies (1993:17), books and their stories help readers revisit “situations in new ways, helping the individual to go back to what has happened not necessarily to change the irreversible but to reinterpret life events in new and fruitful ways”. Bibliotherapy allows participants to approach intimidating and prohibited aspects in a non-threatening manner, stimulate conversation on their perceptions of loss as well as allowing participants to realise that they are not alone in their experiences (Stuttherheim & Pretorius 1993 in Willies 1993:30-31).

One of the future ambitions of this research study is to suggest guidelines and use of the findings of this research in the school situation to assist children in the concrete operational phase cope with their parents’ divorce. The aim is to aid educational psychologists as they assist children in this age group come to terms with their parents’ divorce.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION
Teachers have been utilising bibliotherapy for many years (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:1) by selecting reading material to help learners deal with their own adjustment problems, develop character and instil positive values in children. Other professionals in helping fields such as librarians and psychologists have also realised that books are useful tools in treating children’s behavioural and emotional problems. Harper (2010:16-17) cites research indicating the use of bibliotherapy by school counsellors, nurses, osteopathic doctors, school nurses, psychiatrists (Gregory & Vessey 2004) and teachers (Ouzts & Brown 2000). She specifically mentions that Adlerian psychologists utilise bibliotherapy as it corresponds with their over-riding philosophy which focuses on educating the child during the therapeutic process (Riordan & Mullis 1996 in Harper 2010:17). Thus it can be seen that bibliotherapy is used by many professionals because of its value in different contexts. In addition, Harper (2010:17-18) cites research related to the settings in which bibliotherapy is practised which includes private clinical practice, hospitals (Manworren & Woodring 1998), classrooms (Hendrickson 1988; Lenkowsky 1987; Sullivan & Strang 2003), day treatment centres (English 2005) and school communities (Gregory & Vessey 2004). It has also been established that, although research focuses on using bibliotherapy with adults, bibliotherapy can also be used with success when engaging with children (Harper 2010:18).

2.2 USES OF BIBLIOThERAPY

2.2.1 Application of Bibliotherapy
The notion of bibliotherapy has been examined as a method in coping and dealing with the multiple stresses which children may face. According to leaders of bibliotherapy, such as Pardeck (2004), bibliotherapy can be defined as a way of coping using books, mostly fiction, that allows students to “equate their problems with another and in return effectively deal with their personal issues” (Thompson 2009:1). According to Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:1), under guidance of a skilled helper (such as a psychologist), therapeutic change can occur when the reader and literature interact. Bibliotherapy has been successfully used by people to help them cope with changes and personal problems in their lives or as an aid to enhance personal growth and emotional change (Abdullah 2002 in Prater et al. 2006:6). Other uses
include providing insight into problems, encouraging discussion about issues, making the person aware that others may share similar problems and even offer solutions to these issues (Joshua & DiMenna 2000 in Prater et al. 2006:6). Developing a good self-concept, improving understanding of own and others’ behaviours, encouraging self-appraisal and decreasing mental and emotional pressure are also uses, according to Riahinia and Asemi (2011:711). Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:4-6) mention the following applications of bibliotherapy: increasing assertive behaviours (Allen, 1978; Nesbitt, 1977; McGovern, 1976), bringing about changes in attitude towards a subject (Wilson, 1951), modifying behaviour (McClasky, 1970) and enhancing the therapeutic process (Muehleisen, 1976; Saper, 1967). Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:7,8) include the following cited roles of bibliotherapy: helping individuals improve interpersonal relationships by enhancing the development of tolerance, finding solutions, gaining insight into the intricacies of peer relationships (Pardeck 1990), helping the child come to terms with emotional or physical disabilities (Bernstein 1983) and assisting adolescents to gain understanding about their own behaviour and then finding answers which may prevent future difficulties.

Harper (2010:17-18) cites the following uses of bibliotherapy with children: educating a child about illness, for hospitalisation and surgery it may help in preparing the child for the latter two processes (Manworren & Woodring 1998) and promoting emotional intelligence development in the classroom (Sullivan and Strange 2003). Harper (2010:17-18) lists these uses of bibliotherapy with adolescents and adults: to overcome depression (Ackerson, Scogin, Smith & Lyman 1998), with adults to handle and deal with panic attacks (Lidren et al. 1994; Wright, Clum, Roodman, & Febbraro 2000) and depression and anxiety disorders (Ackerson, Scogin, Smith, & Lyman 1998; Floyd, Scogin, McKendree-Smith, Floyd, & Rokke 2004; Johnson 1998). In addition, teachers have used bibliotherapy to teach suitable developmental and social skills, commitment to work and kindness. They have also shared the love of books with children who may be underachieving or underexposed to reading (Prater et al. 2006:6).

Related specifically to divorce, Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:35) record these functions of bibliotherapy as outlined by their book choices for bibliotherapy: offering realistic hope to children whose parents have separated or divorced; helping children come to terms with and understand the emotions and feelings associated with their parents’ divorce; dealing with the
child’s assumptions that he may be to blame for his parents’ divorce as well as the adjustments that are made now that the child is living with only one of his parents; delving into the everyday problems since his parents have divorced such as moving to a new home and added household duties for the child and, finally, adjusting to only occasional visits with the non-custodial parent.

2.2.2 Theories about How Bibliotherapy Works

By bringing problems to the child’s conscious mind, bibliotherapy encourages children to talk uninhibitedly about their concerns and problems. Since bibliotherapy relies on projection (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2), it overcomes repression or denial which many children use to manage their own difficult experiences (Prater et al. 2006:6). Related to this is character identification which occurs between the child and the characters of the story. Children are able to examine their own thoughts and behaviours by comparing themselves to the characters in the story. Bibliotherapy helps children identify aspects of themselves and their problems in others’ lives, feel emphatically for themselves and others, react emotionally and solve problems by considering examples to which they have been exposed (Detrixhe 2010:63; Prater et al. 2006:6).

Bibliotherapy also provides information on how the child can effectively deal with his own problems. By relieving emotional stress and aiding catharsis, bibliotherapy may help the child improve insight into the problems he is experiencing as well as identify possible solutions (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2; Joshua & DiMenna 2000 in Prater et al. 2006:6). By discovering that others have shared similar emotions and experiences, children may undergo an emotional release thus lowering their anxiety and enhancing relaxation (Prater et al. 2006:6).

Pardeck and Pardeck (1987:271) elaborate that when children who are experiencing difficulty in an area of their lives read about characters who are confronted with similar challenges which they were able to solve, they are capable, under the guidance of an adult, to use the example to find solutions to their own problems. Through the examples of ways in which characters have responded to frustrations, hope, disappointments, anxieties and
failures, children are able to apply what they have learned through reading about these characters' experiences to their own situation.

### 2.2.3 Students' Experiences of Bibliotherapy

Following a study conducted by Harper (2010:79-80), students discussed becoming mindful of a wide variety of emotions and expressing these emotions during their experiences with bibliotherapy. Emotions explicitly mentioned by students included becoming upset, angry, depressed, disappointed, interested and happy. They were able to identify emotions within themselves after engaging with the characters' emotions and recalling their own personal experiences.

The students involved in this study have concurred that, overall, bibliotherapy was a positive experience, it was interesting and “fun reading these books” and that the students could learn about the characters. One student is also recorded as saying: “It made me feel that I could do anything.” In addition, students indicated that they gained insight and learned a great deal about emotion, social skills and emotional awareness. Some books were described as interesting, encouraging them to think about “times of good and times of bad”.

Furthermore, reading the books tended to improve their reading skills. However, studies cited by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:5) indicate that this is not always the case: bibliotherapy does not always improve reading ability (Dixon 1974; Livengood 1961; Ponder 1968; Schultheis 1969).

Despite the above positive experiences of students, Harper (2010:79-80) recorded the following dislikes about bibliotherapy as indicated by the same students researched: time taken to read the books, being forced to sit down and read every day and the level of intensity experienced when thinking about the characters and their situations. These were ideas to keep in consideration when planning the bibliotherapeutic process and selection of suitable reading material.
2.2.4 Conditions when Caution Should be Exercised

However, there are situations in which caution should be exercised. Instances include the limited availability of literature on certain topics, many children may not be willing or ready to read, and children and their caregivers could be defensive about familial problems or may deny the existence of such problems (Abdullah 2002 in Prater et al. 2006:6). Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:16) suggest reaching non-readers using bibliotherapy through the use of audio books and “other innovative approaches”. However, they do concur that bibliotherapy is most effective with avid readers.

Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:6,14) and Pardeck (1990 in Prater et al. 2006:6) agree that bibliotherapy “should not be used as a single approach to treatment” and should be a “valuable component to the therapeutic process.” It is more effective when used in conjunction with other techniques giving the example of combining it with group therapy which fosters greater involvement, problem-solving behaviour and insights into subjects. Jones (2006:25) concurs with Pardeck that bibliotherapy is most effective when combined with other treatments.

Psychologists must be aware that bibliotherapy should not be used haphazardly (Pardeck 2004 in Thompson 2009:31) as not every recreational activity can be classed as therapeutic. Heath (2005) in Stekoll (2011:26) adds that children who have recently been involved in trauma may “feel numb” and may be susceptible to misidentifying emotions thus connecting with the book’s characters could be difficult.

Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:16) and Pardeck and Pardeck (1992:16) advise that there is limited empirical evidence for the use of bibliotherapy using fiction books although there is much support for the use of non-fiction books, particularly self-help books. Limited success may be reached if the psychologist does not know the child well enough and incorrect reading material may have been selected. Should the incorrect book be selected for the child, it “may even reinforce fears, increase defences, and promote rationalisation instead of change”. Once again, echoing the words of Lundsteen (1972) in Cornett and Cornett (1980:9): it is important that the right book is matched to the right child about the right problem at the right time. The child may also use intellectualisation as a defence mechanism when reading about the characters. This may limit the effectiveness of projection and the final outcome of bibliotherapy (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:16). The authors add that books
“can subject the client to a host of unrealistic expectations, potentially frustrating the treatment process” (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:20). It is important for the psychologist to avoid these limitations of bibliotherapy by monitoring the process and ensuring the client clearly understands the content of the reading matter. The psychologist should also tailor the reading tasks to suit the needs of the client should these change (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:20).

In addition, Jones (2006:25) warns that bibliotherapy may be detrimental to the child’s progress if he believes the psychologist is diminishing his problems by giving him a book. Jones (2006:25) quotes Dr Cindy Crosscope Scott, a licensed counsellor from North Carolina in the United States of America, who agrees that advocating self-help books which offer simplistic solutions to their problems could cause anxious patients more anxiety. According to Stekoll (2011:26) some children believe that reading is harmful to them and thus would be unsuitable candidates for bibliotherapy. The psychologist needs to be aware that there will be differences in how the characters are perceived, that maladaptive behaviours may be idealised and that children could find unique messages from each story when they project their own intentions and reasons on to characters (Heath 2005 in Stekoll 2011:26).

It is also important to consider that the relationship between the psychologist and the child may have had more impact on the success of the bibliotherapy process (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:17). This must be kept in mind. Cleveland (2011:12) agrees that “it is difficult to attribute change and success solely to bibliotherapy”. This was kept in consideration throughout the research.

2.2.5 Optimal Conditions for Bibliotherapy

Zaccaria and Moses (1968) cited in Harper (2010:18) stipulate that adolescents benefit the most from bibliotherapy after the following conditions are met: 1) a working relationship of mutual trust has been established between the psychologist and child, 2) the presenting problem has been consensually agreed upon by the adolescent and psychologist, 3) some initial examination of the problem has occurred, and 4) the adolescent is showing low resistance to the therapeutic process. Since the group to be researched by this study involves pre-adolescents, it was beneficial to be aware of these conditions.
Added to these conditions, Jones (2006:25) has found that bibliotherapy is most effective with individuals whose mental health problems are marginal to moderate in severity. Secondly, bibliotherapy is a feasible option in rural areas where mental healthcare is not available or where limited time is available for therapy. Thirdly, bibliotherapy intensifies the patient’s sense of responsibility. The author summarises that bibliotherapy is most successful with motivated individuals functioning at a higher intellectual level.

2.3 PROCESS OF BIBLIOTHERAPY
2.3.1 Important Factors for the Success of Bibliotherapy

As previously mentioned by Zaccaria and Moses (1968) cited in Harper (2010:18), it is essential for the educational psychologist and child to establish a relationship characterised by positive rapport. This will help children feel comfortable to connect with the characters in the books and the characters’ experiences and to share their own personal experiences. Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:13) suggest that reading aloud “provides an opportunity for a trusting relationship to develop between child and practitioner.” Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972) in Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:13) concur that reading aloud to children also holds educational value. Other important ingredients in the therapeutic relationship, mentioned in Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:7), include mutual understanding, trust and confidence which prevent the child from feeling that the psychologist is avoiding dealing with the problem through advocating a book for the child to read. The authors further indicate that the child’s readiness is central to the process: inappropriate timing may hinder the bibliotherapeutic process and even annoy the child (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:7). It is also crucial that the child is be able to see similarities between himself and the characters in the book (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:12) so pairing the correct book with the child is fundamental (Sridhar & Vaughn 2000 as cited in Harper 2010:4).

Before the process begins, the psychologist should select the right book for use by bearing the following factors in mind related to the needs of the child: the reading ability of the child, the number of issues and knowledge of the problems of the child, maturity of the child, the number of possible solutions offered to the problem, the degree of realism in the way the problem is presented in the book and the overall use of a non-judgmental tone in the handling of the issue overcome in the book, possibly with an element of appropriate humour.
Norcross (2006) in Thompson (2009:28-30) agrees that “bibliotherapists should address the problem(s) but also consider the personality and individual dynamics of the reader”. Although the article deals with teachers as bibliotherapists, this suggestion holds true of educational psychologists as discussed in this paragraph. Therefore, it was important to be aware that one book may not meet the needs of all children, adding to the challenge of group therapy.

The use of illustrations has been known to enhance the accessibility of the book to the child, as cited by Whipple (1969) in Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:13-14), by extending the child’s world and enabling the child to envision his wishes, actions and feelings as a normal part of the development process (Cianciolo 1972 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13), with animal characters being most successful with smaller children (Peller 1962 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:14).

Related specifically to divorce, Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:35, 36) suggest books should be selected which encourage realistic hope in children whose parents are divorced or separated. They explain that books may assist children by focusing on their feelings of sadness and bewilderment during the pre-divorce stage thus helping them to cope with their new experiences of everyday life when the divorce is finalised and, in addition, become accustomed to occasional visits from the non-custodial parent. These are important aspects when selecting appropriate books for bibliotherapy in order to “confront enduring human questions” and hold a “particular significance for a particular time” thus making them relevant (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:x). In this manner the books become important aids in assisting children to cope in an altering society.

When bibliotherapy is used in the group setting, it is vital that each member’s needs, characteristics and reading levels are considered (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:9). Multiple copies of the book must be available to the group and it is also recommended that group members be close in chronological age. Books are selected which are not too difficult for the poorest reader in the group. Should members have special needs such as sight impairment, the book should be available in another format such as Braille or as an audio book.
Before formally beginning with the bibliotherapeutic process, the child must be introduced to the book in such a way that he does not equate reading the book with a school assignment. The reading of the book should be a suggestion rather than a directive to ensure this. A short summary of the book should also be made available to the child through a discussion or by carefully looking at the cover of the book with the child (Zaccaria & Moses, 1968; Brown, 1975 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:9).

It is important to consider the age of the children involved in the bibliotherapeutic process as this will determine the approach (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:12-13). The authors explain that small children may have limited vocabulary, problems verbalising their ideas, a restricted range of life experiences and short attention spans. The books and procedures selected also need to be handled less directly than with adolescents or older children. In addition it is vital to realise that many small children will also be unable to read the stories for themselves and the educational psychologist will need to read the story aloud to the children. However, as previously mentioned, this act does have a positive impact on the sense of trust built between psychologist and child (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13).

Illustrations are also appropriate for small children (Whipple 1969 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13). Gillespie and Connor (1975) in Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:14) provide six significant points which should be realised when selecting books for bibliotherapy with young children: use of appealing illustrations, colour, pictures or photographs which add to the text, interesting content of the story which shows logical development of happenings and characters which are credible, valuable information which the child is able to understand, fairly obvious humour which is accessible to the child, elements of surprise which maintain the child’s interest and provide suspense, and pleasing, recurring phrasing which add familiarity and enjoyment for the child.

2.3.2 The Stages of the Bibliotherapeutic Process

The stages followed during the bibliotherapeutic process are vitally important. It is imperative for psychologists to understand each stage as well as the personal needs of the children involved (Athanasiou 2009:iii). Most often the following three stages are followed during the
bibliotherapeutic process, according to Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:2-3): *identification and projection, abreaction and catharsis* and *insight and integration*. Harper (2010:3-5) advocates the same three stages but adds a fourth stage, *universality*. Prater et al. (2006:7-9) outlines a ten-step plan for teachers using bibliotherapy. There are some common occurrences in these three models which will be discussed below.

*Identification and projection* involve the reader identifying with a character in the book. He may make inferences about the character’s reasons for behaving in certain ways and he may assess the relationships between various characters. A similarity should be noticeable between the child and the character in the story; this ensures that he identifies with the character (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2). As a projective mechanism, *identification* allows the child to be aware of some part of himself which he has in common with the character in the book. The child may imitate this specific behaviour or even appreciate this or another trait of the character in the story. He may experience a sense of involvement with the character and stay loyal to that character as a result (Shrodes 1949 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2). Harper (2010:3) also cites evidence from Shrodes (1950) that characters in books are significant to the readers at the point when they can identify with their longings, needs and irritations.

Hendrickson (1988) in Harper (2010:4) warns that when working with a group of children although *identification and projection* are a vital step in bibliotherapy, not all members may have the exact same issue. However, the discussions from the group situation may prove beneficial if another member finds himself in a similar situation at later stage of his life. Thus, the process may be of assistance to various group members at that later stage.

The second stage, *abreaction and catharsis*, occurs when the child is able to experience a release of emotions that may be expressed verbally or non-verbally (Pardeck & Pardeck 1992:15). Harper (2010:3) defines catharsis as “drawing the emotional response from the interaction between the reader and the book character”. It is imperative that the educational psychologist is involved at this stage. This involvement is what makes bibliotherapy different to the normal reading process. The psychologist must monitor the reactions of the child, the extent of similarity between the problem being aided and the emotional experience of the child as well as the child’s emotional experiences as he works through the whole process of
identifying with the character in the story (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2). Harper (2010:3) states that catharsis provides a significant chance for emotional development, most importantly when it is experienced by children. Colville (1990) in Harper (2010:5) describes catharsis as follows:

“The right story at the right moment is an arrow to the heart. It can find and catch what is hiding inside the reader (or the listener), the secret hurt or anger or need that lies waiting, aching to be brought to the surface.”

The final stage characterised by Pardeck and Pardeck (1992:11) is *insight and integration* in which the child is directed by the psychologist to identify solutions to his problem through the book read. He may also be led to identify “the self and significant others” in the literature (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2). The child may be encouraged, at this stage, to develop alternative strategies for working with his present situation.

Prater et al. (2006:7-9) advocate a ten-step plan for utilising bibliotherapy. These include: (a) developing rapport with the children, (b) identifying and finding other supporting professionals for assistance and advice, (c) gaining support from parents and guardians of children, (d) identifying the main problem being experienced by the children, (e) setting goals for the process, (f) researching and choosing appropriate books for the situation, (g) beginning the reading process, (h) including reading tasks, (i) implementing post-reading tasks, and (j) judging the effects of bibliotherapy on the children. Please note that the above programme has been set for teachers and not psychologists.

However, it is interesting to note the overlap between these suggested steps and the plan as outlined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:2-3). Table 2.1 integrates the stages as set by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:2-3) and Prater et al. (2006:7-9):

**Table 2.1 Comparison of steps of the bibliotherapeutic process as suggested by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) and Prater et al. (2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of child’s problem</td>
<td>(d) identifying the main problem being experienced by the children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching the correct book to meet the child’s needs</td>
<td>(f) researching and choosing appropriate books for the situation</td>
<td>Before the actual start of bibliotherapy; may be part of the entire therapeutic process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining consent</td>
<td>(c) gaining support from parents and guardians of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of appropriate goals for therapy</td>
<td>(e) setting goals for the process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pardeck and Pardeck (1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing rapport</td>
<td>(a) developing rapport with the children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin reading with the focus on realising similarities between the child and characters</td>
<td>(g) beginning the reading process</td>
<td>Identification and projection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of the self and others as characters in the story</td>
<td>(h) including reading tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional release</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abreaction and catharsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of similarities and emotional experiences</td>
<td>(h) including reading tasks</td>
<td>Identification and projection; abreaction and catharsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up activities based on the book</td>
<td>(i) implementing post-reading tasks</td>
<td>Insight and integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the problem</td>
<td>(i) implementing post-reading tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding solutions</td>
<td>(i) implementing post-reading tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that several tasks suggested by Prater et al. (2006) could not be correlated with the process of Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) as these tasks may occur in the educational psychologist’s normal course of duty when necessary. In the model by Prater et al. (2006:7-
9) there is no defined period in which an emotional release is specified. This is because the proposed model was designed for teachers and not psychologists or counsellors and this would fall outside the scope of profession of a teacher.

Harper (2010:3) cites evidence from Shrodes (1950), Rubin (1978) and Livengood (1961) that adjoins a fourth stage, universality, in the model as outlined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:2-3). Livengood (1961) in Harper (2010:3,5) acknowledges the psychological progression of universality involved in bibliotherapy. He feels the reader experiences an awareness of not being isolated in his dilemma and a sense that there may be assistance for him. Harper (2010:5) elaborates that universality encompasses the realisation that the person’s problems are not unique but have been experienced by the character in the story and may then be experienced by others too. Part of this stage includes the understanding that problems are experienced and solutions can be produced.

With smaller children, the following adjuncts need to be added to the bibliotherapeutic process: reading the book with the children by focusing on the required level of pitch, pace of reading and tone of voice to enhance the success of the bibliotherapy, encouraging and recording the verbal and non-verbal responses of the children while the book is being read to them and follow-up activities which engage the child’s verbal skills, motor skills and cognitive abilities. These could be in the form of collages, puppet-making and role plays, among other types. These activities also enhance the child’s identification with the characters in the story or situation (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:15-16).

2.4 COPING STRATEGIES OF PRE-adolescent children

Whether it is resultant of divorce, death or other forms of loss, coping with the loss of a significant other is difficult (Cleveland 2011:1). Coping skills are needed for individuals to manage these life-changing events. Unfortunately, these skills may not be developed in children. Thompson (2009:1) concurs that children may not have the coping mechanisms to deal with daily occurrences and this may lead to additional stress which the children are unable to handle. Individual traits especially those related to cognition and coping mechanisms seem to be important in explaining why some children adapt to their parents’ divorce better than others (Grych & Fincham 1997:178).
According to Athanasiou (2009:22-23), coping mechanisms differ across people and age groups. A person’s responses in stressful times may be determined by modelled behaviours to which the person has been exposed as well as his life experiences. Judging the person’s reactions as wrong or right during these times compounds the difficulty of the situation. Even though adults are unable to shield the child from loss and sadness, providing the child with coping skills during adverse periods assists the child.

One situation which children must manage, according to Wade and Smart (2003:107-109), is understanding that they need to be shared between their parents but many do not necessarily feel they have any say in how much time they then have for themselves as a result. They felt that their own needs and wishes were not deemed important and they felt they deserved respect (Honneth 2001 in Wade & Smart 2003:108). Jensen and McKee (2003:8) state that children normally have these choices when faced with changes: voicing their opinions but without the power to leave the situation (their families) or remaining loyal to their parents’ decisions. They then have to cope with their parents’ decisions. This is one example in which children need to have the necessary coping skills.

Social support is listed as one type of coping skill (Grych & Fincham 1997:171). Robinson et al. (2003:79) cites research by Douglas et al. (2000) and Butler et al. (2000) which explain that children show a tendency to establish rapport with someone who will listen to their experience of their parents’ divorce as well as their own resources. They want someone to talk to who may offer advice or gain reassurance.

It was shown that although parents would be the most evident source of emotional support, not all children felt this way as they thought their parents did not understand what it was like to be the child of parents divorcing; they perceived their parents as having “moved on” with their new status as single people and did not want to be reminded of the past (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 in Robinson et al. 2003:79-80). Nevertheless, Hess and Camara (1979) as cited by Grych and Fincham (1997:172) explain that a pleasing affective relationship with the custodial or non-custodial parent relates to better academic performance, better social relationships with peers and lowered stress and aggression than impeded relationships with both parents.

Other sources of support could be siblings and grandparents. However, siblings were also not considered worthy listeners as they were also going through the same divorce, may have
been too young to assist or they did not get along well enough to help each other (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 in Robinson et al. 2003:80). According to Grych and Fincham (1997:174), relationships between siblings from divorced parents may cause more stress than provide support. Douglas and colleagues (2000) and Butler and colleagues (2000) found, however, that grandparents were deemed as vital supports during the process providing reassurance, time and assurance. Their homes became “safe” neutral ground in which the child could find safety from what was happening at his own home (Robinson et al. 2003:80).

Because of their affinity with the child in question and trust established, close friends were reported as the most common listeners and persons in whom the child confided (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 cited in Robinson et al. 2003:80-81). Grych and Fincham (1997:175) add that children’s friends “can become an important source of advice and emotional support”. Part of the reason for children confiding in their friends is because the child felt some level of control over whom was informed of his parents’ divorce and keeping it secret from some people provided that control. The child could be worried about being labelled as “different”, teased or being the centre of gossip in his peer circle, according to research by Douglas and colleagues (2000) and Butler and colleagues (2000) cited in Robinson et al. (2003:80-81).

These researchers further found that participating in sport and engaging with friends were cited as effective coping strategies for children as they attempt to gain some degree of normality in their lives. These two activities also provided emotional release for the children (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 as cited by Robinson et al. 2003:81). In addition, the researchers state that crying in private has been recognised by children as an effective coping strategy. However, it is important that the crying occurs in private only.

There is limited research into the role of social organisations into the children’s healthy adjustment to their parents’ divorce (Grych & Fincham 1997:178). However, research conducted by Guidubaldi and colleagues (1984, 1987) in Grych and Fincham (1997:178) states that supportive, stable school environments are associated with better adaptation to divorce.
2.5 PREVALENCE OF DIVORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Cultural aspects, age at which marriage took place and level of education may show an impact of the level of risk for divorce (Stekoll 2011:6). In South Africa across population groups the greatest number of divorces recorded in 2010 was 8 169 within the Black population group (35.6% of all divorces that year), followed by the White population group with 30.5% (6 995 divorces), 13.9% (3 189 divorces) concerning the Coloured population group, 5.6% (1 294) were of the Indian/Asian group and the Mixed group with a percentage of 0.1 (31 divorces). Fourteen point two percent (3 258 divorces) of the total number of divorces were unspecified according to population group. The researcher feels this may be due to cultural and economic factors although this has not been indicated explicitly in the available statistics. Table 1.1 details the number of divorces including couples with and without children by population group dated 2010.

Amato (2010) in Stekoll (2010:6) further indicates that "level of education is another strong indicator of risk for divorce. While couples with college educations tend to have more stable marriages, couples with less education tend to have higher divorce rates". Unfortunately, this data is not readily available in South Africa although information is provided related to the type of occupations of the plaintiffs (Statistics South Africa 2010:33).

It is found that the majority of divorces were initiated by economically active plaintiffs in careers related to sales or the clerical field with 12% of the total 22 936 divorces which occurred in 2010. The least amount of divorces were found amongst people involved in farming and related occupations with an amount of 0.27% of the total. As mentioned previously, 15% of the total divorces were instigated by economically inactive plaintiffs (cf. Table 1.2 Number of divorces by sex and type of occupation of the plaintiff, 2010).

Statistics South Africa (2010:6) state that, in addition, "divorces were mainly from people who had married for the first time". The data shows that fewer divorces are lodged among couples in which the average age is less than 25 years of age and where the average age of the couple exceeds 55 years of age (Statistics South Africa 2010:5).
According to Stekoll (2011:6), the United States of America shows some similar trends in divorce. However, couples in the 20 – 24 age group have the highest divorce rates (“Divorce statistics” n.d. in Stekoll 2011:6) which is different to the data available for South African divorces. Related to women plaintiffs, the highest number of divorces are initiated in the 35 – 39 age group with 4 689 divorces recorded in 2010. This age group of 35 – 39 years is also the group with the most recorded divorces related to male plaintiffs (Statistics South Africa 2010:37,38).

It is interesting to note that over a ten-year period from 2001 to 2010, the number of divorces recorded in South Africa has fluctuated between the highest number recorded in 2001 at 34 045 to the lowest number recorded in 2010 of 22 936 (Statistics South Africa 2010:32). The reasons for this have not been suggested by the publication.

As seen in Table 1 (Statistics South Africa 2010:39) reproduced in chapter 1 of this dissertation, most of the divorces in South Africa involve children (54,4% of the total number of divorces). The highest number of divorces are initiated by economically inactive people (Table 2: Statistics South Africa 2010:33) as reproduced in chapter 1 of this dissertation. This may suggest that the people’s children are vulnerable as they may have limited access to services.

2.6 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS OF PRE-ADOLESCENTS TO DIVORCE

2.6.1 The Experience of Divorce as a Crisis

According to Douglas and colleagues (2000) and Butler and colleagues (2000) in Robinson et al. (2003:77), children may experience their parents’ divorce as a crisis, one which involves the child needing to regain a sense of balance in his life. This seems to form the basis of most children’s emotional reactions to divorce. Despite directly observing arguments between his parents or even domestic violence, the child is reported as seeing his parents’ separation as emotionally distressing, a shock and something which cannot initially be believed. In the studies of Douglas and colleagues (2000) and Butler and colleagues (2000) as cited by Robinson et al. (2003:78), children explain that they would have been able to better adapt to the situation had they been adequately prepared and informed beforehand. However, they would only want to know about personal, emotional and practical tasks associated with the divorce and not about the legal aspects. By being more informed, the
child may feel more in control over the crisis and this may restore a sense of balance and normality in their lives. Children would like to be involved in matters concerning them such as with whom they should live but seemed to understand that the issue of custodial parent was largely a practical issue, according to Douglas et al. (2000) and Butler et al. (2000) in Robinson et al. (2003:86).

2.6.2 Emotional and Behavioural Reactions in the Divorce Process
Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:33-35) outline children’s emotional reactions to divorce according to two main stages of divorce. The first stage is pre-divorce and begins when the parents decide to separate and divorce. At this time, children may experience emotional trauma during the fights and heated arguments which may occur between their parents. Parents may also separate during this stage. Pre-divorce children may feel emotional trauma during their parents’ continual arguments and fights. The children may experience a sense of conflicting loyalties between their parents when they initially separate. It has been documented that children experience relief when their parents separate and calm returns to their home lives. Hostility may be directed at the parent who has left the home or the parent who remains with the child in the form of emotional disturbances at home and behavioural problems at school. The child may also feel abandoned by the parent who has left the family home. Emotions such as denial, depression, guilt and regression are also common during the pre-divorce stage (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:33-35).

The final stage determined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:33,34) is post-divorce. Some children experience relief as a sense of calm may enter the home. During the post-divorce stage, children may fear that their custodial parents will leave them (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:34). They further identify the following reactions during the post-divorce stage: fear that their parents will stop loving them, difficulty adjusting to the changed circumstances and additional responsibilities of the children, and behavioural problems, especially at school. However, it must be stressed that the above mentioned reactions do not necessarily occur exclusively in each stage and may occur in either of the two stages as outlined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:33-35).

Bowlby (1973) in Grych and Fincham (1997:162) divides the children’s reactions through the stages of divorce beginning with an initial stage in which the child may protest but experiences anxiety and anger. A second phase is characterised by the child feeling depressed, withdrawn and despairing and may appear to be passive. Although the research
study was conducted with children housed in residential nurseries (residential houses in which children are cared for if their parents are unable to provide for them), the authors state that the “parallels to children’s experience with divorce are clear.” A third stage, not mentioned in this paragraph involving detachment, has not been discussed as it is seen as irrelevant to the child’s experience of his parents’ divorce.

Stekoll (2011:8) includes the following emotional reactions by the child to divorce: heightened sensitivity to ridicule from peers, the child blaming himself, abandonment fears and the unrealistic hope that his parents will reunite. Young children may experience depression, anxiety or have irrational beliefs (DeLucia-Waack & Gelman 2007 in Stekoll 2011:8). At the date of publication in 2011, the literature is undecided about the true psychological impact of divorce on the children’s well-being (Stekoll 2011:8 citing Amato & Keith, 1991). Evidence strongly suggests children may be affected academically, socially, and through internalisation and externalisation both in the short and long term. Added to this, the undesirable impacts divorce can possibly have on children are manifested across cultures (Stekoll 2011:8).

Related to children’s emotions are externalised and internalised forms of behaviour. According to Lamsford, Malone, Castellino, Dodge, Petti and Bates (2006) in Stekoll (2011:1), children can manifest internalising or externalising forms of behaviour when dealing with their parents’ divorce. Lagorio (1993) as cited by Athanasiou (2009:23) agrees that, should grieving children internalise messages encouraging avoidance, denial, repression or numbing their experiences of grief, they may restrict their capacity to heal and become powerless. This could lead them to acting out their grief in destructive manners. The author concludes that “not learning to mourn will result in not loving or living well.” It is beneficial for children to be allowed to express whatever emotions they are feeling (Athanasiou 2009:22). Adults often mistake the child’s supposed denial and avoidance for the child not feeling any emotions related to the loss. This is a normal reaction to grief for children even though it may be distressing for adults. The author adds that children often need the normalcy of childhood tasks to feel safe as they come to terms with the upsetting and unfamiliar events unfolding in their lives.

Younger children may often be unable to identify the cause of their parents’ divorce and resulting from this may be a range of internalised symptoms including heightened levels of anxiety regarding fear of being abandoned and blaming themselves for the end of their
parents’ marriage (Hetherington 1989 in Stekoll 2011:13). Another common incidence in young children going through their parents’ divorce is the existence of beliefs which are irrational such as, for example, believing they caused their parents to divorce or the certainty that their parents will be reunited (DeLucia-Waack & Gellman 2007 cited by Stekoll 2011:13; Berg & Johansson 1999 in Berg 2003:125).

Externalised behaviours may be disruptive and distressing for the family and child. Divorce as a negative experience may have the possibility of changing the child’s self-concept or coping styles and can thus result in direct negative results for the child and future adaptations of the child (Leon 2003 in Stekoll 2011:1). Grych and Fincham (1997:160) add that children from divorced parents tend to display more externalised problems, such as aggression and delinquency, than children from intact families, citing a study by Amato and Keith (1990). The authors further cite research by Hetherington and colleagues (1982) in which it was suggested that decreased conflict post-divorce was related to diminished externalising behaviour in boys (Grych & Fincham 1997:165).

It is interesting to note that in longitudinal studies conducted by Hetherington (1989), Hetherington and colleagues (1989) and Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1982) as cited in Grych and Fincham (1997:162), boys and girls tended to exhibit emotional and behavioural disturbances for the first one to two years after their parents had divorced. Typical problems included oppositional behaviour, poor performance at school and the way they related to peers. After this period of “crisis”, a decline in these adjustment problems was noted, predominantly with girls. Boys from divorced parents, however, continued to manifest higher levels of behavioural concerns. Recent research has indicated that these differences in behaviour when comparing children from divorced parents to children from intact families is maintained for some years post-divorce (Cherlin et al. 1991, Hetherington et al. 1992, Peterson & Zill 1986 as cited by Grych & Fincham 1997:162). The authors provide evidence by a study conducted by Hetherington and colleagues (1992) in which it was found that children (with the average age of eleven and a half years) whose parents were divorced between four and six years prior to the study showed considerable stability in externalising and internalising problems as well as in social and academic performance. Thus there appears to be a period after which the reactions of the children to their parents’ divorce appear to lose its momentum. It has also been proven by studies by Furstenburg (1990) in Grych and Fincham (1997:163) that children from divorced parents are more likely to divorce themselves when they are older. The authors offer theories accounting for this which include
the children displaying difficulties in cultivating fulfilling interpersonal relationships (Sweet & Bumpass 1992) and the idea that these children may view divorce as a practical solution when marital struggles surface. Because of this, the study planned to involve children whose parents have been divorced for six years or a shorter length of time as the use of bibliotherapy may then have greater success.

2.6.3 Divorce as Bereavement
Two emotions mentioned by many children are mourning and anger. “Divorce invariably leads to the experience of loss” (Berg & Johannson 1999 in Berg 2003:123) as the once present father may now become a part-time parent. Douglas and colleagues (2000) and Butler and colleagues (2000) in Robinson et al. (2003:82,83) report children experiencing their parents’ divorce as a form of loss, especially involving the changing circumstances associated with the divorce. These changes include one parent not residing with them on a full-time basis, changes in the quality of their relationships with their parents, the absent parent’s inability to keep promises and appointments and changed schools and homes. Associated with this could be the child losing close friends in the case of moving homes and schools. Conversely, stability and continuity in some of their circumstances aided the child in coping with the foreseeable changes such as the parents living in different homes.

Many children experience their parents’ divorce and its associated changes as a form of grief and loss. Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:71) agree that how children react to their parents’ divorce is determined by their ages: “children in the age group of 9-12 often have a difficult time with family breakdown as a result of separation and divorce. They often feel loss, rejection, shame, abandonment, and intense anger about their parents’ separation”.

Therefore, the following considerations pertaining to grieving may be of assistance when helping a child come to terms with his parents’ divorce: the process of grieving starts with denial and shock and in conclusion leads to a stage of acceptance; grieving is experienced differently by each person; parents and teachers need to stay clear from stating how the child should or should not feel after the experience of loss; it may be unhealthy and destructive to evade the subject of loss or grief; even though it may appear at times that children are not feeling any emotions, they will work through a variety of emotions and the final consideration and it is important to assure children that it is acceptable to communicate and show sad emotions despite messages they may receive to the contrary (Athanasiou 2009:23).
2.6.4 Children's Belief that they are to Blame

According to research cited by Berg and Johannson (1999) in Berg (2003:125) children may feel they are partly to blame for the demise of their parents’ marriage. They have been known to “develop theories” around their parents' divorce. Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:72) agree that children commonly blame themselves for the demise of their families. Berg and Johannson (1999) in Berg (2003:125) concur, however, that after rational consideration with another person, children may be reassured of their innocence in this regard. In the above stated research involving children and their fathers by Berg and Johannson (1999) in Berg (2003:125), the researchers found that children appear to display more rational reasoning about the divorce than their fathers by considering it as a case in which problems were identified and solutions should be sought. These solutions should be void of irrational emotions such as mourning, inferiority and anger (Berg 2003:121). According to research quoted by Berg and Johannson (1999) in Berg (2003:127-129), children may then use repression and rationalisation as defence mechanisms to cope with their parents’ divorce.

According to Piaget's theory, children make judgements from their own perspectives (research cited by Berg & Johannson 1999 in Berg 2003:125). Due to egocentrism, they are not easily able to imagine that there are other standpoints than their own. Related to the child’s experience of his parents’ divorce, without any access to information or intervention with a skilled person, he may invent his own theory regarding the reasons for the divorce and accept that he has had a role to play in the divorce. He may deduce that he is the reason his parents are no longer together. Also related to egocentrism, since the child is an actor in his environment, she concludes that most events (including the break-up of her parents’ marriage) are directly or indirectly caused by her (Berg & Johannson 1999 in Berg 2003:125-126). Jarratti (1999-2012) agrees that both parents should make it apparent that their care and love for their children have not decreased and that the child is not to blame for the change in the family.

2.6.5 Changes in the Parent-Child Relationship

The parent-child relationship is important in mediating the child’s adjustment to divorce (Grych & Fincham:172) as “supportive interactions with parents appear to have a direct effect on children’s well-being after divorce”. It was also found by Grych and Fincham (1997:167) that problems in the parent-child relationship are prevalent post-divorce whether they were present before the divorce or not. This may be a result of both parent and child
adjusting to the changing structure of their family. It is a distressing occurrence, however, if parents may be experiencing their own stress and are not able to be as available in an emotional or physical capacity as the children would prefer. A child may also feel angry at one or both of his parents for being the cause of the divorce and as a result, be less willing to approach his parents for direction and assistance. Additionally, many children may feel their parents no longer have time or love available for them if one (or both) of their parents find new partners (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 in Robinson et al. 2003:85). The authors elaborate that children typically did not accept the partners’ attempts to act like parents, especially regarding discipline, and rejected the idea of them as alternative or substitute parents. This may be partly explained by the parents having less time for the children. It is common for children to report a change in the quality of their relationship with their parents with the greatest decline in the relationship being experienced in previously poor parent-child relationships (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 as cited by Robinson et al. 2003:83). Under these circumstances, children frequently expressed anger, most times aimed at the absent or “guilty” parent.

Children may be described as feeling frustrated that spending time with one parent normally precludes spending time with the second parent. Douglas and colleagues (2000) and Butler and colleagues (2000) in Robinson et al. (2003:87) describe this as the “emotional ‘highs’ and ‘lows’” that children experience as a consequence of spending periods of time with one parent and other times with the other parent. In most situations, they do not spend time with both parents simultaneously. It is also upsetting for children when one of the parents cancels a pre-planned appointment (Berg & Johannson 1999 as cited by Berg 2003:123; Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 as cited by Robinson et al. 2003:83). Children may immediately feel sad and then become angry after appointments are cancelled.

The nature, quality and type of communication between children and their parents are all immensely important (Berg & Johannson 1999 in Berg 2003:125). Children cope best when they have a narrative of the events during the divorce. Adults often do not provide this with their children (Robinson et al.:78) as they try to limit explanations and exclude children from the changes associated with divorce. This makes divorce a lonely experience for the children. Children have stated that they would prefer more relevant and clearer information regarding changes in schools, homes or step-parents and that they would choose to be involved in these decision-making processes before these are confirmed. Children would also value recognition from their parents for their experiences of loss and achievements.

Decreased contact with the non-residential parent is especially troublesome. Associated with this is the fact that many children reported not having friends in the neighbourhood of the non-residential parent which had a negative impact on the children. Long distances between the parents and its associated travelling is also seen as “tiring” by children (Moxnes et al. 1999 in Moxnes 2003:96,97) and lack of flexibility in visitation arrangements are also linked problems.

2.6.6 Other Changes Related to the Child's Psychological Well-being

According to Berg (2003:127), the “toughest thing” for children to cope with is their parents’ quarrelling, citing research conducted by Berg and Johannson (1999). Children often do not have the mature reflexive ability to express their emotions about this and thus may remember the traumatic elements of the divorce process but not the narrative behind it as it has often not been shared with them by their parents. However, conflict between parents may not be entirely disturbing for children as the impact of the conflict on the children appears to be related to whether it is seen as a threat to the well-being of the child (Davies & Cummings 1994 and Grych & Fincham 1990 in Grych & Fincham 1997:166). Post-divorce many parents continue to argue. These arguments are usually about payment of child support, custody of the child and visitation issues (Grych & Fincham 1997:166). Unfortunately these quarrels are usually communicated through the children. The authors conclude that this is particularly disturbing for the children.

In the pre-adolescent age group, “children’s ability to move between the worlds of home, neighbourhood, and school, and to cope with academics, group activities, and friends will lead to a growing sense of competence” (Woolfolk 2010:85). Problems encountered in these spheres may result in the child experiencing feelings of inferiority. As noted previously, changes in residence or schools are often associated with divorce; thus children whose parents have divorced may encounter a sense of inferiority. An additional dilemma, especially with difficult divorces, involves the child becoming more focused on being an emotional support for his parents instead of working on his own emotions (Berg & Johannson 1999 in Berg 2003:127-129).
According to Jensen & McKee (2003:4), divorce may lead not only to economic difficulties for the child but also other adverse circumstances such as the mother (or child) carrying larger responsibilities at home, the child competing for the mother’s time if she is working longer hours and adjusting to limited time available with each parent, especially if they have formed new relationships. These changes in responsibilities as well as altered parent and child roles also impact on the relationship between the child and the custodial parent (Grych & Fincham 1997:167). Although this influence may be positive, it still remains a stressful experience.

In a study by Moxnes and colleagues (1999) described in Moxnes (2003:91-92) the lowered household income and changes in residence as “major risks in children’s development” are discussed. In their study this decline in financial resources was due to some of the following causes: the mother not earning much, her possible limited work experience, her inability to secure a skilled job, the mother having to accept a part-time job or having to attend a form of tertiary education, earning a single-parent allowance or the father paying less than he should (or none of what he should) for child support. Interestingly, these children created alternative reasons for the declined opportunities associated with the lowered income and expressed loyalty to the residential parent. They also found reasons for not receiving weekly allowances. In this manner, they took shared responsibility for their new financial situation (Moxnes et al. 1999 in Moxnes 2003:92-93). This was mainly achieved by allowing the child to feel his voice is heard in the same manner as voices of other family members and that the lack of financial resources was perceived as a shared family concern, thus a fairer arrangement and easier to accept. The stress caused by the lowered household income was described as difficult. Children living in households in which a small amount of income was left over after bills had been paid saw lack of money as a shared family problem and usually had a say in financial matters which made them feel responsible. Unfortunately, where there was no money to consider after meeting the household financial commitments, children described feeling powerless with the associated lowered self-esteem. This lack of money has been known to damage relationships within the family, be socially overwhelming and it became a personal problem for the child (Moxnes 2003:93-94). Children also reported being more impacted by the increased workload at home than the lowered income and inability to participate in additional activities (Moxnes 2003:92).

Additionally, changes in residence were a cause of concern to children whose parents have divorced (Moxnes and colleagues 1999 in Moxnes 2003:94-95) as most of the time the new
house was smaller and in a worse neighbourhood. However, children reported the associated less frequent contact with established friends and difficulty of becoming part of the new community as worse consequences than leaving the pre-divorce family home. This was compounded when there was no-one to help them integrate into the new community. Mostly this role would be performed by the resident parent. Unfortunately in most cases this parent was now working and thus unable to perform this task. As a result, the children reported feeling anger directed at the parents as they had failed their children or not helped them stay in contact with their existing friends or integrating them in the new environment. This exclusion from the new community was also reported as causing the child to feel as though they were being excluded from activities, being overlooked or being harassed by other children (Moxnes 2003:96). Social isolation often developed into a personal problem as the children questioned their appeal as friends.

However, in the same study by Moxnes and colleagues (1999) in Moxnes (2003:90,91), the following more positive consequences of their parents’ divorce were mentioned: becoming more individualised with its associated legal and economic rights, the opportunity to “rewrite their story” (narrative), foster new relations with parents and their siblings and discovering a new place in their separate parents’ households. Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:33) agree that divorce may be seen as less destructive for children than a marriage which is characterised by conflict and unhappiness.

2.7 IN CONCLUSION
This chapter has provided an overview of how children may experience their parents’ divorce and their perceptions of the associated changes. Additionally, children’s coping skills were considered in the context of divorce and bereavement. The prevalence of divorce in South Africa highlighted it as a common experience for many children nowadays. Bibliotherapy as a viable and economical therapeutic technique was outlined by detailing its uses, merits as well as areas where it should be used with caution. This theoretical discussion underpins the research methodologies which will be explored in Chapter 3 as the researcher examines the methods in which bibliotherapy can be applied in a group therapy setting to help pre-adolescent children come to terms with their parents’ divorce.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have explored the therapeutic technique of bibliotherapy as well as children’s reactions to their parents’ divorce and ways of coping. In addition, the incidence of divorce in South Africa has been examined.

This chapter will focus on the research methodology, analysis of data, trustworthiness of data, ethical considerations and information related to the plan of research.

The research study follows the schematic outline on the following page (Figure 3.1 Schematic Outline of Research).

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research involves exploring the success of bibliotherapy in a focus group therapy setting for pre-adolescent children to help them cope with their parents' divorce.

Following this general aim are the following specific aims to:

1. Establish the advantages and disadvantages of bibliotherapy when used in a group therapy context in the form of focus groups which will be referred to as focus group therapy (see section 3.4.4.4.) later in this chapter.

2. Conclude whether bibliotherapy can be used in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal their parents’ divorce.

3. Determine whether one selected book is suitable for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents’ divorce.
4. Establish whether bibliotherapy alone is effective as an intervention strategy in helping pre-adolescent children deal with their parents’ divorce or whether additional techniques should be incorporated into the intervention programme.

**Purpose of Research**
- Specific Aims
- Aims
- Research Questions

**Research Methodology**
- Qualitative Research Design
- Interpretivistic Research Paradigm

**Plan of Research**
- Site Selection
- Sampling Method
- Obtaining Consent and Assent
- Data Collection
  - School Report as a Mode of Data Collection
  - Initial Communication with Parents
  - Pre-therapy Interview
  - Focus Group Therapy Sessions
  - Post-therapy Interviews
- Selection of an Appropriate Book
Figure 3.1 Schematic Outline of Research

Analysis of Data
- Emergent Theme Design

Trustworthiness of Data
- Researcher Bias
- Validity
- Reflexivity
- Bracketing

Ethical Considerations
- Informed Consent
- Risks and Benefits
- Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity
- Voluntary Participation
- Other Aspects
Thus, the following research questions originate from the purpose of the research:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using bibliotherapy in a group therapy context?
- Can bibliotherapy be used in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal with their parents' divorce?
- Can one selected book be suitable for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents' divorce?
- Is bibliotherapy alone effective as an intervention strategy in helping pre-adolescent children deal with their parents' divorce or would incorporating additional techniques into the intervention programme be more successful?

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.3.2 Qualitative Research Design

This research employed a qualitative research design. Cresswell (2007) in McMillan and Schumacher (2010:320) defines qualitative research design as beginning with an assumption about the world which focuses on the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to social problems. These are studied with an emerging research design, data collection from people in a natural setting, and studying of patterns emerging from the collected data. It is vital to reflect the participants' voices, researcher's reflexivity as well as a detailed description and interpretation of the subject studied. Thompson and Harper (2012:5) add that “qualitative approaches enable understanding of experience and processes” to develop understanding of emotional anguish and improve the quality in mental health procedures. In this study, this entailed helping pre-adolescent children to deal with their parents’ divorce through using bibliotherapy in a focus group setting. Qualitative research designs include observation, in-depth interviews, document and artefact collection, field observation, and supplementary techniques (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:342). This particular study made use of individual interviews with participants and their parents, the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire, school reports, Three Wishes technique and focus groups.

According to Neuman (1997:14), the following are characteristics of qualitative research: construction of a social reality and consideration of cultural meanings; attention is focused on interactive processes and events; authenticity is imperative; values are explicit and present; research is constrained by the context; it uses a limited number of cases and subjects, and the research includes an analysis of themes and involvement of the
researcher. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:12) add these features to the above list: acceptance of multiple realities; gaining an understanding of the social situation from the perspective of the participant; the researcher assumes the role of prepared researcher who becomes involved in the situation; the goal includes detailed context-specific statements in summary. Both the above lists stress the importance of multiple realities, an assumption of the world which is central to qualitative research based on constructivism.

However, with constructivist research, there is the danger of researcher bias because of the researcher becoming involved or interpreting research subjectively. This would invalidate the research as it would not be a true representation of what happened during the research process. In order to avoid research being manipulated by the researcher’s previous experiences or preconceptions about the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in helping to deal with personal crises, measures such as reflexivity and bracketing were employed. These two aspects as well as other measures to enhance trustworthiness of research will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.6.

3.3.2 Interpretivistic Research Paradigm
An interpretivistic/constructivist research paradigm was used as it considers multiple realities which have been constructed socially (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:6). This implies that the researcher would engage with professional discrimination and her own perception when data was interpreted. The authors add that in this research paradigm, it is important to pay attention to the researcher’s perspectives and judgements with the emphasis of the research being based on context and values. Once again, it is important to consider the researcher’s personal involvement in the research which could lead to subjective interpretation of the research. Thus, the use of bracketing is again emphasised. Willig and Billin (2012:118) describe constructivist research’s search for knowledge as “knowledge about how participants are constructing meaning within particular contexts”. Thus the focus was on the meaning constructed about an experience, namely bereavement as a result their parents’ divorce, by the participants.

3.4 PLAN OF RESEARCH
The following stages formed the basis of this research study:

- Site selection
- Sample selection
- Obtaining consent and assent
• Data collection instruments
• Selection of an appropriate book
• Analysis of data
• Trustworthiness of data

3.4.1 Site Selection
Site selection, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:490), is the “specification of site criteria implied in the foreshadowed problems” and it is used to attain a feasible and appropriate site for the research. The site of this study was a state (government) primary school in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng. The researcher was, at that time, employed by the school as an intern educational psychologist; thus the research was in line with her professional duties and relationship with the learners and staff at the school. It also means she was available to the learners should they have needed individual therapy sessions after the research. Sessions and interviews were conducted in the researcher’s office on the school grounds. An alternative suitable, private venue on the school property was also made available. Telephonic conversations were made from the boardroom telephone in the main office building of the school. This boardroom was booked for the duration of the phone calls and only occupied by the researcher during the telephonic communications.

3.4.2 Sampling Method
In a qualitative study, such as this research, the group of participants or subjects from whom information and data are gathered is called a sample (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:129). It was envisaged that once the research had been finalised, it would indicate trends in the population of the research: those children that conform to the specified criteria of this study, specifically children from the ages of seven to eleven years old whose parents had divorced within the previous six years.

Purposive sampling was employed in this research study. Neuman (1997:206) describes purposive sampling as using “the judgement of an expert in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind”. In this instance, the purpose was to determine how bibliotherapy could help boys and girls in the concrete operational phase deal with loss associated with their parents’ divorce. Thus, the sample included pre-adolescent children whose parents had divorced within the previous six years. Section 2.4 in Chapter 2 discusses research which
indicated that children show vast amounts of stability in internalising and externalising problems including those related to academic and social issues when their parents’ divorce had occurred between four and six years prior to the study. Thus there appears to be a period after which the reactions of the children to their parents’ divorce appear to lose their strength of impact (Hetherington et al. in Grych & Fincham 1997:162). Purposive sampling may be used in three situations (Neuman 1997:106): selecting cases which are particularly rich in information; choosing participants which are part of a supposedly inaccessible, specific population; identifying certain types of cases for thorough investigation. This research study encompassed the first and third reasons: being informative and an in-depth investigation into a few cases.

The children in the sample were required, in addition, to have a fair command of the English language in order to understand the book they had to read. This was determined after an interview with the parents and consultation of the child’s school report, and informally assessed during the pre-therapy interview as detailed later in this section. This is discussed in greater detail in sections 3.4.4.1, 3.4.4.2 and 3.4.4.3.

There were three possibilities of selecting participants for this study.

- The first involved homeroom or class teachers identifying learners whose parents had divorced within the previous six years. These teachers would have been informed of the parents’ divorce either by one of both of the parents, by the child himself or by the school principal if he had been informed and given permission to share the information related to the parents’ divorce by the parents themselves. Teachers could then anonymously leave a note (with the child’s name, parents’ names and contact details for the parents) for the researcher. The note could have been left in a “dropbox” which was kept in a designated area outside the school’s office block. This dropbox would be locked and the key kept by the researcher. The researcher could then contact parents to discuss possible therapy with the child before she spoke with the child.

- A second option involved asking the principal’s permission to peruse Learner Profiles to determine which learners would be suitable participants.
It was decided that, should neither of these two options yield five to six participants (as indicated in section 3.4.4.4 as a suitable size for group therapy), a newsletter would be circulated in print to all parents of children from seven to eleven years of age in the school asking whether they would like their children to be part of a therapy group helping them deal with their experience loss associated with their parents’ divorce if it had occurred within the previous six years (cf. ADDENDUM 4: Request for participation in a research study for children from divorced homes). They would be asked to contact the researcher through a return slip on the newsletter to grant the researcher permission to contact them before obtaining consent and then scheduling appointments for their children. Two letters requesting participation were envisaged to be sent home to each child from a divorced family: one for each parent, each with a return slip. These return slips could be placed in a locked dropbox placed outside the office block of the school. Once again, only the researcher would have a key to this dropbox. Participants would only be selected if both parents sent back reply slips. Should there be more than six willing participants, additional groups could be arranged which would not form part of this research study.

The above-mentioned strategies would ensure anonymity of participants, teachers and their parents as well as confidentiality of information.

The participants were to be selected for compliance with the following characteristics as detailed in Chapters 1 and 2:

- Being between the ages of seven and eleven years
- Parents divorced in the previous six years
- The children must have experienced their parents’ divorce as a form of loss, a common reaction of children as indicated in the literature study (section 2.6.2. and 2.6.3 in Chapter 2) by Douglas et al. (2000) and Butler et al. (2000) in Robinson et al. (2003:82,83) and Pardeck and Pardeck (1993:71) with the following manifestations: the child admitting to feeling emotions related to loss, rejection by the parent who had left the family home, shame, fears of abandonment by the custodial parent and extreme anger about their parents’ separation.
The child would have a fair command of English language. This would be determined by speaking to the parents about the child’s reading ability and, with the parents’ permission, consulting the child’s school report. Additionally, the child’s understanding of the English language would also be informally assessed during the pre-therapy interview although this assessment was to determine the selection of a suitable book and not for inclusion in the research.

Neither the parents nor the children should be reluctant to address issues related to the child’s experience of his parents’ divorce or deny the existence of possible problems related to the divorce and its associated challenges.

3.4.3 Obtaining Consent and Assent

A sample size of six boys and girls was selected as indicated by Heary and Hennessy (2000: internet) in which the authors state that the ideal size is between six and twelve members. Since the participants were still children and experiencing a possibly difficult life event, the number of participants had been set at six to ensure the group was not too large (and intimidating) with the hope that ideally the group would consist of an equal number of boys and girls. Thus six participants seemed an ideal number of participants taking the above into consideration. Once six suitable boys and girls had been identified, both parents were contacted to establish whether they would consent to their child’s participation in the study. During this conversation, aspects related to the study and details of consent were discussed. After each parent granted verbal consent, a series of questions were put to each parent related to the child’s level of reading and understanding of the English language (cf. ADDENDUM 5: Interview Schedule: Initial Communication with Parents). After parents agreed, a letter for informed consent was sent home to each parent (cf. ADDENDUM 6: Letter of Consent). When both letters of consent had been returned to the researcher, the researcher introduced herself to the child in an individual session. She explained the nature of the research and the assent (cf. ADDENDUM 7: Letter of Assent). At any stage, should any of the parents have wished to discuss any of the aspects related to the research, the researcher would have made herself available for a face-to-face interview with the parents in which she would have addressed their concerns or answered their questions. Since the researcher was an intern educational psychologist at this state school, her relationship with the children was be in line with the research.
Should the participants or any of their parents have been reluctant for the children to work through their experiences of their parents’ divorce or denied the possibility of problems related to the child’s experience of his parents’ divorce, other suitable participants would be selected. The children’s reading abilities also needed to be taken into consideration as explained in section 3.4.2.

Since the research site was a state school, permission was needed from the school principal as well as the school’s governing body and the Gauteng Department of Education before research could commence. Permission was requested in writing (cf. ADDENDUM 8: Letter Requesting Permission from GDE, cf. ADDENDUM 9: Letter Requesting Permission from School and cf. ADDENDUM 10: Letter Requesting Permission from SGB). Permission was also received in writing as indicated in ADDENDUM 11: Permission Letter from GDE, cf. ADDENDUM 13: Permission Letter from SGB and cf. ADDENDUM 14: Permission Letter from School.

3.4.4 Data Collection
This study relied on qualitative data research. Qualitative data involves, according to Neuman (1997:328-329), recording real-life events, observing and noting what participants reveal through their verbal communications, gestures, tone and non-verbal communication, observation of certain behaviours, studying written documentation and scrutinising visual images. This study relied on qualitative data collection since it involved recording and analysis of children’s non-verbal communication, participants’ verbal and written responses in interviews as well as interactions in the group therapy settings. In addition, data would also be qualitative since it involved communication with parents as well as information from the child’s school report.

However, as previously mentioned, there was the possibility of the researcher approaching the data in a subjective manner. This posed a threat to the trustworthiness of the research. To avoid this, the use of bracketing and reflexivity was instituted. This will be discussed in more detail in section 3.6 of this chapter.

Since data was collected at various stages during the entire plan of research, data collection methods as they relate to the various stages of the research plan are detailed.
The following data collection instruments were employed in this study:

- The most recent school report of the child
- Information from the parents in the first interview with them (cf. ADDENDUM 5: Interview Schedule: Initial Communication with Parents)
- Pre-therapy Interview: includes Pre-therapy Interview Schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 1) and Incomplete Sentences Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 3)
- Group therapy sessions including various activities
- Post-therapy interview including the use of the Post-therapy Interview Schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 2)
- Field notes made during any of the stages of the research process

3.4.4.1 School report as a mode of data collection

The child’s most recent school report was used to gather information related to the child’s reading and understanding abilities of the English language. Particular attention was paid to the child’s results in English (as a school subject) as well as comments made by the various subject teachers related to the child’s ability to read and understand English. In conjunction with the information gathered from the parents in the first telephonic interviews with them about their child’s reading abilities, the child’s most recent school report was evaluated in terms of the child’s reading level as assessed by the teachers during class assessments. This information was useful when determining the child’s reading abilities before a choice of suitable book at an appropriate level could be made. Field notes were made by the researcher concerning the relevant information gathered from the child’s most recent report.

3.4.4.2 Initial communication with parents

Through telephonic communication (or face-to-face if the parents preferred), questions related to the child’s attitude towards reading as well as reading ability were asked according to an interview schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 5: Interview Schedule: Initial Communication with Parents). Questions specifically addressed the child’s reading level, difficulties with reading, preference in terms of reading books, understanding of the English language, ability to read independently as well as the length of books read in terms of number of pages. The completed interview schedule was kept as a record of data as well as any additional field notes made by the researcher pertaining to the interviews with the parents.
3.4.4.3 Pre-therapy interview

The pre-therapy interview was conducted with each participant individually. It involved conversations emanating from the interview schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 1: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule) as well as the child completing the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 3: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire) on his own during the session. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended sentences to allow the child to share his own ideas about each issue. In addition, the child also indicated his “Three Wishes”. According to Wolraich, Wolraich, Dworkin, Drotar and Perrin, Three Wishes “can reveal insights into a child’s internal representations of relationships” (2008:166). The Three Wishes technique involved the child naming any three things (including people, experiences, emotions, concrete and abstract ideas) which he would want. These indicated the deficits he perceived he had in his life.

Besides the above-mentioned purpose of this session of identifying areas of concern in the child’s life related to his experience of his parents’ divorce, there were other objectives related to the study. Not only was it an opportunity for the participant and researcher to establish rapport and trust, it also presented a chance for the child to feel comfortable with the interviewer. During the pre-therapy interview, the child could also have become aware of his own feelings and issues concerning his parents’ divorce which may in itself have been the start of therapy.

Following the instructions and finishing the sentences also provided the researcher with the chance to estimate the child’s reading and understanding abilities of the English language in the following ways:

- By engaging in meaningful conversation with the researcher about aspects related to the research study or questions to be answered in the Pre-therapy Interview Schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 1) and Incomplete Sentences Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 3)
- The ability to understand and follow instructions related to the completion of the sentences in the Incomplete Sentences Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 3)

This session was scheduled to last no more than one and a half hours. With younger participants, two sessions of 45 minutes each would have been scheduled. Each interview was audio recorded and additional notes and observations were written by the interviewer.
during the session in the form of field notes for later analysis. Interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher for further analysis.

3.4.4.4 Focus group therapy sessions

Group therapy was conducted with the participants. Although the group was not a pure focus group since it was not concerned with collecting supplementary data, it shared some of the same characteristics of focus (focal) groups such as being concerned with collecting information about sensitive topics (Khan, Anker, Patel, Barge, Sadhwani & Kohle 1991:146) and, as indicated by Price, Hescheles and Price (1999:6), the group (like focus groups) was drawn together by a particular problem, in this instance dealing with their parents' divorce. Krueger (1994:6) in Heary & Hennessy (2000: internet) describes a focus group as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment". In this research study this involved children sharing their perceptions of their parents' divorce which was another of the similarities between the research group and focus groups. The goal of the group, also a goal in focus groups, was to elicit a discussion that allowed the researcher to see the world from the participants' perspectives (Grudens-Schuck, Allen & Larson 2004:2) in this case gaining understanding about how the participants viewed their parents' divorce. Because of these similarities with focus groups and the advantages of group therapy (which are outlined in the next paragraph), the group therapy was referred to as focus group therapy and the group referred to as a focus group for the remainder of this research study.

Some of the advantages for a client of being part of a group include decreased amount of time, lower cost of therapy and participating in a therapeutic intervention which was as effective as individual psychotherapy (Price et al. 1999:1). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:363) add that by establishing a social situation in the group, the various group members are stimulated by other members' ideas and perspectives thus enhancing the depth and quality of data collected. They are "encouraged to think more deeply about the topic and are in a better position to question each other to arrive at a group result" (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:364). Heary and Hennessy (2000: internet) state that one of the advantages of using focus groups specifically with children is that it allows the children to become "experts" within the group (citing research by Levine and Zimmerman 1996).
However, it was important that the researcher was skilled in group dynamics and interviewing.

For maximum effectiveness of the focus group, members must be similar in characteristics related to the aim of the research: in this instance having experienced their parents’ divorce within the previous six years as well as fall within the concrete operational phase of development. Groups normally consist of six – twelve members depending on the complexity of the issue studied with more members being permissible with less complex issues addressed. Heary and Hennessy (2000: internet) add that a focus group helps “to facilitate the expression of people's perceptions of a certain phenomenon in an open, free, relaxed format”. A group of six boys and girls was used in this study to allow children to engage with one another in an easier manner and to feel more comfortable in the focus group.

A Cognitive Behavioural Focal Group was formed with these goals: changing maladaptive behavioural patterns and focusing on unproductive cognitions which can be changed to cause altered behavioural patterns (Price et al. 1999:6). The following are characteristics of Cognitive Behavioural Focal Groups, according to Price et al. (1999:5):

- Highly structured
- Therapist plays the role of leader
- Highly educational
- High goal-orientation
- Limited attention to transference and psychodynamic concerns
- Techniques may include: identifying unproductive cognition patterns, assignment of homework to improve behaviours and cognitions; observing external signs which may indicate changes; desensitisation; assertiveness training; role playing using the cognitive rehearsal style
- Client must commit for the duration of the intervention

Each session was to last no more than one hour. Research by Vaughn et al. (1996 cited in Heary & Hennessy 2000: internet) recommends that focus groups with children under the age of ten be in the region of 45 minutes and approximately 60 minutes for children aged between ten and fourteen years. Since the age of the participants is seven to eleven years, it
was decided to limit the length of each session to prevent the children from becoming distracted or bored.

A minimum of five focus group sessions were specified to accommodate the stages of group therapy as well as the stages of the bibliotherapeutic process. Hansen, Warner and Smith (1980) in Fehr (2003:87) indicate the following five stages of group therapy: initiation, conflict and confrontation, group development and cohesiveness, productivity and lastly, termination. The stages of the bibliotherapeutic process (Harper 2010:3-5) are: identification and projection, abreaction and catharsis, insight and integration, universality. This number of sessions would allow for the process of group therapy as well as bibliotherapy to be incorporated. These stages will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 along with the issues dealt with in each session. During these sessions, aspects related to character and situation identification were highlighted. Creative activities such as creating a collage and making puppets were employed.

Planning allowed that, should participants not have been available after school, focus groups would have been conducted at a time which was suitable to all participants and their parents, such as on Saturday mornings. All focus group sessions were recorded by audio means and field notes were taken by the researcher concerning other aspects such as non-verbal behaviour and observations during the focus group sessions.

3.4.4.5 Post-therapy interview

After all four stages of the bibliotherapeutic process (as outlined by Harper 2010:3-5) were followed (as discussed in length in Chapter 2), a post-therapy individual interview took place. A Post-therapy Interview Schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 2: Post-therapy Interview Schedule) was included in the closing interview. Questions were also open-ended to allow the child to share his own thoughts on the various aspects addressed.

Once again, each child was asked about his “Three Wishes” to ascertain whether there was any difference in what he would wish for. This gave an indication about the success of the bibliotherapeutic intervention as well as informed the researcher about the child’s experience of the research process. Information gathered was expected to suggest whether the entire intervention could be a method which could be employed again to help other pre-adolescent
children deal with their parents’ divorce. Field notes were once again be made to record observations and aspects of communication.

3.4.4.6 The use of field notes

Field notes were utilised throughout the research process. Field notes are recorded notes taken during observations as well as the researcher’s reflections on the notes (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:350). These helped the researcher record what she had seen and heard during the research stages as well as take note of reflections which she became aware of during the process. Aspects which could be included in field notes include: physical appearance of participants, non-verbal behaviour (body language), eye contact, gestures, the way the participants position themselves in relation to other focus group members during the focus group settings and facial expressions (Neuman 1997:362). The researcher made notes of these aspects as well as any other significant behaviour which occurred during the research process. Field notes were recorded in the form of a reflexive journal and observation schedules (cf. ADDENDUM 72: Researcher’s Reflexive Journal, cf. ADDENDA 33-38 and cf. ADDENDA 56-61).

3.4.5 Selection of an Appropriate Book

In order for bibliotherapy to be effective, it is imperative that the right book be selected for the right child at the right time about the right issues (Lundsteen 1972 in Cornett & Cornett 1980:9).

Once the pre-therapy session had been conducted and the data analysed in terms of the child’s reading ability, understanding of the English language and concerns related to the experience of his parents’ divorce, this information was added to information from the child’s most recent school report as well as from the initial communication with the parents to select the most suitable book for the bibliotherapeutic intervention used in the focus groups. This information was used when selecting an appropriate book.

However, since there were multiple participants, the most appropriate book for the group was chosen after determining the reading abilities of all the children, their basic understanding of English as well as most common concerns related to their parents’ divorce. The book was chosen to meet the needs of the least advanced reader in the group. The selected book would also not offer unrealistic hope for a reconciliation between the parents,
it would preferably address a number of issues presented by the children, promote understanding of the issues of the children in the group, be relevant in terms of the maturity of the children and also preferably offer an assortment of solutions to the children (Coleman & Ganong 1987 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1992:11; Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:7-9).

It was important for the researcher to have researched and read a number of possible books prior to conducting the research to avoid a long lapse in time between the initial interviews and commencement of the focus group therapy sessions. The time taken to order and purchase the selected books was also be an aspect that needed to be considered when selecting a suitable book.

3.5. ANALYSIS OF DATA
Data was analysed after each stage of the data collection process as outlined in section 3.4.4.

An emergent theme design was adopted. According to Richards (2009:74), through careful exploration of the data and enquiry during the research process, the researcher “discovers theories or threads in the data”. It was important for the researcher to consider the research with sensitivity and care in order to identify ideas, concepts, categories, themes and ways in which the data could relate. These aspects are implicit in emerging data analysis. Richards (2009:75) adds that “there is no alternative to reading and reflecting on each data record, and the sooner the better”. She terms this “purposive reading”. Thus all data records collected from the study were thoroughly read and examined by the researcher in order to identify and verify emerging ideas, categories, concepts and themes in the data before establishing how data related to each other. In addition, raw data analysis was also verified by Professor D. Kruger of UNISA.

3.6. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA
In order to maintain the trustworthiness of the data, various checks were utilised in this research study. This was done by paying attention to researcher bias, validity and bracketing.

3.6.1 Researcher Bias
Since the researcher became part of the group sessions and interviews, it was important to be aware of researcher bias. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:12), qualitative
researchers may become “immersed in the situation and the phenomenon being studied”.

The authors further explain that the role of the researcher must clearly be described and defined in terms of its status within the research group (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:335, 348, 349). In this instance of research, the researcher was partially involved as she was employed as the school’s intern educational psychologist which may have proven beneficial as a degree of participation could have helped in the establishment of rapport with participants which could have aided participants in acting naturally and facilitating trust.

Neuman (1997:333, 334) explains that qualitative researchers often assume that eliminating the researcher’s effect on research is impossible. However, he adds that, despite the researcher’s role being an overt issue, it enables the qualitative researcher to exploit his own human feelings, personal insight and perspective to understand the social aspects under study. Nevertheless, it is advised that the researcher take precautions to prevent previous beliefs or assumptions from influencing the current research. This was something to which the researcher had been alerted. As such the researcher employed methods of bracketing which will be discussed fully in Chapter 4. Her findings were also verified by Professor D. Kruger of UNISA as an outsider to the research.

3.6.2 Trustworthiness

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:330) refer to validity as the “degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world”, in other words, how researchers can establish how trustworthy their findings are when comparing findings to real-life phenomena. The authors refer to this attribute as “validity” although when applied to qualitative research it is termed “trustworthiness”. Because the two terms refer to the same attribute of data, they have been used interchangeably for the remainder of this study. In this study, if the research proved to be valid it could have indicated that the findings of the research corresponded with what happens in the real world. It could then be established that the use of bibliotherapy in a focus group context was ineffective or effective when helping pre-adolescent deal with their parents’ divorce.

Through the use of audio recordings of interviews, children completing their own Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires and focus group therapy sessions, verbatim accounts and use of participant language aided in validity of data. In addition to verbatim accounts and use of participant language, McMillan and Schumacher (2010:330) mention these measures which could be employed in the research to enhance trustworthiness: low-inference
descriptors (using precise and detailed descriptions of participants and situations), participant researcher (in which the researcher would record her perceptions in an anecdotal record for corroboration in a field log), member checking (participants were regularly asked to verify whether the researcher had correctly understood their responses) and mechanically recorded data (use of an audio recorder to record verbalisations during interviews and focus group therapy sessions). Also, raw data analysis was verified by Professor D. Kruger of UNISA to determine validity of the data.

In order to reduce researcher bias and improve trustworthiness, Atlas.ti software (student version) was utilised to analyse and code the data before identifying themes. A CD is included with the dissertation with all output documents and transcriptions of interviews.

3.6.3 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is another method to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of data. It involves “rigorous self-examination by the researcher” (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:332) to avoid subjectivity when working with research.

Pillow (2003 in McMillan & Schumacher 2010:333) suggests these aspects of reflexivity:

a. Personal self-awareness of the researcher
b. Recording the essence of participants by allowing them to “speak for themselves”
c. The researcher’s determination to ensure data is recorded, analysed and interpreted truthfully
d. The researcher must work beyond her own subjectivities and cultural context to be “released from the weight of (mis)representation for accuracy and reporting”

In order to achieve this, the researcher employed a field log (usually used in field work, it was adapted as a chronological record of the process followed in the research with an indication of dates and participants’ interactions and included aspects of a reflex journal - a continuous recording of the decisions during the emergent research design as well as explanations for these decisions). A reflex journal also allowed for the researcher’s personal reactions and ideas to be reflected upon as data was analysed and interpreted. In this way it also indicated subjectivity or bias. These two reflexivity tools were made available to Professor D. Kruger of UNISA in order to validate the findings of the research.
3.6.4 Bracketing

According to Cormack (1976 in Beech 1999:36), bracketing involves the researcher insisting on keeping all her own preconceptions in check in order to identify experiences of participants before sense is made of the experiences and before they are reorganised into concepts which relate to prior knowledge and experience of the researcher. Thus, bracketing is a measure used to enhance trustworthiness of research by limiting researcher bias and subjectivity.

By resolving “to put aside any notions of truth and measures of accuracy of what the subject of the research is saying” (Beech 1999:39), it means that the researcher became mindful of how her previous experiences as an English teacher may have shown the value of books in helping children address personal problems they may have experienced and to take the appropriate steps to prevent her preconceptions from invalidating the study. Through examining any personal preconceptions which she may hold before research was carried out as well as careful use and analysis of a field journal, the researcher was able to use bracketing and reflexivity to add to the trustworthiness of the research. Additionally, Professor D. Kruger verified all results after consulting the raw data. Chapter 4 will detail exact steps taken through bracketing of the research.

3.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.7.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent needed to be obtained from both parents. Participants and parents were informed on the findings of the research as well as how the research would be used, who may have access to the information of the research as well as a detailed description of the research process. Participants were also informed of their right to privacy and confidentiality (Cohen & Swerdlik 2010:66-70). Participants and their parents were informed verbally and in the written form of letters (cf. ADDENDUM 6: Letter of Consent and cf. ADDENDUM 7: Letter of Assent).

According to Rosenberg and Daly (1993:337), permission for children to participate in a study must be granted by parents or legal guardians. Since the parents of the participants
are divorced, consent was obtained in writing from both parents. According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa, written informed consent must be obtained in a language which is understandable to the participant (HPCSA 2004:4, 22). Informed consent indicates that the participant has the legal capacity to consent, has been informed about how participation in the research may impact his willingness to participate as well as confidentiality limits and reimbursement (such as monetary or other forms). It also means that the participant has freely and without any influence consented to participate in the research. Informed consent suggests that the participant has had the opportunity to ask questions relating to the research and received satisfactory answers through grasping appropriate explanations, obtaining the participant's assent, considering the best interests and preferences of the participant and obtaining the appropriate consent from a legally authorised person as detailed above (HPCSA 2004:4). Since the study involved learners from a state primary school, written permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), the school principal and the head of the School Governing Body before commencing with the study (cf. ADDENDUM 11: Permission Letter from GDE, cf. ADDENDUM 13: Permission Letter from SGB and cf. ADDENDUM 14: Permission Letter from School).

### 3.7.2 Risks and Benefits

Ideally, research should not be considered if it in any manner poses the risk of harm to participants through physical discomfort, mental anguish or injury (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:119). This is often referred to as the “Do-No-Harm Principle”. The authors add that harm could also result from revealing information which could be seen as embarrassing to participants or their families as well as instances in which there is an element of danger to the participants. Hammersley and Traianou (2012: 62) supplement this list with other types of harm such as material damage of some manner, damage to one’s reputation, status or relations with important people in one’s life and damage to a project which participants may be concerned with. Neuman (1999:447) maintains that researchers should not add “unnecessary stress” to participants. The researcher needed to be cognisant of such risks and take careful measures to minimise the risks.
However, in qualitative research, it is almost impossible to avoid some degree of harm or risk (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:119; Hammersley & Traianou 2012:57). Risks associated with participation in the research would be explained to participants and their parents. However, it was thought important for parents and participants to realise that “research may generate benefits as well as harms, with the idea that these need to be weighed against one another” (Hammersley & Traianou 2012:58).

Risks involved dealing with emotional discomfort associated with the experience of their parents’ divorce. These may have been dealt with by examining the child’s emotional state and where necessary, offering free therapy as a way of alleviating this discomfort. This would be done in an individual therapy context. Concerning risks to children’s reputations, sessions were conducted before and after school hours when most other learners were not on the school grounds. Although it was stated that ideally sessions would be held in the researcher’s office at the school, should the participants not have felt comfortable holding the sessions there because they were afraid other learners might identify them as having personal problems and thus spending time with the intern educational psychologist at the school, an alternative venue (such as a suitable unused office in the main office block or unused storeroom attached to the school hall) could have been used. The new venue then would have been a “neutral” venue (not being associated with any kind of specific activity by other learners), not be within immediate sight of other learners or immediately accessible to other learners.

Benefits associated with this study involved the participant learning more effective coping styles associated with their parents’ divorce and feeling that he is not alone in experiencing certain emotions related to the parents’ divorce. These were the envisaged benefits and unfortunately could not be guaranteed. Other potential benefits included enjoyment from being interviewed or from contact with the researcher and the development of friendship between participants (Hammersley & Traianou 2012:59).

3.7.3 Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity

Privacy involves restricting the characteristics, descriptions of responses and behaviours as well as other participant information to the researcher through anonymity, confidentiality and
careful storing of data (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:121). Maintaining confidentiality, then, is an aspect employed to ensure privacy.

Concerning confidentiality, the researcher was only able to share information pertaining to the participants with consent from the participants. According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2004:8), the information obtained from the research would also be safeguarded. Confidentiality was explained at the start of the sessions to all participants as well as their legal guardians. Permission was also obtained for the electronic recording of information (such as in sound recorders for transcription purposes which form part of the research) (HPCSA 2004:4, 23). The foreseeable uses of the research were explained before the research commenced. Confidential information was only discussed with relevant professionals who were concerned in the research such as the supervisor allocated by the university, in this instance Professor D. Kruger of UNISA. Information from the study would only be released to third parties with the written consent of the participants and their parents.

Field notes, raw data, other documents related to the research, audio recordings of recordings as well as transcriptions (made by the researcher herself) were only made available to Professor D. Kruger of UNISA and the researcher. Once verified by her, these records of data were locked away in a lockable cupboard in the researcher’s study. This information would be kept for a period of five years from date of completion of the study. Digital data was erased from the researcher’s laptop computer once the dissertation was finalised. Before finalisation, however, it was password-protected on her laptop. A copy of the data was saved on a CD and this was also locked away in that same cupboard. This also allowed confidentiality of information.

Anonymisation involves protecting people from harm by maintaining their privacy (Hammersley & Traianou 2012:126). Names of participants were disguised to ensure anonymity of participants and their parents. This was done by replacing real names with invented names. All identifiable features of participants, their parents and the school were altered. The school was referred to as “a state school in Ekurhuleni”. Data was anonymised from the stage of data recording. As information was to be presented at the request of the
GDE (one of their stipulations for consent to conduct research in a state school), names of participants were anonymised as well as the site at which research was conducted.

Since the topic of divorce is considered a sensitive topic as it “intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience” (Hammersley & Traianou 2012:108), it proved necessary to discuss this matter very carefully with each parent either telephonically or in person prior to obtaining consent. Information related to the parents’ marital status was known to certain teachers and certain members of school management of the research site, as informed by either or both of the parents or the child himself. As the child may have benefited by acquiring better coping skills and understanding following his experience of loss and bereavement associated with his parents’ divorce, participation in the research may have proven to be beneficial and therefore, the parents might have been prepared to allow their children to participate in the research despite the fact that it deals with a sensitive topic. It was decided that if a parent expressed concern about his child’s participation, another suitable child and his parents would be approached for participation until six children assented and their parents granted consent for participation in the research.

3.7.4 Voluntary Participation

All participants and their parents participated in the research on a voluntary basis. Participants were informed that they had the freedom to participate or withdraw from the research at any time. Should the parents or child have chosen to withdraw, there would not be any prejudice shown towards either the parents or child. Important factors that could influence the participants were also explained. These included adverse effects, limitations to confidentiality and risks involved in participating (HPCSA 2004:22). Participants and their parents would not receive any reimbursement for their participation other than the envisaged focus group therapy sessions and interviews. This was explained to them verbally and in writing (cf. ADDENDUM 6: Letter of Consent and cf. ADDENDUM 7: Letter of Assent).

3.7.5 Other Aspects

Since this study involved children under the age of fourteen years, research could only be conducted in the best interests of the child (HPCSA 2004:9). According to the Children’s Act
38 of 2005 (Children’s Act 38 2005:21-22), acting in the best interests of the child as it pertained to this research study included the following factors: taking into account the child’s maturity, age and stage of development; gender; background; other relevant aspects of the child to the research; maintaining the child’s emotional security and intellectual and emotional development as well as the need to protect the child from psychological harm which may result from the research. All research methodology took these issues into consideration.

Since focus group therapy would be used, according to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2004:16), it became important to describe to the participants and their guardians the roles and responsibilities of all members concerned in the research. Compliance with international norms and standards governing research with human participants was maintained as described by the Health Professions Council (2004:22). Written approval from relevant institutions such as the GDE and state school had to be obtained before research could commence and accurate information relating to the research was made available to these institutions. Research was conducted in accordance with the approved research protocol and ethical clearance was obtained from UNISA (cf. ADDENDUM 12: Ethical Clearance Certificate). An agreement was entered into between the researcher and participants which clarified the nature of the research as well as the responsibilities of all involved parties. Deception would not be used in the research process. Debriefing needed to occur at the end of the research process, in this case in the form of a post-therapy interview (HPCSA 2004:24) or additional individual therapy sessions should the need have arisen.

When projective techniques are used, according to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2004:15), the safety of the test results must be observed. Administration, interpretation and application were strictly dealt with according to the procedures outlined in the published assessment guidelines.
3.8 IN CONCLUSION

By following the above guidelines and schematic representation, it was planned that research would be conducted using the required number of participants for the prescribed number of focus group sessions involved in the study. This chapter has outlined the purpose of the research, research methodology and design, data collection methods, the plan of research, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and finally the ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 will present the analysis of data, methods related to data analysis, use of bracketing and reflexivity techniques, emerging themes and issues as well as interpretation of the findings in an attempt to answer the research questions presented.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters explored the use of bibliotherapy as a therapeutic technique as well as issues related to divorce as a form of loss for children from divorced homes. This chapter will focus on the use of bibliotherapy with pre-adolescent children in a group context as a technique to help them deal with their parents’ divorces. As such, this chapter aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using bibliotherapy in a group therapy context?
- Can bibliotherapy be used in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal their parents’ divorce?
- Can one selected book be suitable for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents’ divorce?
- Is bibliotherapy alone effective as an intervention strategy in helping pre-adolescent children deal with their parents’ divorce or would incorporating additional techniques into the programme intervention be more successful?

Background information about each participant will be provided at the start of this chapter after which a summary of the participants’ responses from the pre-therapy interviews (cf. ADDENDUM 1: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule), Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires (cf. ADDENDUM 3: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire) as well as post-therapy interviews (cf. ADDENDUM 2: Post-therapy Interview Schedule) will be discussed. This discussion includes a description of the participants' non-verbal language as a technique of bracketing which limits researcher bias as “the researcher’s task is to remain aware of the participants’ body language, which may signify discomfort or distress as well as reveal added layers of meaning in their responses” (Tufford & Newman 2012:90). Following that, a brief description of each group therapy session will be provided. In conclusion, data analysis and a discussion of the research results will be presented.
This research study was completed over five weeks during which time the participants were interviewed individually and participated in five group sessions. After verbal and written consent was obtained from the parents and assent from the learners, each child was interviewed individually, firstly by asking questions about themselves to set the therapeutic climate, develop trust and confidence (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:7) and get to know each participant better. Thereafter each child was asked a series of questions according to the pre-therapy interview schedule (cf. ADDENDUM 1: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule). The most appropriate book was then selected for the group. Results from the Pre-therapy Interview have been summarised and attached (cf. ADDENDUM 68: Summary of Results From The Pre-Therapy Interview Schedules), Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire results have been summarised as ADDENDUM 69: Summary of Results from the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire and the results from the Post-therapy Interview Schedule have been summarised as ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedule. In total, three boys and three girls aged nine and ten years of age met in a group once a week in which bibliotherapy was used in an effort to help them deal with their parents' divorce. Activities, including puppet-making and a collage, were done by the children to help them identify with the characters and circumstances portrayed in the selected book. Apart from the introductory activities of drawing their families and talking about animal families, all activities were related to the selected book and the programme.

In line with confidentiality and anonymity requirements, all names, places and identifiable information has been replaced with suitable pseudonyms.

However, before the interviews with participants were conducted, the researcher explored her own assumptions about reading and books, and divorce as a technique of bracketing to reduce bias (Hamill & Sinclair 2010:18). These assumptions are included as ADDENDUM 71: Researcher’s Personal Assumptions. In addition, a reflexive journal was kept in which the researcher recorded her own emotions and experiences of the different parts of the research process (cf. ADDENDUM 72: Researcher’s Reflexive Journal).
4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR RESPONSES

Each participant will be introduced and triangulation of data is provided below. Triangulation has been defined “where different sorts or methods of data are brought to bear on the research question” (Richards 2009:148). In this instance, it involved comparing data gathered during the initial communications with parents, copy of the participant’s most recent school report, pre-therapy interviews, Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires and post-therapy interviews.

4.2.1 Sandy

Sandy is a nine year-old Grade 3 learner. She currently lives with her mother who has sole custody of her. Sandy’s mother left her biological father when she was very young, a toddler, according to her mother, although she could not give Sandy’s exact age at that time. Sandy has no contact with her biological father as her mother comments that he is a “hard man to track down” (cf. ADDENDUM 15: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Sandy). Sandy’s mother has been involved with Sandy’s stepfather for a number of years, a number of which were before she divorced Sandy’s biological father. She is in the process of divorcing Sandy’s stepfather presently.

Sandy seems more concerned about the loss of her biological father than her stepfather as she says the latter shouts a lot at her, abuses narcotics and is unkind to her. Sandy’s stepfather has three children with Sandy’s mother and Sandy loves them tremendously. During the pre-therapy interview she was positive but appeared nervous at times (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Sandy). It seems as though she was sad, angry and anxious especially over the absence of her biological father.

According to the pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 21: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule: Sandy) and Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy), her most important concern is losing her biological father. She has also expressed dealing with a range of emotions and seems to have limited coping strategies at hand, most of which involve drawing pictures of her father and family as a way of dealing with the range of emotions she experiences.
Sandy is the only Grade 3 participant in this study. As such her written expressive English language ability is not as advanced as the other participants’ as she is a poor speller and her grammar is poor. According to her mother (cf. ADDENDUM 15: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Sandy) she loves reading, especially the Bible and to her younger half-siblings. She is capable of reading a book of no more than 30 pages, according to her mother. There were no problems noted with Sandy’s spoken expressive English language ability.

In the post-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM: Post-therapy Interview Schedule) it became apparent that Sandy still had some issues with her father’s absence in her life and the way her mother left her biological father. She however, seemed to have learnt additional coping strategies. She was relaxed and engaged freely with the researcher (cf. ADDENDUM Observation Checklist: Post-therapy Interview: Sandy).

4.2.2 Cameron

Cameron is a nine year-old Grade 4 boy. His parents were divorced five years ago. He currently lives with his mother who has sole custody of him. His father and his stepmother live in Delmas. Cameron visits them every second week. His father was married before he married Cameron’s mother and has a child (Cameron is unsure whether this is a boy or girl) with whom Cameron’s father has no contact. Cameron has also never met this sibling. Cameron seems to have a good relationship with both of his parents.

According to the pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 22: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule: Cameron) and Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron), Cameron says he misses his father as he “hardly get[s] to see him”. He has also expressed feeling a range of emotions in response to his parents’ divorce as well as the desire to have his mother and father together again although he admits to liking his stepmother. During the pre-therapy interview, Cameron appeared confident and friendly, and eager to engage with the researcher (cf. ADDENDUM 34: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Cameron).
According to the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire and his most recent school report, Cameron appears to have average English language ability. His mother has also indicated (cf. ADDENDUM 16: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Cameron) that he struggles to pronounce longer words and enjoys reading “easy” books as well as bedtime stories. She estimates that he may find difficulty reading a book of 50 pages or more.

In the post-therapy interview, Cameron was open and relaxed (cf. ADDENDUM 57: Observation Checklist: Post-therapy Interview: Cameron). He seemed to enjoy the entire programme and could not name anything that he liked least (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Cameron). He “sort of” enjoyed reading the book but said that it became repetitive and he did not enjoy the fact that the girl just wanted to change. He seems to have learnt that his parents’ divorce is not something he wants to worry about. He decided that the adults need to sort things out about the divorce. He was positive in his evaluation of the bibliotherapeutic programme.

### 4.2.3 Luke

Luke is ten years of age and in Grade 4. His mother has full custody of him. Luke’s biological father and mother have not had any contact with each other since Luke was born. Luke’s mother remarried when Luke was much younger to a man whom Luke considers to be his father. When Luke was seven years of age his stepfather and biological mother divorced. Luke’s mother has become involved with a new man whom Luke calls his “new dad”. Luke prefers his “new dad” to his stepfather as his stepfather would bully him when his mother was not in the room. Although Luke seems to be outwardly fine about his mother’s divorce from his stepfather, his mother indicated that she wanted him to participate in this research study as she was concerned that he was not dealing with this divorce.

From information in the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke) as well as the pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 23: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule: Luke) it seems that Luke’s major concerns include him wishing to have contact with his biological father and the range of emotions
relating to his stepfather and his treatment of Luke when his mother was married to his stepfather. Luke seemed guarded when asked about his biological father (cf. ADDENDUM 35: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Luke) as he sat in an open and closed stance at different times during the pre-therapy interview. Although his general mood and demeanour were positive and he maintained eye contact for part of the pre-therapy interview, he was not enthusiastic when speaking about his biological father. As his mother indicated in the initial communication with her (cf. ADDENDUM 17: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Luke), Luke seemed to only answer what was asked and did not easily volunteer information.

After considering Luke’s most recent school report, information from the initial interview with his mother (cf. ADDENDUM 17: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Luke) and his completion of the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire, it appears that though he has an average English language ability. His mother has commented that he enjoys reading adventure stories and would be capable of reading a book of 30 pages independently.

The post-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post-therapy Interview: Luke) Luke indicated that he had enjoyed his participation in the programme. He was positive in his evaluation of the entire programme and said there was nothing that should be changed. He was confident and relaxed during the interview (cf. ADDENDUM 59: Observation Schedule: Post-therapy Interview: Luke).

4.2.4 Sophia

Sophia is a ten year-old Grade 4 girl. She lives with her mother and her parents have shared custody of her. She sees her father every two or three weeks for a couple of hours at a time at a family restaurant. Her parents divorced because of her father’s alcoholism. Her father seems to have become involved with a number of girlfriends since her parents divorced four years ago. Her mother does not at present have a boyfriend. Sophia seems to be close to her extended family and especially misses her grandmother’s boyfriend who passed away five years ago.
From the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia) as well as pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 24: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule: Sophia) it seems that Sophia struggles with the presence of her father’s girlfriends in his life as well as his drinking habits. She wishes her parents were back together and that her father would stop drinking. She seems to have limited coping strategies. She has also experienced a range of emotions before, during and after her parents’ divorce. During the pre-therapy interview, Sophia appeared relaxed and eager to engage with the researcher (cf. ADDENDUM 36: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Sophia). She sat with an open stance and maintained good eye contact. It seemed that she felt a lot of pain when talking about her father and his drinking as she would then purse her lips.

After considering her most recent school report, initial communication with her mother (cf. ADDENDUM 18: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Sophia) as well as her responses in the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire, it appears that Sophia has a fairly good English language ability although her spelling is poor. Her mother affirms that Sophia can read well and especially enjoys reading cookery books. Her mother thinks Sophia could read a book of 40 pages and that she would have difficulty with reading longer and more difficult words.

From the post-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 64: Transcription: Post-therapy Interview: Sophia), Sophia explained that she felt the book was immature although she enjoyed participating in the programme. She also said that the process may have been more successful with individuals instead of a group which may be due to the sensitive nature of divorce as a subject or the participant’s personality and preference for discussing topics in private. During the interview she was relaxed and comfortable. (cf. ADDENDUM 58: Observation Checklist: Post-therapy Interview: Sophia).

4.2.5 Jayden

Jayden is ten years old and in Grade 4. He lives with his mother who has shared custody with his biological father. Jayden’s father lives near the coast and Jayden rarely sees him.
Jayden’s father has remarried and has two children with his new wife. Jayden’s mother remarried when Jayden was three years old. His mother and stepfather divorced two months ago. Jayden says things are better since they have divorced as now his mother has a new boyfriend who spends more time with them.

Jayden’s main issues, according to the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden) and pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 25: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule: Jayden), include dealing with his emotions related to his mother, his sadness after the divorces and occasional financial worries. During the pre-therapy interview, Jayden appeared to become very sad at times and cried when he became emotional about his mother’s most recent divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 37: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Jayden). For most of the interview he was open and relaxed but he did become apprehensive when talking about his stepfather.

Jayden’s completion of the sentences in the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire, the initial interview with his mother (cf. ADDENDUM 19: Interview Schedule Initial Communication with Parents: Jayden) reveal that he has a good English language ability. His most recent school report suggests Jayden has a poor English ability as he obtained a term mark for term 2 of 33%. However, his class teacher has made the following comments on his most recent school report: “I do not believe that Jayden has given of his best this term. He does not catch up work missed due to absenteeism and has lost too many notes” as an explanation for his poor performance during the second term. His class teacher has indicated in her comments on his most recent school report that first term’s results for English of 59% appear to be a better indication of his English abilities. Results for his other subjects are also higher in the first term than in the second term. During the initial interview with Jayden’s mother, she revealed that although he prefers shorter books, he would have no problem reading a book of 30 pages.

From the post-therapy interview, Jayden appeared to be in a hurry although he may have been using avoidance as a coping mechanism. He also did not elaborate in many of his responses (cf. ADDENDUM 56: Observation Schedule: Post-therapy Interview: Jayden). His responses show he seems to have learnt some coping skills such as not feeling as though
he has to share his emotions with everyone (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post-Therapy Interview: Jayden). It was unfortunate that he missed the fourth session in which coping skills were addressed as he may have learnt many more. He reports that he has an improved relationship with his mother as a result of participating in the research although his reasons for doing so revolve around others becoming aware of his mother's feelings about the divorce.

4.2.6 Jemma

Jemma is a nine-year-old girl in Grade 4. Her parents divorced four months ago. She lives with her mother and stays with her father three times a week. She has an older sister and younger brother. Since her parents' divorce, both parents have become involved with new partners. This does not seem to bother Jemma. Jemma’s mother requested that she receive counselling shortly after the divorce and was keen on her participation in this research study despite the fact that it appeared that Jemma was coping well following her parents’ divorce. Her mother was concerned that Jemma was not working through or expressing her emotions. In the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma), Jemma also stated that she is not willing to share her emotions.

From the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma) and pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 26: Pre-therapy Interview Schedule: Jemma) it appears that Jemma’s main concerns include her not being willing to share her emotions with others, her friends' treatment of her post-divorce and her parents fighting about money after the divorce. She seems to have accepted her parents' divorce. She was confident throughout the pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 38: Observation Checklist: Pre-Therapy Interview: Jemma) and readily engaged with the researcher. Her body language displayed an open demeanour and a positive attitude.

It seems that Jemma has a fairly good English language ability after consulting her most recent school report, completion of the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire and initial interview with her mother (cf. ADDENDUM 20: Interview Schedule Initial Communication
with Parents: Jemma). She does, however, have poor spelling skills. Her mother has indicated that she thinks Jemma's understanding of the English language is better than many other children of a similar age and that Jemma enjoys books of a humorous nature and could read a book of about 50 pages.

From the post-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post-therapy Interview: Jemma), it seems Jemma has learnt additional coping strategies and feels more comfortable speaking with her parents about the divorce. Jemma seemed reluctant to talk and preoccupied during the interview (cf. ADDENDUM Observation Checklist: Post-therapy Interview: Jemma). Her mother sent the researcher a message the previous night to inform her that there had been a fight between herself and Jemma’s father that night and asked her to speak to Jemma about it. Jemma tried to talk about it when the interview started, but bearing in mind the purpose of the interview, it was addressed in confidence with her after the questions had been answered. She may have been distracted by her concerns during this interview.

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE ABILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS

After informally assessing the participants' responses in the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire (cf. ADDENDA 27-32), it was determined that the participants’ receptive language abilities were average as discussed in section 4.2. However, some of their written expressive language abilities were fair to moderately poor in terms of spelling and grammar. Since this research study involves receptive language ability and not expressive written ability for part of its effectiveness, this was not considered a problem as participants would need to be able to read and understand a story and the abilities to express their concerns in written expressive language was not a barrier to the effectiveness of the programme. Verbally the participants were able to express their concerns in a manner which was understandable to the researcher. Where this was not the case, the researcher attempted to understand what the participant was communicating by asking questions in an effort to limit researcher subjectivity and also as a method of bracketing through checking that the words and phrases used mean the same to the researcher as they do to the participants (Hamill & Sinclair 2010:18).
4.4 SELECTION OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE BOOK FOR THE GROUP

Bearing in mind the issues presented by the participants during the pre-therapy interviews and Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires, their English language abilities as rated by their parents during the initial communication with parents and informally assessed by the researcher through the use of their responses to the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire as well as after consulting each participant’s most recent school report, the book “I Don’t Want to Talk About It” by Jeanie Franz Ransom was selected as it handled the most common issue experienced by the participants in the group: not being able to deal with their emotions as a result of their parents’ divorce as well as providing examples of coping strategies when dealing with parents’ divorce.

This book met the criteria as outlined in chapter 2 of having large, colourful illustrations which enhance accessibility of the book to the participants (Whipple 1969 in Pardeck and Pardeck 1993:13-14). The book also directly addresses the range of emotions which children may feel when dealing with their parents’ divorce, another important consideration for choice of book (Cianciolo 1972 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13).

In addition, the book matches the reading ability of the weakest reader in the group as well as the maturity level of the least mature participant in the group. The high level of realism in the manner in which the problem is presented is also a factor which enabled the researcher to select this particular book from the available selection. In addition, the selected book also offered realistic hope to the participants by relating directly to the range of emotions they experienced and may still be experiencing as a result of their parents’ divorce (Coleman & Ganong 1987 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1992:11; Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:7-9). The practical considerations inherent when parents divorce, such as which parent the child will live with, are also addressed.

Reviews of the other available books are found in ADDENDUM 67: Review of Books.

4.5 GROUP SESSIONS

The group consisted of six children: five were in grade 4 and one was in grade 3. There were three participants aged nine and three participants aged ten years. The group comprised
three boys and three girls and all participants were white learners at a state school. Before each session, custodial parents were reminded the previous day to have their children at school early for the sessions. Full descriptions and reflections on the various sessions are included as ADDENDUM 60: Researcher’s Reflexive Journal.

4.5.1 Session 1

The first session was used to acquaint the participants with the group process by allowing them to introduce themselves and establish rules for the group (cf. ADDENDUM 49: Rules of the Group). The main similarity, the fact that the children come from divorced parents, was highlighted.

A discussion was held dealing with how rules help the participants and researcher function as a unit. The rule relating to confidentiality was stressed as it was very important for participants not to discuss group sessions or other participants’ concerns with others not belonging to the group.

After rules were established, the participants were asked to draw their families and introduce them to the rest of the group. Each participant was given a sheet of white paper and stationery was made available for them to use. Some participants used HB-pencils only and others used colouring pencils and crayons in their pictures. After this, each participant introduced his family and, where necessary, questions were asked by the researcher about their pictures. However, since this exercise was not meant to be a primary data-gathering tool but only to serve as an introduction, questions were kept to a minimum (cf. ADDENDUM 75: An Example of a Picture of a Family).

The participants were shown pictures of animals in families (cf. ADDENDUM 74: Examples of Pictures of Animal Families) and asked how these animal families related to their pictures and families. After some discussion, the participants decided that there was no perfect family structure and that families are not perfect. It was also decided that families are not always happy and that was acceptable.
The participants seemed to enjoy this first meeting. There was an element of camaraderie between certain members as they seemed to pair up during the session into a pair of boys, a pair of girls and one mixed pair.

For a full transcription of Session 1, see ADDENDUM 45: Transcription: Session 1

4.5.2 Session 2

The selected book, “I Don’t Want to Talk About It” was introduced to the participants and read with them in an effort not to diminish their problems by simply advocating a book (Jones 2006:25). It was decided that the participants would not be expected to read the book on their own every day, as warned by Harper (2010:79-80) as participants from Harper’s study indicated the following dislikes about bibliotherapy, among others: time taken to read the books and being forced to sit down and read every day. Thereafter the participants were asked to determine what the book may be about by looking at its cover, in line with suggestions by Zaccaria and Moses (1968) and Brown (1975) in Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:9) which recommend that the book is introduced in a manner in which the book is not equated with a school task. The participants suggested that the girl on the cover was looking out of the window and was probably sad. It was indicated by Cameron that she may be sad about her parents’ divorce. Sophia thought the girl may be upset because somebody died. Cameron also suggested that the parents may not want their child. In this manner, the participants were projecting their ideas, in this instance on to the picture on the front cover of the book, the first stage in the bibliotherapeutic process as outlined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:2-3). The participants also decided that the girl seemed a bit younger than they were. The book was then read with expression by the researcher as each participant followed in his or her copy of the book (as suggested by Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13 and Arbuthnot & Sutherland 1972 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13).

After the first reading of the book, the participants were asked to identify similarities between the story and what had happened when their parents divorced. Some of the participants asserted that there were similarities as they also felt the same ways as the girl in the book, their parents also fought a lot before the divorce and the participants also wished to fly away
like the robin in the book. Two of the girls said there were no similarities as one of the girl’s parents did not prepare her for the divorce (as the girl in the book’s parents did) although she wishes they had. Another of the two girls explained that the book was different because things did not happen in the same way for her as they did for the girl in the story: how the parents told her they were divorcing was different. At this stage the book was read aloud once again by the researcher with participants following in their own copies of the book as emotions that the character was feeling were identified by looking at the animal she wishes she could be at that moment. Towards the end of the session, the participants were asked which animals they would like to be. Most of the participants wished to be like the robin so they could be free and run away. The participants were asked to think about the animals they would like to be over the course of the next week until the next session.

In this session, the process of identification and projection began (the second stage of the bibliotherapeutic process as described by Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2) with the participants identifying similarities between their own experiences of divorce and those of the main character and identifying with aspects of the story. In addition, they were able to project their emotions on to the animals by describing the emotions related to each animal. In this manner they were able to identify with the character’s needs, frustrations and desires (Shrodes 1950 in Harper 2010:3).

Cameron and Jemma seemed to participate the most during the session. Jayden seemed to be feeling more comfortable with the group as he volunteered more answers. Cameron seemed to have more issues related to his experience of his father’s absence. Sophia seemed confident enough to suggest ways in which the book was different to her situation. In contrast, Sandy appeared to be more reserved on that day and chose to sit on her own away from the other girls in the group. She sat behind a desk and faced the wall for most of the session. The researcher tried to include her as much as possible during the session.

At the end of the session, Sophia requested to speak to the researcher alone. A time was arranged. Sophia mentioned that she was not as sad about her parents’ divorce as she showed during the pre-therapy interview. She also added that she was feeling sad after the pre-therapy interview and was unsure of how to express her emotions. The researcher
assured her that many people (including adults) were unsure sometimes of how to show their emotions. This seemed to provide relief for Sophia. She added that, like the main character in the story, she did not want to talk about what had happened when her parents divorced. She said she preferred her life after her parents divorced. She was assured that it was fine to feel that way. The researcher thanked her for her honesty and informed her that she would be able to assess how well the programme worked at the end of the group sessions as that was the purpose of the research: to determine how effective using books can be to help children deal with their parents’ divorce. The researcher was left wondering whether Sophia was denying the existence of her experience of her parents’ divorce as a form of loss as a coping mechanism seeing that she seemed comfortable expressing these feelings when interviewed privately in the pre-therapy interview.

The full transcription of this session is included as ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2.

4.5.3 Session 3

Session 3 (cf. ADDENDUM 47: Transcription: Session 3) started by welcoming all of the participants back from the long weekend. All of the participants were present. Luke arrived early and the researcher used this opportunity to introduce him to the selected book which he read on his own before the other participants arrived.

The participants seemed eager to make their puppets. However, before the participants started making their puppets, they were asked what they remembered from the story which was read the previous session. Most of them seemed to recall some of the animals which featured. Sophia mentioned that the girl (the main character) did not want to talk about her parents’ divorce. This provided an opportunity to remind the participants about the story’s contents. The participants were also asked about what animal they wanted to be. This was used as an introduction to the therapeutic activity of making puppets. Since Jones (2006:25) recommended that bibliotherapy is most effective when combined with other treatments, it was decided that one method in which the participants would be able to project their own experiences safely onto a different medium would be by allowing the participants to make their own puppets. It was also noted that some of the participants enjoyed artistic activities.
So puppet-making provided a creative and enjoyable manner in which participants could utilise what they were learning from the book and externalise their experiences. By allowing the child to project his feelings on to a puppet, three important goals are achieved (according to Boultinghouse 1997:200): the therapist is able to respond to the needs of the client, the client is mobilised during the therapeutic process and a positive, collaborative relationship is encouraged between client and therapist. These are worthy goals which should enhance the effectiveness of the therapeutic process. Through the process of projection, the client is able to “talk about feelings or thoughts that ‘belong’ to the doll or puppet and that the child therefore, does not have to acknowledge as his own” (Webb 1991 in Gil 1994:45). According to Oaklander (2011:180), puppets are one of the techniques used which may assist children in unlocking “buried emotions and learn healthy ways to express their emotions in daily life”.

The children were provided with brown paper bags for the bodies of the puppets as well as various different coloured wools, ribbons, pieces of material, sequins, paper as well as glue and scissors. Jayden seemed to be very dependent on the researcher as he asked many questions related to what the researcher thought would be best for him to create a lion puppet. The researcher encouraged him to make his own decisions through mirroring his questions. Sophia, Jayden and Jemma worked together at one table whilst Luke, Cameron and Sandy worked at the second table. At times, it seemed as though Jayden was irritating some of the participants such as towards the end of the session when he played with Luke's puppet. Sandy, once again, was quiet and worked independently. Sophia engaged readily with the researcher and Jemma was again confident and seemed to especially enjoy this creative task. Luke worked on his own and Cameron also engaged easily with the other participants and researcher. The participants were given 25 minutes in which to complete their puppets and the researcher monitored their progress through regular conversation with each of the different participants. At this stage, the participants were actively involved in the process of projection, according to the various stages of the bibliotherapeutic process.

As the participants were finishing their puppets, the researcher asked them what they learnt over the past two sessions. The participants were reminded of the animal families and how each family is different. Participants were asked to introduce their puppets and explain why they decided to make a puppet of that particular animal. Once again, the participants were able to project their emotions and wishes on to the puppets. The session was concluded with
the participants handing their puppets to the researcher for safe-keeping until the next session. Photographs of examples of puppets are attached as ADDENDUM 76: Examples of Photographs of Puppets.

4.5.4 Session 4

The rationale behind session 4 was to expose participants to each other’s coping strategies as well as let them know that they are not alone in their experiences of their parents’ divorces. The transcription of session 4 is attached as ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4. Session 4 seemed to be the start of the final stage of the bibliotherapeutic process, insight and integration (Pardeck & Pardeck 1992:11) during which the participants would use the book to identify solutions to their problems.

The session was started by the researcher reading the selected book once again as a way to refresh the participants’ memories and make them aware of the coping strategies employed by the main character in the story. Unfortunately Jayden was not at the session as his mother needed to visit friends at the coast who had suffered an unexpected loss. The session was then conducted as a talk show directed by a puppet, the talk show host, controlled by the researcher. The participants’ puppets were presented as experts on the topics of divorce with the goal of this particular talk show segment to assist children whose parents were either going through a divorce or had divorced in the past. A series of questions were asked to each participant’s puppet (cf. ADDENDUM 77: Questions to be asked during “ASK THE EXPERTS” Talk Show).

This was also used as an opportunity for the participants to experience the final two stages of the bibliotherapeutic process, according to Pardeck and Pardeck (1992:11-15): catharsis and abreaction (second stage) and insight and integration (third stage). The participants experienced catharsis as they were able to experience an emotional release through their puppets which were manifestations of aspects of the main character in the story and also projections of their own wishes and experiences. In this manner, each participant’s “secret hurt or anger or need” (Colville 1990 in Harper 2010:5) is brought to the surface and expressed by the reader. Since coping strategies were shared by the other participants and
the researcher, insight was provided on other available coping strategies for the participants to try. In this manner, solutions to participants’ present problems of not being able to deal directly with their emotions were highlighted. The hope was that participants would be encouraged to try these alternative ways of coping with their emotions in future.

During the session it became apparent that the participants had several suggestions for parents who were planning to divorce. As such, it was decided that including a segment on advice for parents in the show would prove valuable as it would allow the participants the opportunity to become empowered as they would be able to voice their concerns. The two main suggestions made were that parents should try save their marriages before resorting to divorce as well as preparing their children before the divorce.

The session was continued by the researcher controlling various puppets who asked the experts questions on topics such as addressing the variety of emotions experienced when parents divorce, coping strategies as well as reminding the participants that they are not guilty when their parents divorce. The session concluded with the researcher asking the participants what they had learnt from their puppets during the session as a way of consolidating the lessons from the session.

4.5.5 Session 5

Session 5 afforded the participants the opportunity to consolidate what they had learnt during the five sessions. This was done through the participants making their own collages based on what they would like to remember and what they had learnt during the programme. At the end of the session, participants were asked to share what they wanted to about their collages with their group as a way of explaining what they had learnt from the group sessions thus concluding the final stage of the bibliotherapeutic process, insight and integration (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:2).

The girls seemed to engage more deeply with this activity although the boys did participate in and enjoy the activity. The girls’ collages seemed to contain more pictures of animals as
Cameron and Luke’s collages consisted of pictures of motor vehicles and Jayden’s collage contained handwritten phrases and words which would remind him of the sessions. Jayden did not want to explain how his phrases and words related to the sessions and Cameron and Luke did not provide lengthy explanations for their collages. Sandy’s explanation and collage were detailed and it seemed as though she was most comfortable with sharing her experiences with the group. Sophia and Jemma also shared what they had created in their collages.

The participants seemed to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of this session although it started to become apparent to the researcher that they were becoming restless with the sessions as she had to remind them several times to be more focused on the activity at hand. Also, several of the collages were completed hastily and not all of the participants could explain how their collages related to what they had learnt from the programme. This was the case with two of the three boys. It seemed as though they were distracted by the “Top Gear” magazines and pictures of cars. This is something to be aware of in future programmes involving collages: the researcher must try to ensure that the magazines offer little distraction value for the participants.

The full transcription is included as ADDENDUM 49: Transcription: Session 5. Photographs of examples of collages are attached as ADDENDUM 78: Examples of Photographs of Collages.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Results of the research will be discussed according to the themes found in the pre- and post-data collection instruments listed below:

- Pre-therapy Interview Schedules (cf. ADDENDA 21 -26)
- Incomplete Sentences Blank Questionnaires (cf. ADDENDA 27 – 32)
- Interview Schedule: Initial Communication with Parents (cf. ADDENDA 15 – 20)
- Transcriptions of Pre-therapy Interviews (cf. ADDENDA 39 – 44)
- Transcriptions of Group Sessions (ADDENDA 45 - 49)
- Transcriptions of Post-therapy Interviews (cf. ADDENDA 50 - 55)
- Post-therapy Interview Schedules (ADDENDA 62 – 67)
These will be discussed to indicate the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in helping pre-adolescent children in dealing with their parents’ divorce. The researcher used emergent as well as directed themes when analysing the data. All data was coded and analysed utilising the Atlas.ti software (student version). A CD with all transcriptions as well as output documents indicating themes and codes is attached to the dissertation.

4.6.1 Themes
Directed themes (as indicated in the literature review in chapter 2) and emergent themes will be discussed in conjunction with each other following the outline of chapter 2. Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned feeling they were responsible for their parents’ divorce or that their parents’ divorce was a form of crisis.

4.6.1.1 Coping strategies employed by the participants
During the pre-therapy interviews, it seemed as though many of the participants did not have a range of coping strategies from which to draw when the situation arises. Luke said he did not know what to do to avoid taking out his anger on other people (cf. ADDENDUM 41: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Luke). It seemed that some of the participants (particularly Sandy, Sophia and Cameron) had difficulty in controlling their emotions. Sandy said she had difficulty calming down when angry (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy), Sophia reported she “take[s] it out on other people” when she is sad (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia) and Cameron indicated: “When I get angry, I can’t make myself calm down. I really can’t”; he would rather “leave everyone alone and go do everything I possibly can to calm myself down.” (cf. ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Cameron). Sandy resorted to drawing pictures of her father when she missed him (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy). Jemma would hug her teddy bear when she became upset (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma). Most of the participants would distract themselves as a coping mechanism such as Sandy drawing pictures (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy) and Jayden playing with his friends, riding his bicycle or asking his mother to take him somewhere else (cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden). During the fourth session through projection on to their puppets, Cameron indicated that he would play computer games, play with his friends or shoot birds (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4), Luke stated through his puppet that he would watch television (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4) and Sophia said she listened to music, sang at her window,
danced or would lie on her bed, again through her puppet (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4).

Positive coping strategies include Cameron using solitude through wanting to be alone (cf. ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Cameron), sports and public speaking participation (utilised by Jayden, Jemma and Cameron; cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden and cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4), Jemma hugging her teddy bear when she was upset (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma) and Sandy daydreamed about her father as a way of coping (cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy). Luke, Sandy and Jayden Luke reported that their friends assisted them in coping when their parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke; cf. ADDENDUM 31 Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire Jayden and cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy). Luke and Jayden also commented that they spoke to their mothers when they were feeling upset (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke and cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire Jayden). Sophia sometimes would play with her dog when she was upset (cf. ADDENDUM 42: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sophia) and Sophia also felt comfortable sharing her emotions with the researcher “Vicci the psychologist” as a coping strategy during the pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia).

Negative coping strategies employed include taking out of emotions on others, such as Sophia who commented that when she is sad, she “take[s] it out on other people, by (sometimes) hurting their feelings” (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia). Some of the participants also reported throwing things around such as Sandy who would throw things around in her bedroom when she became angry (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2) and Cameron who also threw things around when he was angry (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2). Some of the participants wished to escape their situations as a way of coping such as Cameron (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2), Sandy (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2) and Jemma (cf. ADDENDUM 47 Transcription Session 3). Sandy would hit her head against the wall when she is angry (cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy).
4.6.1.2 Behavioural and emotional reactions in the divorce process

From the research, it seems as though the most common emotional and behavioural reactions of the participants include feeling sad with Sandy appearing to feel the greatest amount of sadness, such as when she comments that she felt “very sad, I started crying every time I’d say my father’s name” (cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy). In addition, Cameron and Jayden also said they felt “very sad” (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron and cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden) with Jayden being sad because of his father and stepfather’s lack of involvement in his life and Cameron thinking he would never see his father again. Luke stated he feels sad most of the time (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke). Sophia initially stated she felt “sad, upset and heartbroken” when her parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia) although later in the research process she retracted her statement indicating she felt sad (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia).

Another common emotional reaction shown by participants is acceptance of the divorce with Jemma, Luke and Sophia seeming to show the most acceptance of their parents’ divorce (for example, Jemma indicated in her Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire, cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma, that after her parents divorced she “was fine”). It was also mentioned by some of the participants that they felt angry and sad after their parents divorced specifically for a parent not keeping an appointment with the child (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy). When his parents did not keep appointments with him, Cameron reported that he “get[s] angry” (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron). Luke and Jayden commented that they felt sad if their parents did not keep appointments with them (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke and cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden). Sophia also recorded feeling scared (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia) and “lost” (cf. ADDENDUM 42 Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sophia), Jemma said she felt shocked, confused and unprepared for the announcement that parents were divorcing (such as Jemma saying: “I felt shocked” because she “didn’t really know what was going on”, cf. ADDENDUM 44: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jemma and cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4 when she projected her feelings of confusion on to her puppet, Mr Smiggles) and happy after the divorce (such as Sandy indicating that her “life is very sad
and then mostly sometimes I feel happy when my stepdad isn’t around”, cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy). Cameron says he felt unloved and abandoned as seen when he says: “my father doesn’t even love, doesn’t even want to talk to me or nothing. He doesn’t phone me. He doesn’t love me” (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2). Sophia and Jemma commented that they did not want to share their emotions with anyone after their parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia and cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma).

4.6.1.3 Experience of divorce as bereavement
Some of the participants referred to experiencing their parents’ divorces as a form of loss. For example, Sandy mentions that she “never get[s] to see him [her biological father] and I sometimes write letters at home about him, of how much I miss him.” (cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy). Sophia also expressed her feelings of loss when she said: “And still today I wish those two [her parents] could be together. But they never will for some reason. I wish that my dad wasn’t a drinker and then they’d get back together” (cf. ADDENDUM 42: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sophia). Jemma also admitted to feeling she had lost something when her parents divorced (cf. P40: ADDENDUM 47: Transcription: Session 3).

4.6.1.4 Changes in the parent-child relationship
Most of the participants referred to changes in the parent-child relationship with the non-custodial parent only. Sophia’s main concerns about her relationship with her father involved his frequent comments about his girlfriends when spending time with his children and his drinking problems (cf. ADDENDUM 42: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sophia). As a result she and her sister only see their father for a few hours every two to three weeks when they eat at a family restaurant. She also felt that when she was younger she felt more loved by her father (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia). Cameron felt that since his parents have divorced he does not spend enough time with his father as he sees him only every second weekend (such as when he says: “I really miss my dad a lot – I hardly get to see him”, cf. ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Cameron). Sandy also misses her biological father a lot (as seen when she says: “So then I never get to see him and I sometimes write letters at home about him, of how much I miss him”, cf. ADDENDUM Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy). Luke and Sandy have had no contact with their biological parents after their parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 41
Transcription Pre-therapy Interview Luke and ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy. Jemma did not comment whether her relationship was better with either of her parents although she did indicate that being with both parents was “fun” (cf. ADDENDUM 44: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jemma). Jayden hardly sees his father as the latter lives at the coast (cf. ADDENDUM 43: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jayden) although he saw him the previous school holidays and it was “nice”.

All of the participants reported having positive relationships with their mothers in the pre-therapy interviews. (cf. ADDENDA 39 – 44). In addition, all the participants indicated that they still trusted their family members with most saying they trusted at least one of their parents. Sandy said she trusted her mother (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy). Cameron indicated that he trusted both his mother and father (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron) and he also said he believes his parents “a lot”. Luke said he could trust his “mom and sister” (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke) and added that he believed everything his mother said. Sophia indicated that she believed her parents when they made promises to her (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia) and that she trusted God. Jayden said he believed his parents “if they tell me something true” (cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden) and that the person he trusted was his mother. Jemma said she trusted her sister (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma).

Sandy felt she needed her parents to feed and look after her (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy), Cameron felt he needed his parents to raise him (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron) and Luke said he needed his parents to give him love (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke). However, since no more information was provided on how they felt about these obligations before their parents divorced, it is difficult to determine whether these indicate any changes in the parent-child relationships.

After their parents’ divorce, Luke still felt he needed his parents to “give me love” (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke). Sandy said that her father “did not love me so much” (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy) and Cameron said “he doesn’t even care about me” (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2) and that his “father doesn’t even love, doesn’t even want to talk
to me or nothing” (cf. ADDENDUM 46: Transcription: Session 2). Sandy also projected her feelings of being unloved on to her puppet when she said “they didn’t love me now” (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4).

4.6.1.5 Other changes related to the child’s psychological well-being

Cameron, Sandy and Jemma commented on difficulties experienced as a result of their parents’ fighting before and during the divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron, cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy and ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma). Jemma and Cameron stated that their parents also continued fighting after they divorced.

Another change experienced by some of the participants was related to changes in residence and schools. Sandy commented that she was sad moving to a new home when her mother left her father (cf. ADDENDUM 39: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sandy), Cameron said he was happy to change schools as his new school was better for him (cf. ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Cameron), Luke changed schools and homes which was “just fine” for him (cf. ADDENDUM 41: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Luke) and Sophia, her mother and sister moved in with her grandmother before moving to a new home after her parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 42: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Sophia). Jayden and Jemma did not have to change schools or homes when their parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 43: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jayden and cf. ADDENDUM 44: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jemma).

For some of the participants, there were economic-related problems. However, Sandy indicated that money was not important in her life (cf. ADDENDUM 27: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sandy). Cameron said his family had “some money at least” although it was not a lot (cf. ADDENDUM 28: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Cameron), Luke said his family was “poor” (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke) and Jayden said his family had “enough” money for the moment (cf. ADDENDUM 31: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jayden). Cameron was concerned that his family was wasting “so much petrol on” travelling between his mother and father’s homes which may be related to financial concerns (cf. ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Cameron). He also wished his mother had a better job (cf. ADDENDUM 40: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Cameron). Sophia also wished her mother would have a “nice” job (cf. ADDENDUM 42: Transcription: Pre-therapy
Interview: Sophia). Jayden stated that he and his mother taught his younger brother at home when they did not have money for his school fees (cf. ADDENDUM 43: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jayden). Jemma stated that her parents fight about money and subsequently hate each other (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma).

However, there were some positive changes experienced by the participants. Luke seemed to indicate the most happiness after his mother and stepfather divorced as his stepfather was bullying him (cf. ADDENDUM 29: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Luke). Luke also added that his life was better after the divorce as his new father played with him (cf. ADDENDUM 41: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Luke). Sophia said she “was quite happy but quite sad” after her parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 30: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Sophia). Jemma also indicated that she felt happy after her parents’ divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 32: Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire: Jemma). Jayden stated that he was happier without a stepfather (cf. ADDENDUM 43: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jayden). Jemma said she was “happy having two houses” after her parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 44: Transcription: Pre-therapy Interview: Jemma) and because her father lived in a complex where her friends lived.

4.6.2 Evaluation of Bibliotherapy as a Therapeutic Technique

The use of bibliotherapy will be evaluated from two perspectives as an evaluation by the participants and an evaluation by the researcher.

4.6.2.1 Evaluation by the Participants

ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). She also added “you could just talk about whatever you wanted to. You didn’t have to keep anything away from anyone, you just could tell them what you feel like and no-one will tell anyone” (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia).

All of the participants recorded improved relationships after their participation in the research with Cameron stating an improved relationship with his father and mother (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron), Jayden stated he was relating better to his mother “because now people can know how she’s feeling about her divorce” as a result of his participation in the research (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden), Sophia indicated she was relating better to her father as she understands more about why her parents divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia) and Jemma reported that she was able to relate better to her parents and friends as she is now able to talk more openly to her parents about the divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma). Luke and Sandy both reported better relationships with their parents: Luke explained it as finding it easier to play and talk with them and Sandy said she was no longer rude to her friends (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke and cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy).

Some of the participants experienced catharsis although Jayden could not remember when that occurred (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden); Cameron indicated catharsis occurred “all the time” (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron), and Sophia stated that catharsis occurred during the pre-therapy interview (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia), Luke said he experienced catharsis when the participants read the story (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke) and Jemma felt catharsis occurred when she made her puppet as her heart “shot up” (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma). Sandy said there was no moment when she started feeling better about her parents’ divorce or herself (cf. ADDENDUM 67: Post-therapy Interview Schedule: Sandy).

Three of the participants did not enjoy reading the selected book. Jayden said he did not enjoy reading the book as it “wasn’t like a real story” because it was more like a diary entry.
than a story (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden). Cameron “sort of” enjoyed reading the story as “it just carries on about the same thing” (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron) and Sophia felt the book was too immature (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). The remaining three participants did enjoy reading the book. Luke and Sandy enjoyed the animals (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke and cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy). Jemma said the book reminded her of her brother’s imagination which was why she enjoyed reading the book (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma).

Some of the participants recorded experiencing changes in the way they thought about their parents’ divorce after participating in the research. Jayden, Cameron, Sophia and Sandy said they did not experience any changes (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden, cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron, cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia and cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy). However, Sophia did mention that she was able to understand better why parents divorced. Luke said he was no longer sad after his parents’ divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke). Jemma commented that she saw her parents’ divorce as “normal life” after her involvement in the research (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma).

When the researcher asked the participants whether they thought the programme could help other children deal with their parents’ divorces, their responses were as follows: Jayden felt it could help them as they dealt with their parents’ divorces in a “fun” manner and he added that the programme also helped him deal with his parents’ divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden); Cameron indicated that he did not “have to really worry about it and it just makes us [the participants] feel much better” as they were not feeling sad but happy anymore” (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron); Luke said he thought the programme would work (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke); Jemma indicated that the programme would work with other children (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma) and Sandy explained that “talking about it can get you over it and make you forget about your parents’ divorce so you don’t have to think about it” so she felt the programme would be beneficial for other children whose parents had divorced (cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy). Sophia stated that she was unsure whether the programme
would work (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). She also felt that the programme may have worked better with individuals instead of a group.

Concerning the use of a group setting for the intervention instead of working with the participants on an individual basis, most of the participants felt the group setting was a positive experience with the exception of Sophia who indicated that she felt ambivalent about the setting as she said “The best things was that I actually took part with something in a whole group” although sharing her feelings in a group made her feel “quite strange” (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). Later in the same interview she also stated that she thought it may have been better to talk about the divorce on an individual basis (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). Jayden felt it was a good experience being in the group as it would help other children deal with their parents’ divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden), Cameron enjoyed working in the group (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron), Luke said “the best stuff was everything” about working in the group (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke), Jemma liked the fact that most of the group participants were in her class at school (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma) and Sandy added that “there’s nothing that’s not nice” about working in the group (cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy).

Participants were asked for suggestions to improve the programme should it be used again. Sophia felt a more mature book and different activities should be selected depending on the age of the children involved (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). She also felt that working individually with children may be better as she does not “like anyone knowing my business.” Jemma, Sandy, Jayden and Cameron felt that nothing should be changed in order for the programme to be more effective (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma, cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy, cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden and cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron). Luke did not know what should be changed (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke).
4.6.2.2 Evaluation by the Researcher

The bibliotherapeutic research programme seems to have been successful bearing in mind the specific aims of the research and will be discussed using these aims as a guideline.

a. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Bibliotherapy when used in a group therapy context:

It seems that there were more advantages than disadvantages of using bibliotherapy in a group context. Besides those mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.4.4.4), it appears that most of the participants (namely Jayden, Cameron, Luke, Jemma and Sandy) enjoyed the group environment (cf. ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedule). In addition two of the six participants (Luke and Jemma) recorded experiencing a cathartic moment specifically during the group therapy sessions (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke and cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma). When the participants’ knowledge of coping strategies were compared before the programme and after the programme, it also appeared that the participants had learned more coping strategies than they knew initially. From the summary of the pre-therapy interview schedules (cf. ADDENDUM 68: Summary of Results from The Pre-Therapy Interview Schedules), Jemma recorded hugging a huge teddy bear as a coping strategy, Sandy said she felt better after she hit her head against the wall or draws pictures of herself and her father, Cameron reported removing himself from the situation and trying to be alone, Jayden indicated that he would ask his mother to take him to an amusement centre, Luke said he did now know what to do although he did know not to take out his anger on other people and Sophia said she took out her emotions on other people. However, after the intervention, the following coping strategies were mentioned: participating in activities such as sports and public speaking, dancing, singing and listening to music, hugging a teddy bear, talking to friends, parents, siblings, grandparents and teachers and going to places that make the person feel better (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4). In the group setting, the participants were able to share these coping strategies with one another.

However, there were also disadvantages to participating in the group. Sophia specifically mentioned not feeling comfortable sharing her emotions in the group initially although she felt she was able to share her emotions after she felt she could trust the other participants (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). She also stated that she may have felt more comfortable talking with the researcher individually. Another disadvantage when using bibliotherapy in a group is to select only one book which
addresses the needs of the individual participants. This was also indicated by Sophia that she felt the book was immature (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). Of the remaining five participants, four stated that they enjoyed the book whilst Jayden was undecided (cf. ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedule). There were no problems noted in terms of the reading level of the books and participants.

b. The use of bibliotherapy in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal their parents' divorce:

It seems as though pre-adolescent boys and girls reacted equally well to the use of bibliotherapy in the research. Of the six participants, Sophia and Jayden were either negative (Sophia) or undecided (Jayden) about whether they enjoyed reading the book or not (cf. ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedule). Also it seems that the boys and girls all learnt something from reading the book (cf. ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedule). In addition, all six participants were able to mention coping strategies during the fourth session (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4), which, when compared to what they stipulated in the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires (cf. ADDENDUM 69 Summary of Results from the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire), shows that the participants have learned a greater variety of coping strategies although these cannot be exclusively linked to the use of bibliotherapy.

c. The suitability of selecting one book for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents' divorce:

As mentioned, the participants did not react equally well to the selection of the book. Jayden felt the reading book was what he enjoyed least about the programme since it was not his “type of a story. It was almost like a diary entry” (cf. ADDENDUM 50: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jayden). Sophia indicated that she felt the book was too immature (cf. ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia). Cameron said he “sort of” enjoyed reading the book as it “just carries on about the same thing” (cf. ADDENDUM 51: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Cameron). Luke said he enjoyed reading the book because of the animals (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke) and Jemma stated that she enjoyed reading the book as it reminded her of her brother's
imagination (cf. ADDENDUM 54: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Jemma). Sandy also said she enjoyed reading the book because of the animals and it reminded her telling her sister that she did not want to talk about the divorce (cf. ADDENDUM 55: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sandy).

Bearing in mind the variety of issues and experiences the participants were facing as a result of their parents’ divorces (cf. ADDENDUM 68: Summary of Results from The Pre-Therapy Interview Schedules and cf. ADDENDUM 69: Summary of Results from the Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaire), the most suitable book had been selected. However it may have been more beneficial if a greater variety of books dealing with divorce aimed at pre-adolescent children were available (cf. ADDENDUM 79: Review of Books). It may have been better if books were available on issues such as not all parents wanting involvement with their children post-divorce and not all parents being able to keep regular contact with their children after the divorce. Books on helping children cope with feelings of rejection and pain after the divorce, stories addressing issues related to parents’ partners and siblings as well as how to deal with multiple father-figures as a result of mother’s involvement with several men may have been more beneficial for this particular group of participants.

d. The Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy Alone as an Intervention Strategy in Helping Pre-adolescent Children deal with their Parents’ Divorce:

Only one of the participants (Luke) could specifically state that catharsis was experienced when reading the book (cf. ADDENDUM 53: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Luke). The remaining participants either could not state when they started to feel better or felt better during the pre-therapy interview (Sophia as she stated in ADDENDUM 52: Transcription: Post Therapy Interview: Sophia) or when the puppets were made (Jemma, cf. ADDENDUM 54 Transcription Post Therapy Interview Jemma). Although the use of coping strategies was linked to the book by the researcher in the fourth session (cf. ADDENDUM 48: Transcription: Session 4), the learning of coping strategies by the participants cannot be directly linked to the use of bibliotherapy. Thus, it is unclear whether the use of bibliotherapy alone would be more successful than combining it with additional techniques such as those employed in this research, namely making and using puppets and the use of collages.
4.7 IN CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a discussion on the research study beginning with the selection of the participants as well as a brief outline of gaining consent and assent. A summary of the entire research process was provided. Thereafter the participants and their issues related to their parents’ divorces were introduced. Each participant’s responses during the pre- and post-therapy interviews as well as Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires were utilised. The selection of the most suitable book and evaluation of the participants’ followed. Each session was described in detail before a discussion of the results was provided by focusing on emergent and directed themes. Finally evaluations by the participants and the researcher on the success of the programme were conducted.

It seems as though the programme was successful and that the participants learnt various useful lessons from the intervention. They all enjoyed participating in the sessions and the creative activities used (cf. ADDENDUM 70: Summary of Results from the Post-Therapy Interview Schedule). It seems as though the use of bibliotherapy is equally successful with boys and girls in the pre-adolescent group although the successes of this programme cannot be ascribed solely to the use of bibliotherapy.
CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

When parents divorce, children may experience the event as a form of loss (Heath et al. 2008:259) and as such, these children may experience a variety of emotions such as sadness, confusion, anxiety (NASP 2010:1), anger, mood swings, helplessness, relief and shame (Broadway 2008:44).

Bibliotherapy has been used by psychologists and librarians as a technique to help children deal with a range of issues such as drugs, obesity and divorce through teaching the children to deal with their problems (Thompson 2009:1,2). Bibliotherapy can be defined as treatment through the use of books (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:1) in an effort to improve the child’s coping through helping the child deal with his presenting problem after reading about characters in stories with similar problems and how they face their own problems (Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:2).

Statistics South Africa states that in 2010, 22 936 divorces were finalised with 54,4% of these divorces involving children younger than 18 years of age (Statistics South Africa 2010:4,6). Statistics in that same year show that most of the divorces are instituted by economically inactive spouses (Statistics South Africa 2010:38). As a result, it seems that many children of divorcing couples may not have access to sufficient services and support and are thus vulnerable. Under these conditions, the use of bibliotherapy specifically in groups may prove an acceptable option to address the needs of these children because of its economic viability.

The findings in Chapter 4 have shown that bibliotherapy can be used with a degree of success to help children deal with loss associated with their parents’ divorce. Section 4.6.2 discusses the evaluation of the technique in detail. Participants in this study have each learnt various coping mechanisms (discussed further in section 4.6.1.1) which will help them deal with their parents’ divorce.
5.2 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Bibliotherapy has been used since 1916 as a therapeutic technique in which the client learns coping mechanisms through comparing his problems with others' before dealing with his own problems (Thompson 2009:1,2). In line with this use of bibliotherapy, the purpose of this research study was to determine the effectiveness of using bibliotherapy in a group setting to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with their parents' divorce.

These research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using bibliotherapy in a group therapy context?

2. Can bibliotherapy be used in a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal their parents' divorce?

3. Can one selected book be suitable for a group of pre-adolescents in helping them deal with their parents' divorce?

4. Is bibliotherapy alone effective as an intervention strategy in helping pre-adolescent children deal with their parents' divorce or would incorporating additional techniques into the intervention programme be more successful?

5.3 LITERATURE FINDINGS

Bibliotherapy has been used in the following instances, inter alia: helping children deal with various changes and personal problems in their lives (Abdullah 2002 in Prater et al. 2006:6), providing insight, encouraging discussion and enlightening the individual that others may share similar issues and offer solutions to these problems (Joshua & DiMenna 2000 in Prater et al. 2006:6), helping in the development of a good self-concept, increasing understanding of own others’ and own actions and lessening emotional pressure (Riahinia & Asemi 2011:711), and aiding in the development of tolerance, solution-finding and increasing insight into peer relationships (Pardeck 1990 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:7,8).
Specifically related to divorce, bibliotherapy has been used to offer realistic hope to children whose parents have separated or divorced, assist children in dealing with and understanding the emotions and feelings as a result of their parents’ divorce and the various adjustments that will be made in the child’s life after the divorce, among others (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:35). See Section 2.2.1 for more information. Other positive experiences of bibliotherapy are discussed under section 5.3.1.

Important factors when considering the use of bibliotherapy include the use of illustrations in the story (Whipple 1969 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1993:13-14), the selection of the right book to suit the individual’s reading ability, specific problem, maturity of the child, number and range of issues presented in the book and the use of a non-judgemental tone (Norcross 2006 in Thompson 2009:28-30) and the psychologist establishing a relationship characterised by mutual understanding, confidence and trust with the client (Pardeck 1984:7). An additional important consideration when using bibliotherapy to help children deal with their parents’ divorce should be that the book offers realistic hope (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:35,36). Section 2.3.1 provides further explanation.

There are three main stages of the bibliotherapeutic process, according to Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:2-3): identification and projection in which the individual identifies with a character in the story and projects his own ideas on to this character; abreaction and catharsis during which the individual experiences an emotional release; and insight and integration during which the individual gains insight into his own problems and begins finding solutions to his problems through what he has learnt from reading the book. Harper (2010:3-5) adds a fourth stage, universality, in which the individual realises that his problems and experiences are not unique. See section 2.3.2 for additional explanations.

Coping strategies related to a child being able to cope with his parents’ divorce include the following: social support from a significant other (Grych & Fincham 1997:171), participating in sport, interacting with friends and crying in private (Douglas et al. 2000 and Butler et al. 2000 in Robinson et al. 2003:81) and being in supportive, stable school environments (Guidubaldi et al. 1984, 1987 in Grych & Fincham 1997:178). Coping strategies are discussed in more detail in section 2.4.
Many children experience their parents’ divorce as a crisis (Douglas et al. 2000; Butler et al. 2000 in Robinson et al. 2003:77). As a result, there are various emotional and behavioural problems which may occur before and after the divorce (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:33-35) such as abandonment fears, the child blaming himself for his parents’ divorce and holding unrealistic hope that his parents will reunite (Stekoll 2011:8). Experiencing the divorce as a form of loss influences the child’s behaviour by the child’s acting out in response to his parents’ divorce (Lagorio 1993 as cited by Athanasiou 2009:23). Children may also experience emotions of anger and mourning in response (Berg & Johannson 1999 in Berg 2003:123). Associated problematic behaviours such as oppositional tendencies, poor school performance and poor peer relationships have also been reported (Hetherington 1989; Hetherington et al. 1989; Hetherington, Cox & Cox 1982 as cited in Grych & Fincham 1997:162). Other issues associated with a parent’s divorce include changes in the parent-child relationship (Grych & Fincham 1997:167), parents fighting before, during and after the divorce (Berg 2003:127), economic difficulties as a result of the divorce (Jensen & McKee 2003:4) and changes in residence as a result of the divorce (Moxnes et al. 1999 in Moxnes 2003:94-95). Section 2.6 provides additional discussion on this aspect.

Answers to the research questions have been provided by the literature study as follows:

5.3.1 What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Bibliotherapy in a Group Therapy Context?

Advantages of using bibliotherapy include its successful use by individuals to help them cope with various personal problems (Abdullah 2002 in Prater et al. 2006:6), its use in different contexts (2010:17-18) and its successful use with children and adults (Harper 2010:18). Bibliotherapy offers realistic hope to children whose parents have divorced or separated, it helps them deal with the myriad of emotions as a result of their parents’ divorce and helps them realise they are not to blame for their parents’ divorce, among other functions (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:35). Harper (2010: 79-80) found in a research study that students involved became aware of a range of emotions which they were able to express during their experiences with bibliotherapy. They reported bibliotherapy as a positive experience explaining that they learnt social skills and experienced increased emotional awareness as a result. Reading the books has also been linked to improved reading skills although this is not always the case (Dixon 1974; Livengood 1961; Ponder, 1968; Schultheis, 1969 in Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:5). Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.3 provide more
information on these and other advantages of using bibliotherapy. However, these advantages are related to the use of bibliotherapy in general and cannot be explicitly stated as advantages for the use of bibliotherapy in groups.

Disadvantages associated with the use of bibliotherapy include the time taken to read the book, the individual being forced to sit and read the book every day and the level of intensity experienced when the individual thinks about the characters and the situations described in the book (Harper 2010:79-80). Other disadvantages include the limited availability of books on certain topics and children being negative towards reading (Abdullah 2002 in Prater et al. 2006:6). Bibliotherapy is more effective when combined with other treatments and as such should also not be used as a single approach (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:6,4, Pardeck 1990 in Prater et al. 2006:6; Jones 2006:25). Bibliotherapy should also not be used for children who have recently experienced trauma (Heath 2005 in Stekoll 2011:26). The child may also feel his problems are being diminished by the psychologist if he is merely given a book to read instead of using bibliotherapy as an adjunct to other therapies (Jones 2006:25). Section 2.2.3 provides more discussion on these and other disadvantages of the use of bibliotherapy in general. No information on disadvantages of the use of bibliotherapy specifically in a group setting has been discussed.

5.3.2 Can Bibliotherapy be used in a Mixed Boys and Girls Group in the Pre-adolescent Stage to Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce?

No information on the gender-based effectiveness of bibliotherapy was discussed in the literature study.

5.3.3 Can One Selected Book be Suitable for a Group of Pre-adolescents in Helping Them Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce?

None of the cited researchers specifically comment on the selection of one book to help a group of pre-adolescents deal with their parents’ divorce. Instead, advice is provided for the selection of the book. If the incorrect book is selected it may increase the child’s defences and promote rationalisation instead of change. The right book must be selected for the right child about the right problem at the right time (Lundsteen 1972 in Cornett & Cornett 1980:9).
Since there is more than one member in the group, each member’s needs, reading levels, ages and characteristics must be taken into account (Pardeck & Pardeck 1984:9). Since not all members’ problems will be identical, it is likely that the book may not be ideal for all members and a “most appropriate” book will then need to be selected. Sections 2.3.1 and 2.2.4 discuss other problems associated with advocating the wrong book.

5.3.4 Is Bibliotherapy Alone Effective as an Intervention Strategy in Helping Pre-adolescent Children Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce or Would Incorporating Additional Techniques into the Intervention Programme be more Successful?

Pardeck and Pardeck (1984:6,14), Pardeck (1990 in Prater et al. 2006:6) and Jones (2006:25) state that bibliotherapy should be used with additional therapies as it is more effective when used in conjunction with other techniques. Section 2.2.4 provides more information on this aspect.

5.4 EMPIRAL RESEARCH

The results of the empirical research has shown that bibliotherapy in the group context has been successful in helping pre-adolescents deal with their parents’ divorce.

From the pre-therapy interviews and Incomplete Sentence Blank Questionnaires, it became apparent that many of the participants did not initially have a range of coping strategies at their disposal. Coping strategies used before the intervention included taking out emotions on others, drawing pictures of loved ones, hugging a teddy bear and distracting themselves by riding bicycles, among others (section 4.6.1.1). During the fourth session after participants had the opportunity to engage with the selected book and each other, participants mentioned additional coping strategies such as speaking to significant others, singing, dancing and participating in activities such as sport and cultural events.

The participants recorded feeling sad especially regarding the lack of involvement of the non-custodial parents in their lives. Other emotional reactions involve the participant feeling angry when parents do not keep appointments, feeling shocked and confused when first
finding out about the parents’ divorce, feeling unloved and abandoned by the non-custodial parent and not wanting to share their emotions after their parents’ divorce (section 4.6.1.2).

Most of the participants experienced changes in the parent-child relationship. These changes are a result of limited contact with the non-custodial parent and the non-custodial parent’s involvement and frequent mentioning of new partners. It appears as though participants had positive relationships with their custodial parents, in all cases their mothers. Section 4.6.1.4 discusses the parent-child relationships in more detail.

Other negative changes related to the participants’ psychological well-being include problems experienced as a result of parents fighting, changes in residence and schools and difficulties as a result of changed economic circumstances. Positive changes include some of the participants feeling happy after their parents divorced (see section 4.6.1.5 for elaboration).

5.4.1 What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Bibliotherapy in a Group Therapy Context?

Some of the participants seemed to enjoy working with others in the group setting. The children seemed to learn coping strategies from one another and offer support to one another. Two of the participants mentioned experiencing a cathartic moment during the group sessions. Section 4.6.2.2 provides more information on these advantages of using bibliotherapy in a group therapy context.

Disadvantages cited by participants included one of the participants preferring to work individually with the psychologist as she felt uncomfortable sharing her emotions with others. She did, however, mention feeling more comfortable sharing her emotions with the other participants once she felt she could trust them. A major disadvantage is to select one book to address the needs of the various participants in the group as not all participants shared the exact same issue related to their parents’ divorce. Section 4.6.2.2 provides more information on this aspect.
5.4.2 Can Bibliotherapy be used in a Mixed Boys and Girls Group in the Pre-adolescent Stage to Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce?

Bibliotherapy can be used with a mixed boys and girls group in the pre-adolescent stage to deal with their parents’ divorce. The results indicate that bibliotherapy seems to be equally successful and enjoyable for boys and girls in the pre-adolescent age group whose parents have divorced. Two of the girls and two of the boys mentioned learning something after reading the book. Section 4.6.2.2 explains in more detail.

5.4.3. Can One Selected Book be Suitable for a Group of Pre-adolescents in Helping Them Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce?

One book cannot be selected to suit the needs of a group of pre-adolescent children to help them deal with their parents’ divorce. Because of the variety of issues presented when parents divorced as well as the myriad of changes in circumstances after the divorce, it may have been better to use multiple books each addressing different aspects of divorce with a group of children. Alternatively, when working with individuals it may be easier to find a book that suits the particular child at that specific time as outlined in the literature study. Section 4.6.2.2 provides additional information on this aspect.

5.4.4 Is Bibliotherapy Alone Effective as an Intervention Strategy in Helping Pre-adolescent Children Deal with Their Parents’ Divorce or Would Incorporating Additional Techniques into the Intervention Programme be more Successful?

Because the research study incorporated additional techniques such as collages and puppet-making, it cannot be determined whether bibliotherapy alone is effective as an intervention strategy or whether including additional techniques would be more successful. This is discussed in detail in section 4.6.2.2.
5.5 SHORTCOMINGS IN THE RESEARCH

From the research, the following shortcomings became evident:

1. Using one book to address a myriad of issues of the participants has proven problematic as not all participants related equally well to the character and her situation as portrayed in the selected book. Not all participants experienced the same issues related to their parents’ divorce.

2. Unfortunately there was not a great variety of books available on the topic of divorce for the selected age group of participants. The books available address issues related to two different residences and dealing with the parents’ divorce. In all of the books, the characters were informed that they would have contact with both parents and that both parents still loved them regardless of the parents’ marital status. However, some of the participants had no contact with their non-custodial parents and thus cannot be assured that their non-custodial parents loved them. The researcher is unaware of any books addressing these particular aspects.

3. It is important to include questions in the initial communication with parents or the pre-therapy interview on how the child feels sharing their emotions within a group context to determine whether it may have been better to assist the participants individually instead of in a group situation.

4. It was not foreseen by the researcher that some of the participants may have had to deal with several divorces within their families. Information about this aspect should have been obtained in the initial communication with the parents.

5. In addition, it may have been less distracting during the fifth session in which the participants made their collages to have magazines available that offered less distraction.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

These topics may provide useful information for further study:

1. It may be interesting to conduct parallel studies with two similar groups of participants in terms of age and gender. For one group the intervention should only use bibliotherapy and the other group could utilise bibliotherapy and additional techniques to determine whether
bibliotherapy alone is as effective as when bibliotherapy incorporates other techniques. Pre- and post-intervention assessments can be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the two approaches.

2. Research can be carried out to determine whether using multiple books to address a variety of needs of participants is effective in a group context.

3. Additional research can be conducted during which a group of participants reads several books on the topic of divorce before writing their own individual or combined narratives (perhaps as their own books) in which they attempt to help other children deal with their parents’ divorces. The effectiveness of them writing their own narratives as a strategy to help them overcome their parents’ divorce can be assessed against the effectiveness of the intervention before their narratives were recorded. This can be evaluated by comparing the effectiveness after the books have been read and the effectiveness at the end of the entire intervention.

4. It may also be studied how bibliotherapy can be implemented in the classroom situation in which the teacher selects a variety of books for the students to read based on information about their various personal issues. This will be especially useful for language and literacy teachers as a way of providing additional support to students who have limited access to social and psychological support services. In this instance, the success of reading the book alone can be indicated as additional techniques will not be employed.

5. 7 IN CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the use of bibliotherapy specifically with pre-adolescent children to help them deal with their parents’ divorce.

The use, applications and stages of bibliotherapy have been discussed as well as coping strategies that children in this age group employ. It was shown that divorce is a common occurrence in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2010:33, 39) with many of these children possibly having limited access to support services. The children’s experience of divorce as a crisis and a loss were discussed. In addition, psychological, emotional and behavioural problems experienced by pre-adolescent children as a result of their parents’ divorces were outlined. Other changes in the child’s life were also mentioned.
An outline of the research methodology as interpretivistic qualitative research was provided. In addition, the selection of the site and participants, methods of gaining consent and assent and the various data collection instruments were discussed. Criteria for the selection of the most appropriate book were included. Information regarding data analysis, trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations were provided.

The research process has been described by providing information about the participants, an assessment of their language abilities, the process of selecting the most appropriate book for the group of participants, a discussion of the five group sessions and a discussion of the results. Finally, evaluation of the intervention by the participants as well as the researcher through assessing how the research has answered the research questions was undertaken after analysis of the themes emanating from the research.

This research determined that bibliotherapy is effective in group therapy to support pre-adolescent children to deal with their experience of their parents’ divorce.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ADDENDA

ADDENDUM 1: Pre-Therapy Interview Schedule

1. **Tell me about what happened when your parents divorced.**

   

2. **After your parents divorced, how did you feel?**

   

3. **With whom do you now live?**

   

4. **Tell me what it is like staying with this parent.**

   

5. **How often do you visit/ stay with your other parent?**

   

6. **Tell me what it is like visiting/ staying with this parent.**

   

7. **What was life like before your parents separated/ divorced?**

   

118
8. Did your parents prepare you for their divorce/separation? If yes, what did they do?

9. What is your life like now that your parents are separating/have divorced?

10. Have you had to move to another home or change schools? If yes, tell me how you feel about this.

11. Would you like to go back to the way your life was before your parents separated/divorced? Is there a reason why you say this?

12. Have any of your parents become involved with another partner? If yes, tell me how you feel about this.
13. When you become angry or sad what do you do to feel better?

14. Have you had any problems in school or with friends after the divorce? Tell me about these if you have had any.

15. If I could grant you any three wishes, what would you wish for?
ADDENDUM 2: Post-Therapy Interview Schedule

1. What did you enjoy most about taking part in the research process?

2. What did you enjoy least?

3. Did you enjoy reading the book?

4. What did you learn about yourself and your situation from reading the book?

5. Who was your favourite character and why?

6. Tell me what you learnt about coping with your parents’ separation/divorce.

7. Was there a point in the group sessions where you started to feel better about yourself or your parents’ divorce? If yes, explain what happened.
8. Have your relationships with your parents, siblings or friends improved after taking part in the group? Describe these changes if there are any.

9. What were the best and worst things about working in the group specifically?

10. Do you think this programme can help other young people deal with their parents’ separation/ divorce? Is there a reason for saying this?

11. What do you think should be changed for this programme to work better?

12. Has the programme changed anything about the way you think about your parents’ separation/ divorce? Describe these changes.
13. Do you have anything else to share you think would be of value for future programmes like this?

14. If you think back to your initial three wishes you made, what three wishes would you make now?
**ADDENDUM 3: Incomplete Sentences Blank Questionnaire**

| Name: ______________________ | Age: __________ | Boy/ Girl | Date: ____________ |

Complete these sentences to show your feelings. Try to complete each sentence. Remember there is no right or wrong answer so you can write the first thing that you think of.

If you aren’t sure of what to do or what a question means, please ask me.

1. When my parents were together

2. My happiest time

3. If I feel upset about my parents’ divorce I

4. Back home

5. I feel abandoned when

6. When I am sad

7. After my parents’ divorce I feel

8. The best memories I have

9. After my parents’ divorce my friends

10. The person I trust

11. A mother

12. I feel I can control

13. I share my feelings with
14. With my dad

15. I don’t understand

16. Before my parents divorced I

17. When I was younger

18. Being angry

19. The future

20. I fear

21. I failed

22. Most of the time I feel

23. I think my parents divorced because

24. My grandparents

25. I need my parents to

26. The worst thing about my parents’ divorce

27. I am best when

28. When I am with my mom

29. I blame

30. At school after my parents divorced
| 31. My other home                  |
| 32. If one of my parents does not keep an appointment with me |
| 33. I believe my parents          |
| 34. The best thing about my parents’ divorce |
| 35. A father                      |
| 36. I secretly think my parents   |
| 37. My life after my parents divorced |
| 38. Money                         |
| 39. My greatest worry is          |
| 40. Before my parents’ divorce my life was |
ADDENDUM 4: Request for Participation in a Research Study for Children from Divorced Homes

School letterhead 25 June 2013

Dear Parents

Participation in a research study for children from divorced homes

As you may be aware, we have an intern educational psychologist, Mrs Vicky Downing, assisting our learners at our school on Mondays and Fridays. She is working on her dissertation at the moment and would like your consent and your child’s assent to participate in a research study of limited scope relating to divorce. This newsletter has been circulated in print to assist her in identifying possible participants for the research study.

The title of the dissertation is: The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce. Bibliotherapy involves using books to help a person deal with problems he/she may be experiencing. These books will be provided for your child to utilise throughout the intervention at no cost to you.

The intervention will last a minimum of five sessions each lasting no more than one hour. These interventions will take place immediately at the end of the school day on Mondays and Fridays for a minimum of five consecutive Mondays and Fridays. The dates and times will be confirmed before the study commences but should take place in the second or third term this year. Should you wish your child to participate but he/she is not available on Monday or Friday afternoons, another more suitable time can be negotiated with the researcher and other participants in the study.

Any information divulged by your child will remain confidential and your child’s identity will be disguised to maintain confidentiality. The ethical guidelines as stipulated by the university, UNISA, and the Health Professions Council of South Africa will be strictly adhered to.

By participating in this study, your child may benefit by developing coping skills and dealing with divorce. Should additional issues arise, these will be dealt with in individual therapy sessions with the Mrs Vicky Downing at no cost to you or your child. However, Mrs Downing wishes to exclude herself from any forensic proceedings which parents may have in mind.
If you are interested in involving your child as a participant in this research study, please complete the reply slip at the bottom of this page and place it in the confidential dropbox situated outside the school office block. Should you consent for your child’s participation, Mrs Vicky Downing will contact both parents telephonically to discuss the proposed research in more detail. If you give verbal consent, consent letters will be sent home to both parents to sign before she arranges to meet with your child individually to explain the research as well as your child’s right to assent.

Please feel free to contact Mrs Vicky Downing at X or alternatively by contacting her at the school on Mondays or Fridays.

Yours faithfully

Mrs X
Deputy Principal

Mrs V. Downing
Intern Educational Psychologist

---

REPLY SLIP

I ________________________________ (full names), parent of ________________________________ (child’s full names) am interested in my child’s participation in the proposed research study utilising bibliotherapy in assisting children in coming to terms with their parents' divorce.

I also give permission for Mrs Vicky Downing to contact me telephonically on ________________________________ (cell phone number) or ________________________________ (work or home telephone number) to discuss the research further.

__________________________________________  ________________
Parent’s signature  Date
ADDENDUM 5: Interview Schedule: Initial Communication with Parents

Information to be shared with parents before asking the interview questions:

The aim of this study is to establish whether books can be useful in a group therapy setting to help pre-adolescent children come to terms with their parents’ divorce. The study will be conducted under the supervision of Professor D. Kruger at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

- All information obtained from the group therapy and individual sessions and interviews in this study will remain confidential.
- The group will consist of 6 boys and girls from age 7 to 11 years.
- Your child’s name will be kept private with only me as the researcher having access to the identity of your child. This will be done by disguising your child’s identity through giving your child a false name in the final write-up of the dissertation. Details of the research will not be made readily available to learners so your child’s participation will be confidential unless he discloses it himself.
- This is a Masters-level study conducted by myself and paid for by with my own money (there is no outside sponsor).
- Your co-operation is voluntary. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time. You may also withdraw your child from the study at any time.
- Even though the sessions may take place at the primary school, no information will be shared with any of its staff members without your written consent in this regard.
- By agreeing to your child’s participation, you agree to make your child available for a minimum of 5 focus group sessions which will be held after school on Mondays and Fridays. Should your child be unable to attend on these days, alternative days and times can be arranged in negotiation with other participants and their parents. Your child will have to read a still-to-be-selected book in preparation for the sessions. The book will be provided to your child at no cost to you. Each session will last no more than 1 hour.
- I will also need your consent to access a copy of your child’s most recent school report to ensure I select a topic-book which is at an appropriate level for your child to read.
Your child will need to attend an initial interview with me on Monday/ Friday/ another suitable day in July, August or September (still to be determined) 2013 in which I can understand his/ her circumstances better. This should last no longer than 1 ½ hours. This interview also includes the completion of an Incomplete Sentence Blank and answering specific questions. These questions deal with your child’s reactions and feelings about the divorce of his/ her parents. The interview will take place in my private office on the school premises.

A concluding interview will be held after the group sessions have completed. It also includes answering specific questions related to your child’s feelings about his/ her parents’ divorce as well as the group therapy sessions and entire research process. This concluding interview should last no more than 1 hour.

The interviews and group focus sessions will be recorded by audio means. I will transcribe the sessions and interviews personally. Professor Kruger from UNISA will be the only other person with access to the raw data or the recordings. This means that your child’s responses in the sessions and interviews will be treated as highly confidential. All notes related to the research will be locked away in a cupboard in my study at home after verification by Professor Kruger. These will be destroyed after 5 years. Any information related to the research will be password-protected on my personal laptop. Once the dissertation has been passed by UNISA, the information will be copied on to a CD which will be locked away in the same cupboard in my study. All information will then be deleted from my laptop.

Your responses, along with those from other interviewees, will be combined in the final dissertation of the findings to further protect your privacy.

All procedures will be followed according to the stipulations of the Health Professions Council of South Africa as well as the Ethics Policy of UNISA.

The risks associated with participation in the study may include dealing with uncomfortable emotions associated with the parents’ divorce. As remedy, I offer therapeutic services should your child experience uncomfortable emotions. Your child’s name will be disguised in the research to prevent disclosure of identity. Although all steps will be taken to ensure anonymity, there is a risk of disclosure of identity involved.

Benefits associated with this study involve learning more effective coping styles associated with the parents’ divorce and feeling that he/ she is not alone in experiencing
certain emotions related to the parents’ divorce. These are the envisaged benefits and unfortunately cannot be guaranteed.

Findings of the research will be released to UNISA as well as the Gauteng Department of Education. Again, your child’s identity will be protected as outlined above. There will not be any form of compensation for participating in this study.

1. If you have any concerns about me working with your child in any of the aforementioned ways like in a group or individual setting to help him/her come to terms with your divorce, please let me know now.

If the parent says he/she feels uncomfortable with any aspects related to helping his/her child cope with the divorce, this may be further examined. If the parents decide they would rather not allow their child to be involved, the interview will be halted and the parents thanked for their time.

2. Do you then give your verbal consent for me for your child to participate in the study?

If the answer is "no", the interview will end here with the researcher thanking the parents for their time.

If the answer is yes, the questions below will be answered:

The researcher will also add: I will send a letter of consent home, one for each parent, which will explain the aspects related to the study as I have explained them verbally to you now. Please sign the return slip and send it back to school. There will be a dropbox outside the main office at school to which only I have the key. Please put the reply slip in the dropbox and I will then contact your child so I can introduce myself to him/her and gain his/her assent. I will also be able to confirm the dates and times for your child’s participation within the next three to four weeks as soon as I have all the reply slips from the other participants.
3. Does your child enjoy reading books?


4. How well does your child understand the English language when compared to other children of a similar age?

The remaining questions will only be asked if the child enjoys reading books and if the parents answer that the child’s level of understanding of English is average or better. If not, the conversation will be halted with the interviewer thanking the parent for his/her time.

5. Does your child have any specific difficulties related to reading? If yes, please tell me more about these.


6. Can your child read a book independently?


7. What sort of books does your child enjoy reading?


8. Do you think your child will be able to read a book of 30 pages?


9. In your opinion, will your child be able to read a book of about 40 pages?


10. Is your child able to read a book of about 50 pages, according to your opinion?


132
11. What sort of words does your child battle to read? Please give examples.

Thank you for your time.
ADDENDUM 6: Letter of Consent

25 June 2013

Dear parent/ guardian

Thank you very much for agreeing to allow your child to participate in this study. The aim of this study is to establish whether books can be useful in a group therapy setting to help pre-adolescent children deal with their parents’ divorce. The study will be conducted under the supervision of Professor D. Kruger at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Please be advised of the following:

- All information obtained from the group therapy and individual sessions and interviews in this study will remain confidential.
- The group will consist of 6 boys and girls from age 7 to 11 years.
- Your child’s name will be kept private with only me as the researcher having access to the identity of your child. This will be done by disguising your child’s identity through giving your child a false name in the final write-up of the dissertation. Details of the research will not be made readily available to learners so your child’s participation will be confidential unless he discloses it himself.
- This is a Masters-level study conducted by myself and paid for by with my own money (there is no outside sponsor).
- Your co-operation is voluntary. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time. You may also withdraw your child from the study at any time.
- Even though the sessions may take place at the primary school, no information will be shared with any of its staff members without your written consent in this regard.
- By agreeing to your child’s participation, you agree to make your child available for a minimum of 5 focus group sessions which will be held after school on Mondays and Fridays. Should your child be unable to attend on these days, alternative days and times can be arranged in negotiation with other participants and their parents. Your child will have to read still-to-be-selected book in preparation for the sessions. The book will be provided to your child at no cost to you. Each session will last no more than 1 hour.
- I will also need your consent to access a copy of your child’s most recent school report to ensure I select a topic-book which is at an appropriate level for your child to read.
Your child will need to attend an initial interview with me on Monday/ Friday/ another suitable day in July, August or September (still to be determined) 2013 in which I can understand his/ her circumstances better. This should last no longer than 1 ½ hours in total and may span over two separate sessions of 45 minutes each. This interview also includes the completion of an Incomplete Sentence Blank and answering specific questions. These questions deal with your child’s reactions and feelings about the divorce of his/ her parents. The interview will take place in my private office on the school premises.

A concluding interview will be held after the group sessions have completed. It also includes answering specific questions related to your child’s feelings about his/ her parents’ divorce as well as the group therapy sessions and entire research process. This concluding interview should last no more than 1 hour.

The interviews and group focus sessions will be recorded by audio means. I will transcribe the sessions and interviews personally. Professor Kruger from UNISA will be the only other person with access to the raw data or the recordings. This means that your child’s responses in the sessions and interviews will be treated as highly confidential. All notes related to the research will be locked away in a cupboard in my study at home after verification by Professor Kruger. These will be destroyed after 5 years. Any information related to the research will be password-protected on my personal laptop. Once the dissertation has been passed by UNISA, the information will be copied on to a CD which will be locked away in the same cupboard in my study. All information will then be deleted from my laptop.

Your responses, along with those from other interviewees, will be combined in the final dissertation of the findings to further protect your privacy.

All procedures will be followed according to the stipulations of the Health Professions Council of South Africa as well as the Ethics Policy of UNISA.

The risks associated with participation in the study may include dealing with uncomfortable emotions associated with the parents’ divorce. As remedy, I offer therapeutic services should your child experience uncomfortable emotions. Your child’s name will be disguised in the research to prevent disclosure of identity. Although all steps will be taken to ensure anonymity, there is a risk of disclosure of identity involved. In addition, should your child feel uncomfortable using my office at the school (as he/ she may be concerned other learners may think your child has a personal problem), another more suitable and private venue can be used.
Benefits associated with this study involve learning more effective coping styles associated with the parents’ divorce and feeling that he/she is not alone in experiencing certain emotions related to the parents’ divorce. These are the envisaged benefits and unfortunately cannot be guaranteed.

Findings of the research will be released to UNISA as well as the Gauteng Department of Education. Again, your child’s identity will be protected as outlined above. There will not be any form of compensation for participating in this study.

By signing this consent form, you give written consent for your child to participate in this study and agree to the above terms.

Should you like to get a summary of the findings of this study, please inform me and I will make these available to you as soon as they are ready. If you have any other queries related to this research, you are welcome to contact me (details provided below) or on Mondays and Fridays at a suitable time when I am at the school.

Once again, thank you for your kind co-operation.

Vicky Downing
Tel: 0
Fax: 086
E-mail:

I _________________________ parent/guardian of ____________________________
give consent for my child to participate in the research conducted by Vicky Downing as outlined above.

__________________________________________  _________________________
Parent/guardian’s signature                 Date

__________________________________________  _________________________
Researcher’s signature                               Date
ADDENDUM 7: Letter of Assent

25 June 2013

Hi there

Thank you for agreeing to be part of my research study on how using books can help children come to terms with their parents’ divorce. This research forms part of my qualification of a Masters Degree in Education at UNISA.

If you and your parents agree for you to participate in this study, here is an outline of what will happen:

- You will meet with me to answer some questions related to your experience of your parents’ divorce as well as some questions about you as a person. I will use the opportunity to get to know you better. This meeting may span over two separate sessions each lasting 45 minutes with a total time of no more than about 1 ½ hours.
- You will form part of a group of 6 boys and girls aged 7 to 11 years. As a group you will meet for at least 5 sessions each lasting no longer than 1 hour. These sessions will occur after school on Mondays and Fridays until all 5 sessions have taken place. I plan to start these sessions in the second or third term. If you are not available on Monday and Friday afternoons, another time can be decided on after checking with the other children participating in the research.
- You will be given a book to read for the sessions. This will not cost your parents any money.
- When we have worked through the book during the sessions, we will meet again for about 1 hour. I hope you will share your feelings about the book, the research process and group as well as how you may now feel about your parents’ divorce.
- I may need to look at your most recent school report to make sure I choose a book that is at the right reading level for you.
- The only risks you may encounter involve sharing your ideas and emotions in the group setting and with me. If you feel uncomfortable, you are welcome to arrange individual time with me to work through these emotions. We will also be meeting in my office at school. If, however, you feel uncomfortable meeting there we can find another more private venue to meet.
- If you change your mind and do not want to take part anymore, there will be no unwanted consequences. You are free to leave the group at any stage.
o Whatever information you share will be confidential. I will not use your real name in the final copy of my research and will rather use a made-up name for you instead. Your teachers and principals will also not be told any information you share during any of the sessions.

o I hope that by the end of the sessions you will feel you can deal with your parents’ divorce and your situation better. However, these cannot be guaranteed.

o There is no cost to be involved in this study.

o You will be given a copy of this assent form to keep.

o Make sure you discuss your participation in this study with your parents before signing this form

o Your parents will be asked to give their permission for you to participate by signing a similar form.

Thank you once again for agreeing to work with me on this research project. If you have any questions, you are free to contact me. My details are printed below or you can speak to me when I am at the school on Mondays and Fridays.

Mrs Vicky Downing
Tel: 0
Fax: 086
E-mail:

I _____________________________ give my assent to be part of the research study conducted by Mrs Vicky Downing.

__________________________   _____________________________
Participant's signature    Date

__________________________   _____________________________
Researcher's signature    Date
ADDENDUM 8: Letter Requesting Permission from GDE

1 May 2013

Head of Research
Gauteng Department of Education

Dear Sir

Request for Permission to Conduct Research at a Government Primary School

I would like to request written permission to conduct research at a government school in Ekurhuleni. The title of the research is: The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce.

I would like to select 6 learners from X School in Ekurhuleni in this age group whose parents have been divorced within the last 6 years to participate in the research. The study will consist of a pre-therapy interview (it total it will last no more than 1 ½ hours), a minimum of five group therapy sessions (each lasting no more than 1 hour) in which we use a selected book to overcome issues relating to their parents’ divorce and a post-therapy interview (lasting between about 45 minutes to 1 hour). In the individual therapy sessions, learners will be interviewed according to set interview schedules. In addition, learners will complete a questionnaire during the pre-therapy interview. Observation will also be employed during the individual sessions. During the group therapy sessions, various activities related to the selected book will be carried out such as making puppets and collages based on themes and characters from the selected book. Learners will be provided with the books for the duration of the research at no cost to them or the school. During the group therapy sessions, I will make notes based on observation as well as use field notes.

The planned date for the research to commence (depending on when final approval is granted by the Gauteng Department of Education and from the UNISA Ethics Committee) should be at the start of the third term of 2013. All sessions will occur after school on Mondays and Fridays for a maximum of an hour each time. The research will be used in my dissertation which forms part of my qualification in Masters in Education. I will obtain consent from the parents as well as assent from the learners themselves. The school, its staff (if mentioned), learners and parents will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of information will be maintained at all times. Learners may withdraw from participation and,
since the learners are still young, their parents may withdraw their consent for participation at any time without fear of reprisal or any other adverse effects.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Vicky Downing

Tel: 0 or e-mail:
ADDENDUM 9: Letter Requesting Permission from School

25 June 2013

Mr X
X School

Dear Mr X

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

I would like to request written permission to conduct research at X School using 6 learners aged between 7 and 11 years old. The research title is: The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce.

I would like to select 6 learners in this age group whose parents have been divorced within the last 6 years to participate in a pre-therapy interview lasting no more than 1 ½ hours in total, a minimum of five one-hour group therapy sessions in which we use a selected book to overcome issues relating to their parents’ divorce and a post-therapy interview of about 45 minutes to 1 hour. In the individual therapy sessions, learners will be interviewed according to set interview schedules. In addition, learners will complete a questionnaire during the pre-therapy interview. Observation will also be employed during the individual sessions. During the group therapy sessions, various activities related to the selected book will be carried out such as making puppets and collages based on themes and characters from the selected book. Learners will be provided with the books for the duration of the research at no cost to them or the school. During the group therapy sessions, I will make notes based on observation as well as use field notes.

The planned date for the research to commence (depending on when final approval is granted by the Gauteng Department of Education and from the UNISA Ethics Committee) should be at the start of the third term of 2013. All sessions will occur after school on Mondays and Fridays for a maximum of an hour each time. The research will be used in my dissertation which forms part of my qualification in Masters in Education. I will obtain consent from the parents as well as assent from the learners themselves. The school, its staff (if mentioned), learners and parents will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of information will be maintained at all times. Learners may withdraw from participation and, since the learners are still young, their parents may withdraw their consent for participation at any time without fear of reprisal or any other adverse effects. The official permission forms have been completed and sent to the Gauteng Department of Education for this research. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Vicky Downing

Tel: 0 or e-mail:
25 June 2013

Head of School Governing Body
X School

Dear X

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

I would like to request written permission to conduct research at X School using 6 learners aged between 7 and 11 years old. The research title is: The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce.

I would like to select 6 learners in this age group whose parents have been divorced within the last 6 years to participate in a pre-therapy interview lasting no more than 1 ½ hours in total, a minimum of five one-hour group therapy sessions in which we use a selected book to overcome issues relating to their parents’ divorce and a post-therapy interview of about 45 minutes to 1 hour. In the individual therapy sessions, learners will be interviewed according to set interview schedules. In addition, learners will complete a questionnaire during the pre-therapy interview. Observation will also be employed during the individual sessions. During the group therapy sessions, various activities related to the selected book will be carried out such as making puppets and collages based on themes and characters from the selected book. Learners will be provided with the books for the duration of the research at no cost to them or the school. During the group therapy sessions, I will make notes based on observation as well as use field notes.

The planned date for the research to commence (depending on when final approval is granted by the Gauteng Department of Education and from the UNISA Ethics Committee) should be at the start of the third term of 2013. All sessions will occur after school on Mondays and Fridays for a maximum of an hour each time. The research will be used in my dissertation which forms part of my qualification in Masters in Education. I will obtain consent from the parents as well as assent from the learners themselves. The school, its staff (if mentioned), learners and parents will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of information will be maintained at all times. Learners may withdraw from participation and, since the learners are still young, their parents may withdraw their consent for participation at any time without fear of reprisal or any other adverse effects. The official permission forms have been completed and sent to the Gauteng Department of Education for this research. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Vicky Downing

Tel: 0 or e-mail:
# ADDENDUM 11: Permission Letter from GDE

## GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>13 May 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validity of Research Approval</td>
<td>13 May 2013 to 20 September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Researcher</td>
<td>Downing V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address of Researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
<td>011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax Number</td>
<td>086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Topic</td>
<td>The effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in Group Therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and type of schools</td>
<td>ONE Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District/s/HO</td>
<td>Ekurhuleni South</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

---

Footer:

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

5th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg 2001

P.O. Box 7745, Johannesburg 2001 Tel: (011) 355 0500

Email: David.Makhado@doe.gall.za
1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.

3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

4. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.

5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that do not participate will not be penalised in any way.

6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the site that they manage.

7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter must be requested to conduct research in the following year.

8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.

9. It is the researcher’s responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.

10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.

11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.

12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.

13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.

14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Dr David Mkhado
Director: Knowledge Management and Research

DATE: 2013/05/14

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: david.mkhado@gauteng.gov.za
UNISA

Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

VB Downing [32501072]

for a M Ed study entitled

The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.

Prof CS le Roux
CEDU REC (Chairperson)
lrouxcs@unisa.ac.za
Reference number: 2013 JUNE/32501072/CSLR

20 June 2013
ADDENDUM 13: Permission Letter from SGB

25 June 2013

Head of School Governing Body

Dear

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

I would like to request written permission to conduct research at using 6 learners aged between 7 and 11 years old. The research title is: The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce.

I would like to select 6 learners in this age group whose parents have been divorced within the last 6 years to participate in a pre-therapy interview lasting no more than 1 ½ hours in total, a minimum of five one-hour group therapy sessions in which we use a selected book to overcome issues relating to their parents’ divorce and a post-therapy interview of about 45 minutes to 1 hour. In the individual therapy sessions, learners will be interviewed according to set interview schedules. In addition, learners will complete a questionnaire during the pre-therapy interview. Observation will also be employed during the individual sessions. During the group therapy sessions, various activities related to the selected book will be carried out such as making puppets and collages based on themes and characters from the selected book. Learners will be provided with the books for the duration of the research at no cost to them or the school. During the group therapy sessions, I will make notes based on observation as well as use field notes.

The planned date for the research to commence (depending on when final approval is granted by the Gauteng Department of Education and from the UNISA Ethics Committee) should be at the start of the third term of 2013. All sessions will occur after school on Mondays and Fridays for a maximum of an hour each time. The research will be used in my dissertation which forms part of my qualification in Masters in Education. I will obtain consent from the parents as well as assent from the learners themselves. The school, its staff (if mentioned), learners and parents will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of information will be maintained at all times. Learners may withdraw from participation and, since the learners are still young, their parents may withdraw their consent for participation at any time without fear of reprisal or any other adverse effects. The official permission forms have been completed and sent to the Gauteng Department of Education for this research. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Tel: 0 or e-mail: [Contact Information]

Principal

[Signature]

SGB Chair person
ADDENDUM 14: Permission Letter from School

25 June 2013

Head of School Governing Body

Dear

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

I would like to request written permission to conduct research at your school using 6 learners aged between 7 and 11 years old. The research title is: The effectiveness of bibliotherapy in group therapy to assist pre-adolescents in dealing with bereavement after divorce.

I would like to select 6 learners in this age group whose parents have been divorced within the last 6 years to participate in a pre-therapy interview lasting no more than 1 ½ hours in total, a minimum of five one-hour group therapy sessions in which we use a selected book to overcome issues relating to their parents’ divorce and a post-therapy interview of about 45 minutes to 1 hour. In the individual therapy sessions, learners will be interviewed according to set interview schedules. In addition, learners will complete a questionnaire during the pre-therapy interview. Observation will also be employed during the individual sessions. During the group therapy sessions, various activities related to the selected book will be carried out such as making puppets and collages based on themes and characters from the selected book. Learners will be provided with the books for the duration of the research at no cost to them or the school. During the group therapy sessions, I will make notes based on observation as well as use field notes.

The planned date for the research to commence (depending on when final approval is granted by the Gauteng Department of Education and from the UNISA Ethics Committee) should be at the start of the third term of 2013. All sessions will occur after school on Mondays and Fridays for a maximum of an hour each time. The research will be used in my dissertation which forms part of my qualification in Masters in Education. I will obtain consent from the parents as well as assent from the learners themselves. The school, its staff (if mentioned), learners and parents will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of information will be maintained at all times. Learners may withdraw from participation and, since the learners are still young, their parents may withdraw their consent for participation at any time without fear of reprisal or any other adverse effects. The official permission forms have been completed and sent to the Gauteng Department of Education for this research. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Vicki Dowling

Tel: 0 or e-mail:

Permission granted.

Principal

SAS Chairperson.