

**AN EDUCATIONAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES
WHICH SERVE TO ANCHOR RESILIENCE**

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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An educational-psychological perspective of the personal attributes which serve to anchor resilience.

by

Linda Carol MacFarlane

Degree: ***Master of Education - with specialisation in guidance and counselling***

Promoter: ***Professor H.E. Roets***

SUMMARY

This study focuses on the concept of resilience, and seeks to determine the nature, and role, of personal attributes in adolescents' ability to bounce back from life's blows, and continue determinedly along the path of self-actualisation.

The personal attributes impacting on the ability to surmount life's challenges are delineated by an empirical study focussing on twenty learning-disabled adolescents, half of whom demonstrate resilience, and half of whom appear to have turned their backs on self-actualisation. The study aims to provide educational psychologists with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of resilience, so that vulnerable youngsters might ultimately be therapeutically assisted to choose a more resilient attitude and behaviour.

The results of the study delineate nine definite personal attributes which anchor resilience and promote self-actualisation, despite obstacle-ridden circumstances. Furthermore, results suggest that personal choice underlies resilience, implying that intervention targeted at inculcating resilience may well be a worthwhile exercise.

KEY WORDS

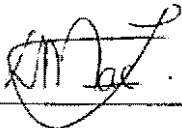
resilient; vulnerable; personal attributes; self-actualisation; learning disabled;
protective factors; risk factors

Date: ***November 1998***

DECLARATION

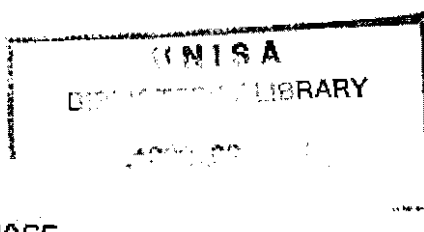
Student Number: 8513058

I declare that *AN EDUCATIONAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES WHICH SERVE TO ANCHOR RESILIENCE* is my own work and that all sources used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references



Mrs L.C MacFarlane

17.11.1998



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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

*... Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows, for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that gulfs will wash us down:
It may be that we will touch the Happy Isles,
And see the Great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

(from ULYSSES, by Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

(Malan, 1984: 47)

1.1 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

Ulysses, the legendary Greek hero, struggled for ten years following the Trojan war to return home again. He was ensnared by numerous, unwelcome odds: a one-eyed, man-eating giant; a malicious witch; seductive sirens. Nevertheless, always determined, he overcame each obstacle, to emerge a victor. In many ways, he embodied the very essence of resilience.

There are modern-day youngsters who face appalling odds too: parental abuse, direct exposure to criminal elements, dire social-economic status, parenting by adults suffering from psychiatric disorders, acute marital discord, and others. Some of these youngsters react as Ulysses did: although they may temporarily be weakened...burdened...saddened by their fate, they remain determined *"To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."*

During the six years of her teaching experience, youngsters such as these, wrenched the writer's attention. She became both fascinated and humbled by their remarkable survival instincts. Regardless of tragic odds, such resilient youngsters continued largely undaunted, determined to grasp life with both hands.

Whilst these youngsters continued determinedly along the path of self-actualisation, it became equally obvious to the writer that many of their peers faced with similar hardships reacted antithetically, behaving destructively and becoming increasingly selfish and self-pitying. Whilst the former group continued to affirm life constructively, the latter gave up on life, or felt that life owed them. Although the former group was not immune to the hardships, these hardships did not deter them from living in the fullest sense, from being fully human or from *"drinking life to the lees..."*, to quote Tennyson's 'Ulysses' again (Malan, 1984: 45). These youngsters continuously impressed the writer for their very ability to evidence a *"...stubborn durability..."* (Haggerty, 1994: 12).

When the writer began to work among learning disabled children, the dearth of learning disabled children with Ulysses-like qualities was glaring. Many of these children demonstrated fragility of spirit and a propensity towards being broken, rather than bent, by life's setbacks.

Thus, the writer became increasingly baffled by the difference between the youngsters who managed to transform themselves in the face of suffering, apparently searching for new meaning; and other youngsters who fell apart in response to suffering, becoming bitter and cynical, as they began increasingly to stagnate.

From her educational-psychological perspective, the writer observed that resilient youngsters appeared determined to self-actualise at all costs. Equally the writer's observations led her to feel great empathy for the many youngsters, especially the learning disabled youngsters, who to all intents and purposes appeared to give up, rather than aim for self-actualisation. The writer wished that she might understand why some youngsters gave up so easily, whilst others remained committed to self-actualisation, in order that as an educational psychologist, she might be able to understand this phenomenon and therefore teach non-resilient youngsters skills which might enhance their chances of self-actualisation.

This growing awareness has led the writer to ponder numerous questions:

- What is the nature of resilience?
- What are the general factors contributing to resilience?
- What are the personal attributes contributing to resilience?
- Is ego strength allied to resilience?
- Is there a positive correlation between the capacity for ego defence mechanisms and resilience?
- Is the development of resilience dependent on resilient role models?
- Is resilience determined by the ability to employ creative problem-solving thought processes?
- Are resilience and intelligence interrelated?
- Is resilience related to the ability to cherish a vision for the future, regardless of the present?
- Does a positive self-concept necessarily give rise to resilience?
- What is the role of positive and negative self-talk in the development of resilience?
- Is resilience allied to the capacity for giving and receiving love?
- Does the level of resilience ebb in accordance with the severity of life's obstacles, or is it constant?
- Does resilience run in families or is it a trait unique to an individual, regardless of family background?

- Is resilience linked to having significant unfinished future business, so that the present must be overcome in favour of the future?
- What role do community support systems play in promoting resilience?
- What is the role of psychotherapy in encouraging and nurturing resilience?
- Does resilience merely mean survival in the face of risk and vulnerability, or should someone only be termed resilient when happiness is indicated too?
- To what extent does social attractiveness correlate with resilience?
- What role does consistent, caring parenting play in the development of resilience?
- Does self-understanding play a role in resilience?
- Is social skill a determinant of resilience?
- Can resilience be influenced by the prevailing, general attitude of the peer group?
- Is the propensity for resilience influenced by gender?
- Are learning disabled children less resilient by nature, and if so, can resilient characteristics be cultivated in these children?
- What role does the self-concept of the learning disabled child play in his or her ability to demonstrate resilience?

A great number of questions have been posed by the writer. She does not intend to address all of these questions, although they remain relevant questions. Where the above questions co-coincide with general themes in current literature on resilience, as set out in Table 1, the writer will address the issues raised in the literature overview of chapter two.

In the following section, the writer wishes to define the concept of resilience.

1.2 DEFINITION OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is a complex concept which, if it could be simplified, could be defined as the ability to bounce back from life's blows and continue along the path of self-actualisation.

According to Higgins (1994: 1) *"Resilience implies that potential subjects are able to negotiate significant challenges to development yet consistently 'snap back' in order to complete the*

important developmental tasks which confront them as they grow."

Higgins further emphasizes that resilience encompasses more than mere survival: "... *an additional strength of the resilient is their ability to acknowledge and experience significant psychological pain and still maintain the ability to love well.*" (1994: 2)

Vaillant (1993: 284) in turn defines resilience as "... *the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back.*" Furthermore, Vaillant proposes that this capacity is fostered by the presence of protective factors.

Young-Eisendrath (1996: 20) views resilience "...*as the ability to thrive, not just survive, after having encountered some great difficulty or adversity.*" Young-Eisendrath is furthermore adamant that resilience is firmly tied to choice of attitude: "...*the capacity to be resilient, to respond to difficulty with development, is rooted in many diverse factors, but it consistently depends on one thing: the meaning you, the individual, make of where you are.*" (1996: 21-22)

Thus resilience may be seen as a multifaceted, active process which enables individuals to remain hardy, human negotiators of life's curve balls. Such individuals evaluate life's experiences and determine their response.

In terms of UNISA's perspective, namely Relations theory, resilience could be defined as the ability to continue towards self-actualisation regardless of negative life-experiences. Resilient youngsters may have a traumatic life world, characterised by poor relations and an inadequate educational climate, but despite the shakiness of their foundation, they remain largely unshaken. The individual's propensity for resilience would be related to the nature of intrapsychic interaction occurring when the individual is faced with difficult or traumatic life-experiences: the resilient individual would attribute meaning to the experience in such a manner, that his or her self-concept would remain unscarred, thereby facilitating continued involvement. The self-talk of the resilient individual will evaluate the identity of the self, in terms of the trauma, in such a manner that the self-concept remains realistic and no lasting unrealistic positive/negative meaning attribution occurs. Rather than allow the trauma experienced to become a label of the

self, it is given status only as an incident, not as a life-sentence. This in turn impacts on the individual's behaviour, keeping him or her on the course of self-actualisation.

The writer would like to illustrate the components of the above definition with a scenario observed by the writer during her internship:

A white teenage boy (we shall call him Adam for the purpose of this illustration) was removed, by welfare, from his parents' care after extreme abuse and placed in foster care, with a view to adoption. This never materialised, and Adam was then transferred to a foster home, run by indifferent parents. Rather than adopt an attitude of self-pity, he attributed meaning in a realistic manner: he acknowledged the horror of his past, but refused to become its slave. Instead, Adam chose to continue to remain involved in school activities and to attend regular counselling sessions.

With the help of the counsellor he gave his future significance, rather than his past, and in so doing he told himself that he was in no way worthless as a result of the abuse he had suffered, or deserving of it in any way. In the long run Adam's self-concept remained intact, and his behaviour generally underlined a desire to self-actualise.

Thus, the quality of Adam's experience was modified by his ability to attribute meaning realistically, and the will to remain involved in life. This, in turn, positively influenced his self-talk, resulting in his self-concept being galvanised in a positive direction; ultimately steering him in the direction of self-actualisation. The dynamics of his intrapsychic structure prompted resilience. As a result, Adam did not remain permanently bowed to the pressures of fate: he evidenced "*...the capacity, once bent, to spring back again.*" (Vaillant 1993: 284)

Therefore, if the writer were to re-define resilience from her present understanding, resilience may be seen as a positive orientation to one's life world (both denotatively and connotatively), regardless of the nature of this life world. This, in turn, will prompt the pursuit of meaningful goals, sparking a positively intentional subjective stance to one's life world and relations, which ultimately motivates self-acceptance and a drive to become what one can, ought to, and wants

to become, despite the obstacles inherent to the individual's life world. The all-inclusive, dynamic image that the individual will hold about him/herself, will be coloured by the hand of cards life has dealt, but not tainted by it.


In the following section, the writer will provide an overview of the literature currently available on resilience.



1.3 LITERATURE OVERVIEW




The field of resilience is a fairly new one. Certainly, between 1987 - 1997, only three South African studies, focusing on resilience, have been conducted.

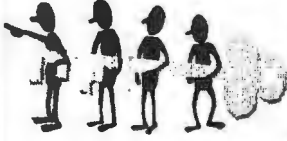


In an overview of the literature available on the topic, it would appear as if there are nine recurring research themes pertaining to resilience, and then a few isolated themes covered by only one or two sources.

TABLE 1
MAJOR THEMES IN CURRENT LITERATURE

<p>Resilience as a personality trait.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Werner and Smith, 1982. ◆ Garmezy, 1984. ◆ Rutter, 1983, 1984 and 1986. ◆ Higgins, 1994. ◆ Berliner and Bernard, 1996. ◆ Rak and Patterson, 1996. ◆ Hart, Hofmann, Edelstein and Keller, 1997. 	<p>Personality traits as the foundation of resilience.</p> <p>Personality traits as predictors of resilience.</p> <p>Internal locus of control as a specific predictor of resilience.</p>

THEME	SOURCE	FINDINGS
<p>Protective factors contributing to resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Werner and Smith, 1982. ◆ Garmezy, 1983. ◆ Rutter, 1985. ◆ Anthony and Cohler, 1987. ◆ Dugan and Coles, 1989. ◆ Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990. ◆ Luthar, 1991. ◆ Vaillant, 1993. ◆ Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy and Rutter, 1994. ◆ Joseph, 1994. ◆ Loesel and Bliesener, 1994. ◆ Blocker and Copeland, 1994. ◆ Smith and Prior, 1995. ◆ Watt, David, Ladd and Shamos, 1995. ◆ Herman-Stahl and Petersen, 1996. ◆ Tschann, Kaiser, Chesney, Alkon and Boyce, 1996. 	<p>Protective factors as the foundation for resilience.</p> <p>Identification of protective factors.</p> <p>Familial, environmental and personality factors.</p> <p>Specific contributions made by protective factors.</p> <p>Protective factors in terms of a balance model.</p>
<p>The impact of family on resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Werner and Smith, 1982. ◆ Garmezy, 1983. ◆ Dugan and Coles, 1989. ◆ Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990. ◆ Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Weintraub and Nuechterlein, 1992. ◆ Egeland, Carlson and Sroufe, 1993. ◆ Barnard, 1994. ◆ Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy and Rutter, 1994. ◆ Smith and Prior, 1995. ◆ Wilson, 1995. ◆ Fergusson and Lynskey, 1996. ◆ Rak and Patterson, 1996. ◆ Tschann, Kaiser, Chesney, Alkon and Boyce, 1996. 	<p>Parent -child relationships and resilience.</p> <p>Additional caretakers and resilience.</p> <p>Family functioning and resilience.</p> <p>The impact of rules and structures on resilience.</p> <p>Socioeconomic status and resilience.</p> <p>Parent variables and resilience.</p>

TOPIC	SOURCE	POINTS
<p>The role of therapeutic intervention in resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Weintraub and Nuechterlein, 1992. ◆ Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy and Rutter, 1994. ◆ Cowen, Wyman, Work and Iker, 1995. ◆ Focht and Beardslee, 1996. ◆ Beardslee, Wright, Salt, Drezner, Gladstone, Versage and Rothberg, 1997. 	<p>The elimination of risk factors.</p> <p>The concept of successful intervention.</p> <p>Methods of promoting resilience.</p>
<p>Risk factors impacting on resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Rutter and Madge, 1976. ◆ Werner and Smith, 1982. ◆ Garmezy and Rutter, 1983. ◆ Masten, et al, 1990. ◆ Rolf, et al, 1992. ◆ Haggerty et al, 1994. ◆ Martin, 1995. 	<p>Identification of risk factors.</p> <p>Risk factors in context.</p> <p>Proximal and distal risk factors.</p> <p>Risk factors as predictors of vulnerability.</p> <p>Countering risk factors.</p>
<p>The impact of a learning disability on resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Keogh and Weisner, 1993. ◆ Spekman, Goldberg and Herman, 1993. ◆ Miller, 1996. ◆ Morrison and Cosden, 1997. 	<p>Increased risk in the presence of learning disabilities.</p> <p>Learning disability as a risk factor in itself, in terms of resilience.</p> <p>Acceptance as the target of intervention.</p>

THEME	SOURCE	ISSUES
<p>The role of school programmes/teacher mentors in the promotion of resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Quinton, Pickles, Maughan and Rutter, 1993. ◆ Canfield and Wells, 1994. ◆ Bruce, 1995. ◆ Berliner and Benard, 1996. ◆ Patterson, 1996. ◆ Finn and Rock, 1997. 	<p>The role of school-based intervention programmes in promoting resilience.</p> <p>The role of the teacher as mentor.</p> <p>Strategies specifically for the classroom, designed to foster resilience.</p>
<p>The role of extra familial factors (e.g. community / peers) on resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Masten et al, 1990. ◆ Rolf et al, 1992. ◆ David, Ladd and Shamos, 1995. ◆ Werner, 1995. ◆ Fergusson and Lynskey, 1996. ◆ Rak and Patterson, 1996. 	<p>Peer affiliations.</p> <p>The impact of community.</p> <p>Environmental protective circumstances.</p> <p>Environmental risks.</p>
<p>The role of gender/ age on resilience.</p> 	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Carson, Swanson, Cooney, Gillum and Cunningham, 1992. ◆ Rolf et al, 1992. ◆ Haggerty et al, 1994. 	<p>The impact of gender on resilience.</p> <p>Age and resilience.</p>

Gaps in the existing literature covering resilience centre around the themes of the link between resilience and creative problem solving, or a right-brained approach; the correlation between resilience and intelligence; the role of self-talk in resilience; the correlation between resilience and happiness; the ability to love as a hallmark of resilience; the correlation between resilience and social attractiveness; and the role of the peer-group in resilience.

In the following section the writer wishes to indicate the demarcation of this specific study on resilience.

1.4 DEMARCATION

For the purposes of this thesis, the writer intends to focus only on the following themes:

- (a) The nature of personal attributes in the individual's ability to demonstrate resilience, specifically in learning disabled youngsters.
- (b) The role of innate determinants in the learning disabled individual, and how this impacts on the learning disabled child's propensity for resilience.

Although there is much literature documenting the role of the personal attributes of the resilient individual, researchers have emphasized the need for greater specification of the manner in which these attributes are involved in resilience (Garmezy and Masten, 1986; Rutter, 1987; Luthar, 1991). There is an even greater need for such a specification among learning disabled children (Miller, 1996). For this reason, as well as the writer's daily working relationship with learning disabled children who, by and large, appear to be so patently vulnerable, the writer has specifically selected the above demarcation. In adhering to this demarcation, the writer will focus on both personality traits, as well as innate protective factors, as she is of the opinion that there is a large degree of overlap between these factors which form the basis for innate resilience determinants.

The impact of the family, extra familial factors, age or gender on resilience; the role of therapeutic intervention in resilience; risk factors impacting on resilience; and the role of school programmes or health services in the promotion of resilience will be addressed in the literature study, but not in the empirical study. The latter will be devoted to investigating personal attributes anchoring resilience, given the writer's specific interest in the role of personal attributes in resilience. Nevertheless, the themes which will not be addressed in the empirical study, remain extremely valid.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem the writer wishes to target is the following:

WHAT IS THE NATURE, AND ROLE, OF THE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES ANCHORING RESILIENCE; AND WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT THE LEARNING DISABLED CHILD WHO TYPICALLY LACKS RESILIENCE?

This problem promotes investigation of further aspects:

- ☛ the nature of personal attributes in learning disabled children who are resilient.
- ☛ the nature of personal attributes in learning disabled children who lack resilience.
- ☛ the role of personal attributes in learning disabled children who are resilient.
- ☛ the role of personal attributes in learning disabled children who are not resilient.
- ☛ strategies to encourage those personal attributes which appear to anchor resilience.

1.6 HYPOTHESES

Given the demarcation of this study, the writer assumes the following hypotheses:

- ↳ it may be empirically determined which personal attributes impact positively on resilience, especially resilient learning disabled adolescents.
- ↳ it may be hypothesized that such attributes would include intelligence, ego strength, optimism, sociability, self-control, assertiveness and independence.
- ↳ it may be empirically shown that vulnerable learning disabled children typically lack such attributes.

- it may be shown what the role of personal attributes is in terms of resilience.
- it may be determined that the lack of such attributes acts as a potential risk for maladjustment.
- it may be shown that in the absence of personal attributes which provide a buffering effect, vulnerable youngsters execute negative self-fulfilling prophecies.
- it is probable that the personal attributes contributing towards resilience do not function as isolated factors, but rather as a coalition of factors.

1.7 AIMS

The writer seeks to realise the following aims from an educational-psychological perspective:

- to conduct a literature study on the phenomenon of resilience.
- to conduct an empirical study geared towards specifically determining the nature and role of the personal attributes contributing towards resilience, especially as concerns learning disabled children.
- to provide an analysis of the data obtained from the empirical study in order to equip educational psychologists with an in-depth understanding of the nature and role of personal attributes in resilience, especially as pertains to learning disabled youth, with the hope that such an understanding might ultimately impact positively on therapeutic intervention.
- to suggest guidelines for assisting the vulnerable, learning disabled child towards resilience. The focus of such guidelines would be towards nurturing personal attributes which impact positively on resilience, with the hope of enhancing these, and thereby fostering resilience.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

For the purposes of this study, the writer wishes to clarify the following terms:

1.8.1 Educational psychology

Educational psychology is concerned with the child as a learner and the learning process. It views the child as an integral part of a whole, so that an understanding of the child within his or her life world and the learning process is sought. Such an understanding will take cognisance of all the variables which interact as learning and development occur.

1.8.2 Personal attributes

Personal attributes refer to those characteristics which are a feature of the individual, as opposed to the individual's family or environment. Personal attributes are inherent individual characteristics.

1.8.3 Anchor

In terms of this study, anchor refers to those phenomena which ensure or secure resilience.

1.8.4 Self-actualisation

Self-actualisation, is a multifaceted concept, which suggests that the individual become the very best that he or she may become. In terms of resilience, this would imply that the individual continues to strive for his or her ultimate, individual best, rather than cease self-actualising in the face of obstacles. Self-actualisation is not a question of perfection, as perfection is

unattainable. Rather, it is something which everyone is entitled to, and something which resilient individuals stubbornly pursue, and attain. Thus, the writer is of the opinion that self-actualisation is intrinsic to resilience.

1.1.5 Learning disability

A learning disability is spoken of when there is a discrepancy manifested between the child's potential and the child's level of achievement. A learning disability is not applicable to children whose learning difficulties stem primarily from visual, auditory or physical impairment; or from mental retardation; or from environmental deprivation; or primarily from emotional disturbance.

The salient features of a learning disability are summarised by Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman (1993: 12): "*It is described as an invisible handicap, often of unknown etiology, frequently misdiagnosed, and hard to understand and explain to children, parents and teachers alike.*" There are many synonyms for the term learning disability. Amongst others, the most common include: minimal brain dysfunction, perceptual handicap, dyslexia, congenital word blindness, hyperkinesis (Benner, 1987: 639).

Of pertinence is the impact of a learning disability on the child's life. Although a learning disability takes a unique course with each child, the following likenesses may be probable:

- ✓ hyperactivity or hypoactivity
- ✓ motor awkwardness
- ✓ emotional instability
- ✓ unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships
- ✓ impulsivity
- ✓ attention deficit (Benner, 1987: 639)

1.2.6 Resilience

As indicated in 1.2 resilience implies an ability to cope in the face of adversity, or to demonstrate general superior adjustment, or simply, to quote Fonagy, Steele, Higgitt and Target (1994: 233), "*Resilience is normal development under difficult conditions.*" Resilience is also referred to as "*invulnerability*", or "*adaptability*", or even simply "*success*" (Miller, 1996: 257). However, Norman Garmezy (1993: 129) prefers the term resilience over the other terms listed, because central to the term resilience is the concept of springing back or rebounding: "*The central element in the study of resilience lies in the power of recovery and in the ability to return once again to ... patterns of adaptation and competence.*" The writer concurs with Garmezy's expert opinion.

Often, resilience is explained in terms of an absence of psychopathology or maladaptive behaviour in the face of stressors. It suggests an attitude which echoes the following:

*"Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life and when it comes,
hold your head high, look it squarely in the eye and say,
'I will be bigger than you. You cannot defeat me.'"*

ANN LANDERS (Buscaglia, 1992: 138)

1.9 A PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS

⇒ **Chapter two** will form a literature survey, covering nine facets of resilience, namely: personality traits contributing to resilience; protective factors, familial factors, extra familial factors and risk factors impacting on resilience; the impact of therapeutic intervention on resilience; the impact of a learning disability on resilience; the role of the teacher and school programme in resilience; and the role of age and gender in resilience.

- ⇒ **Chapter three** will delineate the **research methodology** to be used in the empirical study, including the aim and motivation of the empirical study, as well as the actual research design to be followed (including the research group, diagnostic media to be used, method of evaluation and possible results of this empirical study.)

- ⇒ **Chapter four** will provide a **report of the empirical study** conducted, and the results of the study.

- ⇒ **Chapter five** will provide brief **guidelines** for the educational psychologist on fostering resilience in typically vulnerable individuals.

- ⇒ **Chapter six** will serve as a **conclusion** to this study incorporating findings of the literature survey, findings of the empirical study, as well as recommendations for further study. A bibliography will follow chapter six.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: AN OVERVIEW OF RESILIENCE

*"The same sun hardens mud and softens wax.
Trials can either make us or break us."
(Johnson, 1997: 54)*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer intends to provide an overview of what is currently understood by the phenomenon of resilience as explained in available literature. The overview will proceed under the same headings as those used in Table 1 in Chapter One, namely:

- Resilience as a personality trait.
- Protective factors contributing to resilience.
- The impact of family on resilience.
- The role of extra familial factors on resilience.
- Risk factors impacting on resilience.
- The role of therapeutic intervention in resilience.
- The impact of a learning disability on resilience.
- The role of the school programme/teacher on resilience.
- The role of gender/age on resilience.

As a preface to her overview, the writer would like to caution the reader that although she has compartmentalised current literature, to facilitate a more comprehensive overview, the phenomenon of resilience is not that easily fragmented, especially in terms of personality, protective, family, extra familial and risk factors. These factors are all interacting parts of the same whole, but in the writer's opinion, if resilience is to be truly understood, it must be viewed as something greater than the sum of its interacting parts.

2.1.1 Resilience as a Personality Trait

People are fundamentally different. Some of the fundamental differences between people can be understood in terms of personality dimensions, or personality traits, which are understood to be relatively enduring human characteristics found to a greater or lesser extent in all individuals (Benner 1987: 1168-1170).

It would appear as if some resilience studies to date view personality traits as a causal explanation for resilient behaviour:

Werner and Smith (1982: 84-93), who conducted a longitudinal study of children on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai, emphasise that both resilient males, as well as females, are verbally superior to their vulnerable counterparts. Furthermore, they found resilient individuals to achieve consistently higher scores on the following traits: responsibility, socialisation or social maturity, achievement via conformity, emotional responsiveness and social perception. Resilient adolescents also demonstrated an internal locus of control.

The results obtained by Werner and Smith corroborated those obtained by Murphy and Moriarty in the 1976 Longitudinal Coping Project at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas (Werner and Smith, 1982: 92). These youngsters presented as articulate, sensitive and autonomous. They were also capable of delayed gratification. In Werner and Smith's follow-up study (Watt, David, Ladd, & Shamos, 1995: 212), the outstanding personality traits of resilient adolescents were that of social maturity, a definite need for achievement and traditional "feminine" traits, such as sensitivity, gentleness and nurturance.

Higgins (1994: 20-21) suggests that resilient individuals are creative and empathically attuned. They are seen to be friendly and competent at social relations. They are also described as possessing an internal locus of control, and as voluntarily helpful.

The ability and desire to feel and understand others' needs (ie empathy); the ability to compromise (ie flexibility); acceptance of a delayed gratification of personal needs;

creativity; humour (especially the ability to laugh good-naturedly at one's own mistakes), and finally wisdom, are posited by Young-Eisendrath (1996: 70-71) as the major personality traits predictive of resilience.

Berliner and Bernard (1996: 4) suggest that central personality traits commonly associated with resilience are: social competence (including an ability to establish and sustain positive relationships, demonstrate empathy and a sense of humour); resourcefulness (including an ability to reach decisions creatively and reflectively or to consider alternate solutions); autonomy (including an ability to behave independently and according to an internal locus of control); and a sense of purpose (including optimism and ambition.)

Rak and Patterson (1996: 369) base their view of the personality traits associated with resilience on the longitudinal studies of Garnezy and Rutter (1983), Rutter (1985), and Werner and Smith (1982), and suggest that the resilient child will typically have an active problem-solving approach; will possess the ability to elicit positive attention from others; will generally remain optimistic; will be essentially future-orientated; will function autonomously; will seek novel experiences; and will finally behave pro-actively.

Hart, Hofmann, Edelstein and Keller (1997: 195) suggest that the resilient type of child may be characterised as self-confident, independent, verbally fluent and capable of concentrating on the task at hand. In addition, they suggest that resilient individuals display high intellectual ability, obedience, openness, cooperation, a relaxed attitude and reflective thinking (1997: 201).

If the writer were to summarise the role of personality traits in resilience according to the above findings, it would seem as if the presence of certain traits, namely social competence, emotional responsiveness, autonomy, creativity and optimism (which includes a sense of purpose and a positive future orientation), would suggest that youngsters at risk may well mature into the equivalent of Werner and Smith's findings on high-risk children, namely individuals who "*... grew into competent young adults who loved well, worked well, played well and expected well.*" (1992: 262).

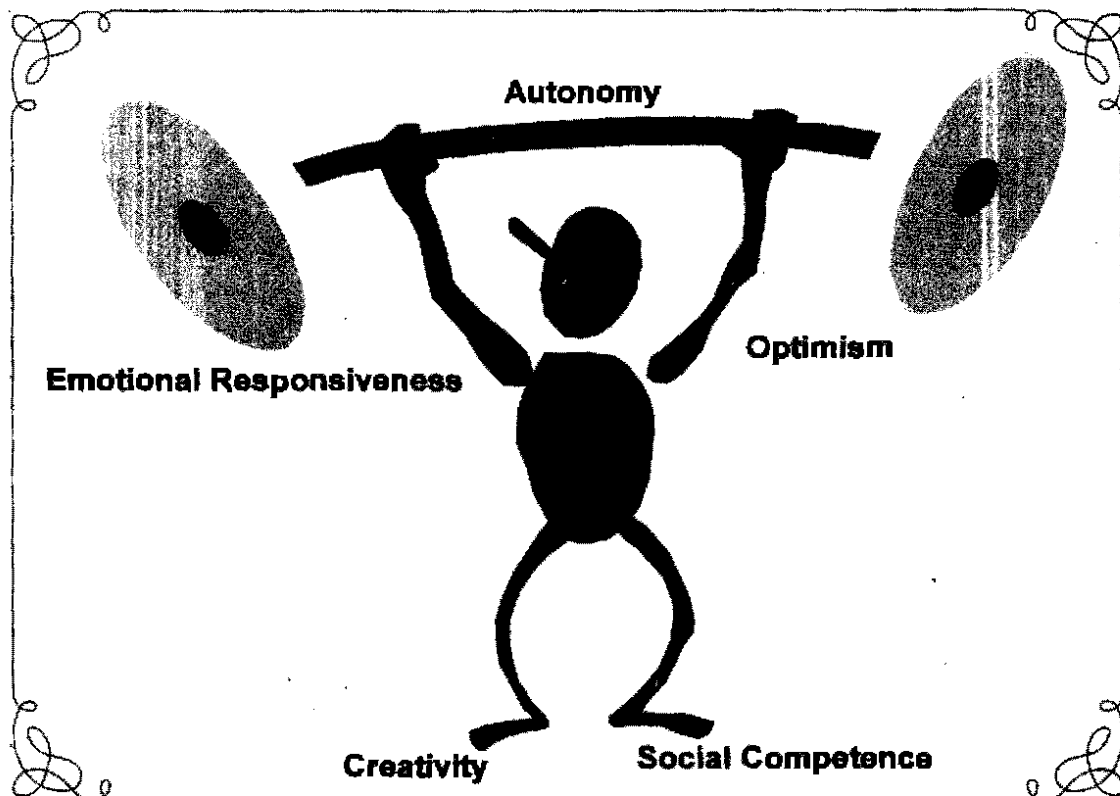


DIAGRAM 1

PERSONALITY TRAITS IMPACTING ON RESILIENCE

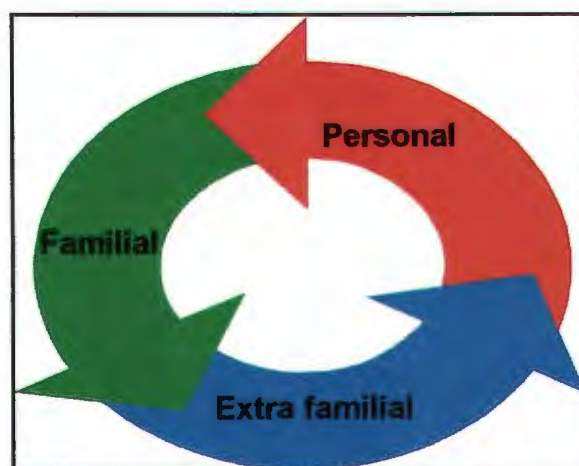
The above diagram summarises the core personality traits thought to characterise resilient youngsters. The writer is of the opinion that the above-mentioned personality traits underlie most of the personal protective factors.

2.1.2 Protective Factors Contributing to Resilience

Protective factors are “...*hypothesized to reduce the likelihood of dysfunction and disorder in the presence of vulnerabilities and stressful life experiences.*” (Gore and Eckenrode in Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy & Rutter, 1994: 34). In other words, protective factors equal variables distinguishing highly stressed youth, who develop psychological or behavioural problems, from those who do not (Blocker and Copeland, 1994: 286). Thus, protective factors ameliorate stressful experiences, in that they “...*provide resistance to risk and foster outcomes marked by patterns of adaption and competency.*” (Garmezy et al, 1983: 73).

It is generally accepted that protective factors, or stress buffers, may be dichotomised into personal factors (either biological predispositions or dispositional attributes) and environmental factors. In other words, the dichotomy may be understood in terms of what the individual brings to the situation as opposed to what is inherent in the situation (Gore and Eckenrode in Haggerty et al, 1994: 34-38). Environmental factors may be further split into factors relating to a supportive family milieu and factors relating to social support in the extra familial milieu. Thus, there appears to be a triad of protective factors (personal, familial and extra familial) assisting some individuals to maintain healthy functioning in an unhealthy setting (Smith and Prior, 1995: 168-169). The writer is of the opinion that these factors interact reciprocally, as is graphically represented in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2
PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Certain researchers (Werner and Smith [1982], Loesel and Bliesener [1994]) view protective factors in terms of a balance model: as long as the balance between stressors and protective factors is fairly stable, an individual will cope successfully. When stressors continue indefinitely and/or accumulatively, or are repeatedly noxious, the individual is hypothesized to be at risk for developing a pathological reaction (Loesel & Bliesener, 1994: 754-757).

Although it has been hypothesized that resilience is merely an absence of risk factors and a surplus of protective factors, Michael Rutter (1985: 600) suggests otherwise: "*People knuckle under because of the sum of accumulated risk factors minus the sum of accumulated positive experiences ... there is doubtless something to this idea ... [but] it appears inadequate to account for this phenomena.* Vaillant (1993: 299) supports this idea further: "*...resilience is more than just an algebraic sum of risk factors and protective factors. Resilience reflects that which characterises a twig with a fresh, green, living core: when stepped on, such a twig bends and yet springs back.*"

The writer is of the opinion that risk and protective factors are perhaps merely different ends of the same continuum, and that they should therefore be viewed as interacting agents within a unique, given context. The enigma of resilience, from the writer's perspective, overarches this continuum, like a rainbow of defiance and promise.

It is further important to note that protective factors are not culture- or class-bound: "*These protective buffers appear to transcend ethnic, social-class, and geographic boundaries.*" (Werner, 1995: 82).

There are seventeen personal factors considered to be protective, as illustrated by the following pie-graph:

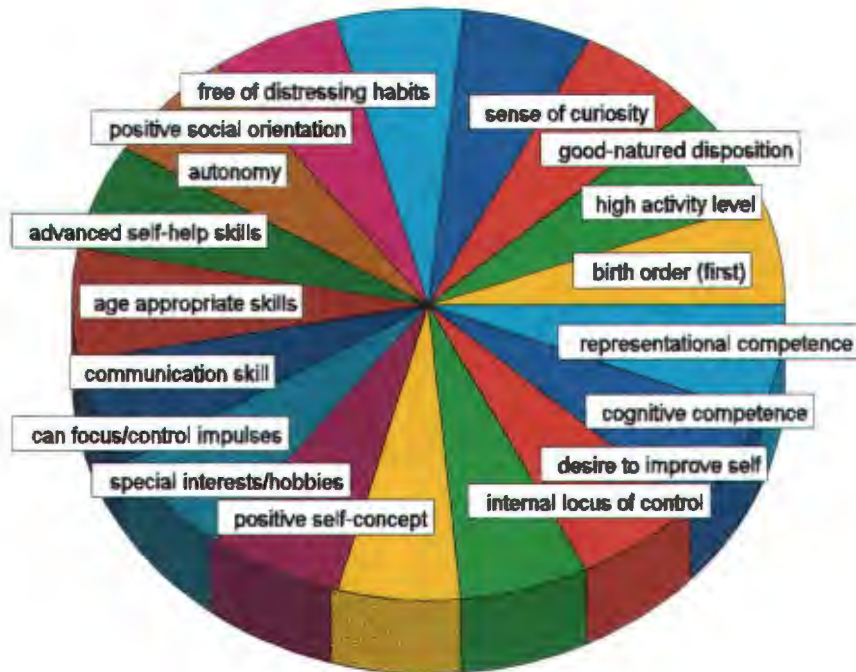


CHART 1

personal protective factors aiding resilience

The above table will form the foundation for the writer's discussion of personal protective factors. Commencing with a sense of curiosity, and then moving clockwise, the writer will briefly explain each of these individual correlates of resiliency:

- (i) *A sense of curiosity* suggests a freedom to explore and discover, which in turn impacts on the individual's ability to solve problems. In terms of resiliency, a sense of curiosity should promote a task-oriented, problem-solving disposition (Blocker and Copeland, 1994: 287).

- (ii) A **good-natured disposition** suggests an ability to relate positively to others and show low emotional reactivity:

“Positive temperament attributes have a particularly significant role in individual children’s capacities to maintain adaptive behaviours in domestic, social and learning settings, despite severe stress exposure. These attributes also appear to play an important part in primary relationships such as mother-bonding, which in turn further facilitate stress adaptation.” (Smith and Prior, 1995: 177-178).

The prime process through which temperamentally difficult children are placed at risk seems to include difficult interactions with their parents (Tschann, Kaiser, Chesney, Alkon & Boyce, 1996: 185). It seems to the writer therefore, that children who do not possess a good-natured disposition are easily scapegoated, or at the very least appear to be often in trouble. This must necessarily make it more difficult for these children to develop positive self-concepts, which in turn erodes the potential for resilience.

A good-natured disposition is further linked to being affectionate. Werner and Smith (1982: 55) report that resilient individuals were perceived as being more cuddly and affectionate in infancy and beyond. Smith and Werner maintain that a good-natured temperament serves to elicit positive responses from a range of caregivers, which must impact positively on the child and its future development. The writer also links a good-natured temperament to positive responses from peers which also impacts positively.

- (iii) A **high activity level** suggests active participation in school, church or community activities. Non-resilient youth have been reported to be passive and inactive, and this even impacts on their inclination to seek help (Blocker and Copeland, 1994: 292).

In young children, activity level pertains to the level, tempo and frequency of the

motor component of their functioning (Chess in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 184). The writer supposes that active youngsters interact more with their environment, and in so doing develop a reserve of experience which may be used in novel situations, or to solve problems, thereby boosting the potential for resilience.

- (iv) ***Birth order:*** resilient individuals are often first born, especially resilient males. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is reported to be the greater and almost exclusive social interaction first-borns have with their mothers (Werner and Smith, 1982: 58-59). A good mother-child relationship augments the potential for resilience in that it feeds a positive self-concept and a sense of trust.
- (v) ***Representational competence,*** first alluded to by Anthony and Cohler (1987), refers to a highly stressed individual's ability to make meaning out of the adversity or stressful situation, "...by retreating to mental safety to recuperate and by using fantasy to transform unpleasant reality into more tolerable situations." (Blocker and Copeland, 1994: 287).

This allows the resilient individual to attribute meaning positively to events within his or her life world. Barnard (1994: 139-140) adds that meaning can be constructed from scientific or religious worlds too. Murphy (in Anthony and Cohler, 1987: 102) reports that resilient children fend off intolerable pressures by "... shifting to more gratifying activity, temporary regression, biding [their] time, containing and letting out fantasy, and sheer determined courage..."

Luthar (1991: 613) suggests that "*The stressfulness of any life event depends a great deal on the child's appraisal of it.*" Although the ability to appraise positively is not synonymous with representational competence, the writer is of the opinion that the capacity to reason optimistically is very protective, possibly more so than using fantasy to transform stressful life events. Seen from the perspective of Relations theory, the writer would like to posit that the capacity for positive self-talk will empower the individual to cope with stressful life events:

realistic positive self-talk enables the individual to cognitively restructure his perspective, thereby attributing healthy meaning to his life world.

The writer would like to quote Herman-Stahl and Petersen (1996: 734) in support of her above hypothesis: “ *Coping efforts appear to moderate the effects of negative life events on psychological well-being ... and certain styles of coping are linked with better adaptation. Specifically, active coping efforts (i.e., attempts to act on or modify stressors through cognitive or overt behavioural means) are linked with more positive adjustment, while avoidant strategies (i.e., attempts to escape from or avoid stressors or deny their existence) are generally associated with poorer adaptation.*”

- (vi) **Cognitive competence** does not imply an above-average intellectual ability, merely that a resilient individual possesses at least an average IQ. Of relevance, is that whilst resilient children do not have to be particularly gifted, they use whatever talents they have effectively (Werner, 1995: 82). However, most studies of resilient individuals do indicate a positive correlation between the propensity to overcome difficulties and intelligence.

Furthermore, IQ functions as a protective factor in terms of the potential advantages intelligent, disadvantaged youngsters will reap, in societies which set store by academic achievement (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990: 429).

According to Luthar (1991: 611), there are studies (e.g. Masten, 1982) that suggest that higher intelligence leads to greater levels of sensitivity towards the environment, thereby increasing the individual's stress, rather than ameliorating it.

The writer would also like to draw attention to the cumulative protective factors often accompanying cognitive competence (such as elevated socioeconomic status, parents who are intent on stimulating their children, and educational advantages) and would like to suggest that this picture as a whole forms a buffer for the child

at risk.

- (vii) A *desire to improve* is indicated by resilient individuals, who grasp at life's second chances. Second chances often take the form of adult education programmes; active church participation; voluntary, military service; or a good marriage (Werner, 1995: 83).

Furthermore, "*The resilient child is oriented towards the future, is living ahead, with hope.*" (Murphy in Anthony and Cohler, 1987: 100). The writer sees this as a refusal to be sucked into the bleak vortex of the child's present and a determination to improve on this present. Therefore, the resilient individual is oriented towards achievement and a positive future, because he/she looks beyond the present, by being goal-orientated towards a better future (Barnard, 1994: 139). Wyman, Cowen, Work and Kerley (1993: 657) suggest that positive future expectations facilitate, rather than merely co-occur, with resilient behaviour, primarily because positive future orientation modifies the youngster's response to stressors. They also stress that positive future orientation may be linked to self-esteem, locus of control, socioemotional and academic functioning, thereby suggesting that "*Rather than being connected narrowly to distant goals, future expectations seem to be part of the fabric of a child's ongoing self-experience and the attitudes and feelings with which she or he engages in the world.*" (Wyman et al, 1993: 658).

Watt, David, Ladd and Shamos (1995: 233-234) report that resilient individuals from all walks of life possessed a determination to improve and transcend their adversity: "*... the resilient subjects all agreed that transcending is a process which must be chosen and nurtured. In the minds of these people, there were no other alternatives.*"

- (viii) An *internal locus of control* suggests that the resilient child assumes the source of change to be located within in him/herself, as opposed to the vulnerable child who

perceives him/herself to be at the whim of outside forces (Felsman in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 74). Thus, an internal locus of control allows the individual to avoid feelings of helplessness, thereby fostering "... *the capacity to expect well and ultimately to develop an internal image of oneself as a survivor...*" (Felsman in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 75). Furthermore, Luthar (1991: 611) is also of the opinion that an internal locus of control means that learned helplessness is avoided.

It is vital to understand that an internal locus of control does not imply that the individual necessarily believes in his or her ability to control external forces, rather "... *it means I can control myself and accept responsibility for my own decisions and their consequences.*" (Joseph, 1994: 31). Herein lies the amelioration of the stress, because in taking charge of the situation, the stressor is managed. The writer suggests that resilient youngsters make the choice to accept that although they are helpless to control their circumstances, they can at least control their attitude to these circumstances, and in so doing they reframe the situation for themselves, thereby encouraging resilient behaviour.

- (ix) "*We are all more resilient when we have a firm sense of who we are and that we are loveable. Success breeds success, whereas the expectation of the repetition of past failures can make us depressed and 'brittle'.*" (Vaillant, 1993: 302).

In the light of the above quote then, a *positive self-concept* promotes resilience in that it motivates attempts to adapt, in contrast to the passivity which often accompanies despair and a defeatist attitude: "*Resilient children may enter a situation more prepared for effective action by virtue of their self-confidence; subsequently, successful mastery of a difficult situation would be expected to increase self-efficacy and reinforce efforts to take action.*" (Masten et al, 1990: 431). Thus, a positive sense of self appears to imbue the individual with a feeling of personal power.

Based on Jacob's Relations Theory, the writer is of the opinion that when the odds are perpetually stacked against an individual, that individual's experience, attribution of meaning and involvement will not lead to self-talk which blames the individual and corrodes the self-concept, leaving it vulnerable. Instead, the resilient individual will realistically assign meaning, and in so doing will not allow the pendulum of the self-concept to become permanently, and unrealistically, fixed in a negative position.

- (x) *Special interests or hobbies* aid resilience in that individuals who have an area of competence, be it valued by themselves or society, feel efficacious. The interest could be academic, athletic (sport-related), artistic or mechanical (Masten et al, 1990: 438). Regardless of the source, hobbies and interests provide consistent satisfaction and enjoyment for resilient individuals, thereby shoring up resources for dealing with stress (Joseph, 1994: 33-34).

Furthermore, special interests "...aid in the establishment and pursuit of goals, and goals give people reasons for persevering." (Joseph, 1994: 33).

- (xi) An *ability to focus and control impulses* is part and parcel of resilience: "Self-control is a prerequisite for a number of the traits needed for resilience. Indeed, it's the basic foundation for our feelings of internal control..." (Joseph, 1994: 109). Self-discipline motivates the individual to continue despite the odds, and creates a 'let-me-meet-the-challenge' mentality.

Hauser, Vieyra, Jacobson and Wertlieb (in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 114) are also of the opinion that resilient children's ability to regulate impulsive drives, allows them to delay gratification, which is seen by them as one of the hallmarks of resilience. The writer suggests that delayed gratification is socially acceptable, which in turn fosters positive social relations, providing sources of support for the individual.

An ability to remain focused is important in terms of task completion and sticking with whatever is difficult, or not giving up in the face of adversity. Being able to focus, and persevering, is a prerequisite for mastering a challenge (Joseph, 1994: 110-111).

- (xii) Effective *communication skills* are reported by Werner and Smith (1982: 72-76) to favourably impress caregivers and school teachers, thereby possibly easing the individual's journey through life. Ineffective communication skills would also lead to emotional frustration, thereby sabotaging resilience (Moriarty in Anthony and Cohler, 1987: 117).
- (xiii) *Age-appropriate skills* refers to a child having mastered age-appropriate sensorimotor and perceptual skills. Coping with his or her life world and resultant resilience "...entails the integration and application of developmental skills into daily living." (Zeitlin and Williamson, 1994: 27). Werner and Smith (1982: 69-72) specifically refer to resilient children's superior scores on the Bender-Gestalt test. The writer posits that age-appropriate skills also endear the child to his or her caregivers and that the resultant positive relationship bolsters the potential for resilience.
- (xiv) Advanced *self-help skills* feature prominently in Werner and Smith's longitudinal study: resilient children are reported to behave autonomously, yet are also capable of asking for help when needed (Werner, 1995: 82). Joseph (1994: 35-37) supports the theory that resilient youngsters are capable of self-help, describing them as taking charge of themselves and actively seeking solutions. They demonstrate initiative.

Barnard (1994: 140) reports that resilient children can "... *selectively disengage from the home and engage with those outside, and then re-engage...*" thereby protecting the self during adverse circumstances, and so demonstrating creative self-help skills.

Resilient adults are seen to engage in self-help activities by acknowledging their adversity: "*They make the horrific comprehensible ... by recognising, reading, analysing, and speaking out about human pain.*" (Higgins, 1994: 308). In so doing, they choose not to bow indefinitely to life's pressures.

- (xv) **Autonomy** impacts on resilience in that the perception of the self as "...*stable, separate, independent, and private.*" (Young-Eisendrath, 1996: 116) is empowering and promotes a sense of control.

Wolin and Wolin (1993: 88) see autonomy as "... *the right to safe boundaries...*". Resilient individuals succeed in separating themselves from sources of trouble and adversity. Wolin and Wolin equate autonomy, in terms of resilience, with "*emotional disengagement*" (1993: 98-100).

The writer suggests that many non-resilient or vulnerable children are enmeshed in the chaos of the context in which they find themselves, and in this way they forfeit a sense of identity. From the perspective of Relations Theory, the writer believes that resilience is fed by a determination to attribute meaning to the self as an individual, thereby disallowing experience to impinge on the sense of self as an autonomous individual, and ensuring that meaningful involvement will continue.

- (xvi) **Positive social orientation** is a skill which the resilient individual appears to wield deftly. Resilient individuals are described as "... *friendly and well-liked by peers and adults, interpersonally sensitive, socially responsive and more 'cooperative', 'participatory', and 'emotionally stable'.*" (Hauser et al in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 114).

The capacity for developing intimate relationships is evident from infancy (Werner and Smith, 1982: 51-59) right through the various developmental stages (Masten et al, 1990: 432). The resilient individual is socially responsive, cooperating with

others and actively participating, rather than being passively withdrawn. In fact, Blocker and Copeland (1994: 291) cite social responsivity as the greatest differentiating factor between resilient and non-resilient youth.

- (xvii) Werner and Smith (1982: 130-135) suggest that resilient individuals are *free from distressing habits*, especially during infancy and childhood, which allows positive social relationships to form. Babies who evidence distressing habits (such as crying inconsolably) are not as readily accepted by their mothers or caregivers and this impacts on later resilience.

In older individuals, aggressive habits are thought to undermine resilience (Masten et al, 1990: 429-430). This makes sense to the writer as distressing habits impede social orientation, which in turn saps the likelihood of resilience.

Although protective factors are generally viewed as a triad, the writer will not discuss familial and extra familial factors within the confines of this subsection, as she intends to discuss these factors under the subsections dealing with the impact of family, and community, on resilience

In the following subsection, the writer will deal with both protective and risk factors associated with the impact of the family on resilience.

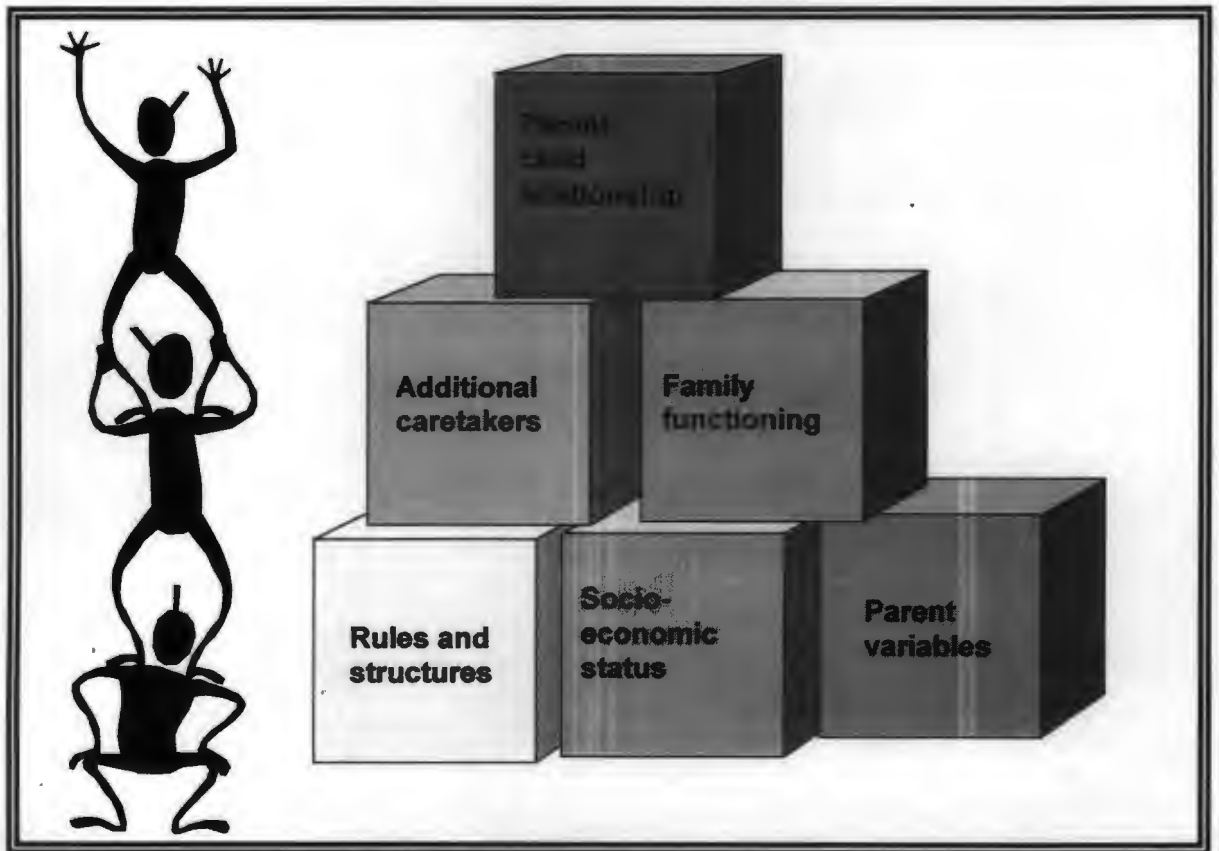
2.1.3 The Impact of Family on Resilience

"The family ... a means by which people pull together, learn from one another, gain mutual strength, and sometimes collectively fail, but still nevertheless persist."

(Robert Coles in Collins, 1988: 437)

Using Diagram 3, which follows, as a framework, the writer will discuss each of the familial aspects impacting on resilience independently. Although in terms of resilience, the

prefacing quote by Robert Coles sets a command standard for positive family impact on resilience, reality and research show that family factors are also unfortunately consistently associated with risk.



FAMILY VARIABLES IMPACTING ON RESILIENCE

DIAGRAM 3

2.1.3.1 The *parent-child relationship* is crucial to the development of resilience. Parents of resilient children may be characterised as competent and loving in their relationship to their children (Hauser et al in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 117).

Werner and Smith (1982: 63-65) suggest that a good relationship with parents, who are essentially supportive and understanding, distinguishes resilient youngsters from their non-resilient counterparts. Werner and Smith also emphasise that parents of resilient children respect their children's autonomy. Furthermore, Werner and Smith report that especially resilient girls had mothers who interacted positively with them. High risk girls, who manifested problems later in life, reported significantly more negative interactions with their mothers.

Smith and Prior suggest that a warm and positive relationship with a primary caregiver is pivotal in providing resilience: "*It is notable that it was predictive of adjustment at school as well as at home, emphasizing its significance as a cross-situational protective factor.*" (1995: 177). Along with easy temperament, Smith and Prior rate mother-child warmth as a core protective factor which is not situation specific.

Even a good relationship with only one parent, who refrains from being overly critical and exudes warmth, is thought to operate as a protective factor (Hauser et al in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 117). Fergusson and Lynskey (1996: 282), reporting on research done to date, cite this finding: "*Specifically ... the presence of warm, nurturant, or supportive relationships with at least one parent may act to protect against or mitigate the effects of familial adversity.*"

Hauser et al (in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 117-119) report on the research done by Kauffman et al in 1979, Cole et al in 1980, Yu in 1979 and Wynne et al in 1982. These researchers focused on the communication between parent and child and

suggest that resilient youngsters enjoy healthy communication with their parents. Healthy communication is also reported to impact positively on the child's development, in that cognitive capacities, such as the ability to concentrate, focus, and carry out instructions, are developed. This in turn is reported to impact positively on the youngster's social-emotional competence.

When the parent-child relationship is wholesome, the child is made to feel worthwhile because of the attachment to the parent figure. This sense of being loved and valued provides a secure base from which the child may venture and learn to master his world, thereby instilling a sense of autonomy (Masten et al, 1990: 432).

Even in families characterised as multiple-risk families, resilient children were categorised as the family favourite, suggesting therefore that despite the dysfunctional nature of these families, the resilient children had enjoyed some positive attention. Non-resilient children in these families generally enjoyed a nonfavourite status and perceived parental ill-feeling (Radke-Yarrow and Brown, 1993: 586-587).

The writer wonders whether the child's physical attributes contribute toward a more positive relationship with the caregiver. The writer has noticed that adults pay very ego-gratifying attention to cute or attractive youngsters, thereby possibly inviting positive self-evaluation by the youngster, which in turn might impact positively on the formation of the self-concept, and so on resilience.

Gore and Eckenrode (in Haggerty et al, 1994: 53) report that parental inattention puts youngsters at risk, especially for substance abuse. Furthermore, a dysfunctional parent-child relationship is identified as a primary source of stress (Watt, David, Ladd & Shamos, 1995: 233). The Basic Behavioural Science Task Force of the National Advisory Mental Health Council (1996: 26) strongly suggests that insecure attachment, resulting from dysfunctional parent-child relationships,

may be directly linked to later psychopathology, especially borderline personality disorder. This task force also posits that poor parent-child relationships contribute to hostility, poor peer relations, lack of social competence, lowered self-esteem and depression.

The *number of children* in a family is thought to have a direct impact on the parent-child relationship too, and therefore, resilience. Rak and Patterson (1996: 369) report that when there are four or fewer children in a family, spaced more than two years apart, buffering effects are experienced. Werner and Smith (1982: 134-135) endorse this. Barnard (1994: 139) is also of the opinion that having no sibling born within in twenty to twenty-four months is conducive to greater attention from the primary caregivers, which in turn breeds resilient characteristics. The writer is of the opinion that when there are multiple children in a family it becomes increasingly difficult for the mother (or caregiver) to discipline and supervise adequately, which must impact negatively on the children. The writer also questions whether the presence of many children may be very taxing on the mother (or primary caregiver), thereby depleting her resources and making her vulnerable to fatigue and depression. This would then, necessarily, detract from her ability to build a positive parent-child relationship, which would in turn negatively affect the potential for resilience.

2.1.3.2 "*When other adults are present in the household as child rearing agents, children the world over tend to receive a fair amount of warmth.*" (Werner and Smith, 1982: 76). *Additional caretakers* are therefore seen as aiding resilience by Werner and Smith (1982: 76-77; 160-161), as accepted children are reported to develop into more self-reliant, resilient individuals than their rejected counterparts. There is also a positive impact on their later social responsiveness.

Rak and Patterson also report that "... *an array of alternative caretakers - grandparents, siblings, neighbours - who stepped in when parents were not consistently present...*" (1996: 369) had an ameliorative effect..

Werner and Smith (1982: 77) report on the research conducted by Rohner in 1975, which established that maternal rejection of an infant was higher when the mother was alone all day without someone else in the household to share the burden of child care. Maternal rejection would necessarily impact negatively on resilience.

Werner and Smith (1982: 78) also report that when older siblings fulfil the function of alternate caregiver, the impact on the development of resilience is positive for both the child providing the care and the child receiving the care. They suggest that sibling caretaking gives rise to a greater sense of responsibility and competence for the care-giver, and possibly fosters adaptive psychological and behavioural characteristics in the recipient. Conversely, when the death of a sibling occurred in a system where siblings acted as care-givers, it acted as a risk factor for the development of coping problems.

In terms of the above findings, the writer questions whether the advent of nuclear families, and single-parent families, as opposed to extended families, may be part of the reason for non-resilient behaviour.

2.1.3.3 **Family functioning** is also implicated in the development of resilience, or lack thereof.

Minimal conflict in the home, especially during infancy, is thought to encourage the formation of resilience. It is easier for the child to learn to trust and venture in the absence of conflict. In homes where there is generally harmony, conflict resolution skills are modelled (Barnard, 1994: 141). Furthermore, Hammen (1991: 211) suggests that relatively high levels of family cohesion operate favourably in terms of resilience.

When family functioning is characterised by an absence of parent-child role reversals, the child develops and progresses appropriately, acquiring resources that

promote resilience (Barnard, 1994: 141).

However, when family functioning is dysfunctional, the potential for resilience is sabotaged:

"To varying degrees, dysfunctional families injure all their members. The cognitive, emotional, relational, and spiritual injuries leave no visible scars. In extremely troubled families members may also experience physical and sexual wounds. Because children believe they cause whatever treatment they receive, they sustain the deepest injuries." (Wilson, 1995: 21).

The effects of family dysfunction on resilience are manifested in various ways:

- ⊗ Family discord is thought to be associated with vulnerability in youngsters, especially boys, who appear to be more at risk for antisocial disorders when family discord is present (Werner and Smith, 1982: 81).
- ⊗ Family discord is especially distressing to children when it includes overt parental anger, overt hostility, extreme displays of anger and no, or inadequate, conflict resolution. This distress is thought to lead to both internalising and externalising emotional and behavioural problems, thereby impacting negatively on the potential for resilience (Tschann et al, 1996: 185).
- ⊗ Faulty or confusing communication and familial use of guilt is thought to undermine resilience (Fisher, Kokes, Cole, Perkins and Wynne, in Anthony and Cohler, 1987: 218). A dysfunctional family also often possesses a faulty belief system, which does not acknowledge reality-based truths. This results in youngsters who are confused and misguided, which in turn undermines self-esteem, and in so doing, resilience (Wilson, 1995: 22).

- ⊗ When family functioning is characterised by a high level of criticism, or alternatively, by high levels of emotional over-involvement, both of which are conducive to stress, the prognosis for schizophrenia is thought to be good. It is furthermore hypothesized that especially maternal emotional over-involvement may be viewed as a precursor to poor social interaction (Goldstein in Rolf et al, 1992: 413- 420).

When the family's functioning is persistently characterised by stress, the impact on resilience is deleterious, especially for adolescents, who are reported to show heightened stress levels and a recurrent depressed mood (Gore and Eckenrode in Haggerty et al, 1994: 29-30). There is, however, also evidence to the contrary, suggesting that some types of family stress are beneficial in that they prompt the adolescent to become responsible and independent. Alternatively, family stress motivates the individual to shift away from the family, and create his own niche, generally by turning to peers for support. This is thought to operate as a protective factor (Gore and Eckenrode in Haggerty et al, 1994: 29-31).

What the writer feels is cardinal in terms of family functioning, however, are the findings of Carson, Swanson, Cooney, Gillum, and Cunningham (1992: 294), who suggest that the stressful event, or adversity, is of lesser importance compared to the family's functioning, despite whatever difficulty it faces: "*... how children and their families approach these events, and the presence of certain family characteristics (e.g. support, flexibility and confidence), may be more important to development and adjustment than the events themselves.*"

Thus, in terms of the potential for resilience, the family's ability to function as a cohesive, healthy whole, seems to possess the power to mediate risk.

2.1.3.4 *Rules and structures* play an important role in the development of resilience.

Joseph (1994: 112-117) emphasises that rules and structures are vital to the

individual's development of self-discipline and self-control. However, she simultaneously cautions parents that in order for rules and structures to encourage resilience, they need to be clear, reasonable, simple, appropriate and democratic.

Resilient boys, especially, appear to come from families which are characterised by structures and rules, and in which there is a male identification figure, be it the father, a grandfather or an older brother (Werner, 1995: 83). Structures and rules provide stability and security, thereby buffering stress.

Rak and Patterson (1996: 369) add that when rules and structures are present during adolescence, despite poverty and stress, there is a buffering effect on children.

In healthy families there is a clear hierarchical structure with the parents in charge, sharing a stable coalition (Berlin and Davis in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 89). When nonnormative family structures are present, as a result of unsuccessful conflict resolution for example, vulnerability to stressors is indicated. Examples of nonnormative structures could be a weakened parent alliance or cross-generational alliances, such as between grandparents and grandchildren (Emery and Forehand in Haggerty et al, 1994: 86).

Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole (in Rolf et al, 1992: 277-279) stress that when rules and restrictions form a response to a high-risk environment, resilience is encouraged. They suggest that strictness is only successful in encouraging resilience when there are obvious risks, and the rules are chosen to mediate risk. In these instances the parents do not seem arbitrarily autocratic or harsh. To the writer it is almost as if the rules draw the lines between the family and their context, and in so doing serve to cement the family as a unit against the 'enemy'. This sense of oneness may also serve to fuel resilient behaviour, in conjunction with the rules regulating behaviour.

When structures are understood to mean family rituals, such as holiday celebrations, fixed supper times and other regular, organised events, resilience is also encouraged (Barnard, 1994: 140). The writer is of the opinion that when the extra familial context becomes chaotic and uncontrollable, the maintenance of family rituals creates stability, thereby creating moments of order, and in so doing lessening the potential risk environmental factors may hold.

Furthermore, the writer is inclined to question the advent of laissez-faire families, in which there are either no rules or structures, or in which youngsters are simply allowed to flout them. This not only detracts from the likelihood of resilience, but must cause the parents stress too. The writer is of the opinion that parent-guidance courses, or support groups, may well have an invaluable input in training parents to cope with their children in such a way that resilience as an end-product, and ongoing process, is encouraged.

2.1.3.5 The *socioeconomic status* of the family has an impact on resilience. Egeland, Carlson and Sroufe (1993: 519) found that poverty and its associated factors "... had a pervasively negative effect on child adaptation." in terms of poor caretaker-child relationships, and poor emotional, social, behavioural and academic functioning. Furthermore, Egeland et al (1993: 520) found the adverse effects of poverty to be cumulative and proportionally worse as the child increases in age.

Generally it is thought that middle and upper class children would have an escape route, whereas children from the lower class are more often considered trapped. Children from blue collar families tend to express a lack of self-confidence more often than children of white collar families. However, children from professional families are not exempt from risk either, more often manifesting depression, suicide and poor relationships with the opposite sex (Berlin and Davis in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 98-99).

Nevertheless, economic hardship is particularly deleterious to the manifestation of

resilience: "... we have seen in our families how economic hardships, diverting of the child's attention to matters of survival, and lack of opportunities for mastery or success experiences are major obstacles..." (Berlin and Davis in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 99). The child is enmeshed in the family's ongoing struggle to make ends meet, and so his own identity and own life-course are neglected, stunting the development of resilience.

At the age of thirty months, children from lower social status families are reported to differ significantly from children who are not from economically disadvantaged backgrounds: the lower social status children were reported to be less cooperative, more timid, more apprehensive, more depressed and more prone to engage in bizarre behaviours (Sameroff and Seifer in Rolf et al, 1992: 59).

Social status is also thought to have a major impact on cognitive competence, and thereby on resilience. Optimal growth experiences are not always provided when socioeconomic status is low. Furthermore, research on parents belonging to a lower socioeconomic status indicates that parental perspectives reflect rigidity and a limited conception of reality, rendering it almost impossible for these parents to moderate the effects of stressful life-experiences for their children (Seifer and Sameroff in Anthony and Cohler, 1997: 54-57).

The writer is of the opinion that a poorer socioeconomic status may well be seen as a limiting context serving to shackle resilience, rather than give it wings, especially if one views poverty as a backdrop for multiple daily stressors, rather than just an individual stressor in itself. The challenge, therefore, is to equip our youngsters with skills to thrive, despite their socioeconomic context.

2.1.3.6 *Parent variables* impact on resilience.

Perhaps the most obvious impact parents can have on the development of resilience within their child, is by example: "*It is widely reported that the response and*

functioning of parents during and after a stressor can have a profound effect on child behaviour." (Masten et al, 1990: 434). Parents provide both a social reference and a model for their offspring, and so the writer would concur that children are likely to assimilate observed parental coping behaviour, which in turn impacts on the child's propensity for resilience. Modelling of resilient parental behaviour could lead to resilient behaviour in turn.

Parental depression can impact negatively on the eventual resilience of the child, as can parental anxiety. Very often, mothers or fathers suffering from depression, also suffer from anxiety disorder. Generally, this leads to parental unavailability, dysfunctional parent-child interaction, and even marital conflict, which hampers family functioning, thereby equalling a risk factor rather than a protective one. Children may then present with depressive symptoms or externalising problems (Compas and Hammen in Haggerty et al, 1994: 251).

Interparental conflict is linked to psychological difficulty in children. It is thought that parental conflict, especially in terms of the phenomenon of divorce, is the genesis of post-divorce adjustment difficulty, rather than the divorce itself. Single, divorced mothers are also thought to provide inferior parenting compared to married mothers, in the sense that they tend to be less affectionate and consistent (Emery and Forehand in Haggerty et al, 1994: 86).

Parental alcoholism also holds risk. The result of alcoholism is a chronically disordered environment, putting children at risk for a variety of problems. The impact is especially severe in single parent (usually mother only) families, where the parent is an alcoholic, as the burden of survival falls on the children (usually the eldest.) When children are capable of adaptive distancing, their resilience is ensured (Berlin and Davis in Dugan and Coles, 1987: 88-96).

The mother's role, almost more than the father's role, is often implicated in the later development of risk factors. Garmezy (1976: 9) refers to this in his address

on vulnerable and invulnerable children: *"Mothers who are anxious and view their pregnancy and the child who is to follow with distress, who are very poor, and who have a limited education provide risk factors for the yet unborn infant."*

Werner and Smith (1982: 78-80) report that the mother's employment is constructive in terms of the development of resilience, fostering especially competence and independence in resilient daughters. Working mothers offer a good model of independence and social adjustment. However, when the family context is an unstable one, and the mother's working means that sons are left unsupervised, there is apparently risk of delinquency.

When the mother is an adolescent, it is generally agreed that the child is at risk for behavioural adjustment (Nettles and Pleck in Haggerty et al, 1994: 158-160). The writer imagines this may be because an adolescent mother has not yet had the opportunity to obtain vast life experience and is therefore not in a position to mediate life's obstacles for her child. Alternatively, the young mother may feel robbed of her chance at life and so be resentful towards her child, thereby stymying their relationship, which has negative spin-off effects for the development of resilience.

Paternal absence is thought to impact more negatively on sons than on daughters. Paternal absence means a limited opportunity for identification with a male figure and so sabotages the development of resilience (Werner and Smith 1982: 80-81). Furthermore, the writer is mindful that paternal absence might imply restricted opportunity for sons to model resilient male behaviour. However, Garmezy (1983: 74-76) disagrees concerning the potentially negative impact on resilience of paternal absence, given a lack of consistent evidence concerning father-absence among competent black children. Garmezy is of the opinion that *"Mother's style of coping with and compensating for an absent father appeared to be a powerful redemptive variable."* (1983: 75). Thus, maternal variables appear to be powerful in the shaping of risk and resilience.

In conclusion, it would therefore seem that family variables have a powerful influence on the shaping of resilience. The writer is of the opinion, however, that it is not as simple as compartmentalising family variables. She is of the opinion that the variables mentioned in this section interact to form a powerful matrix in which resilience is moulded. This matrix must necessarily also be influenced by, and influence, the individual and extra familial factors.

In the next subsection, the writer will focus on extra familial, or non-family variables, impacting on resilience.

2.1.4 Extra Familial Factors Impacting on Resilience

Extra familial factors, as the writer understands the concept, may be seen to be social or environmental factors, other than family factors, impacting on resilience. The impact may be protective or risk-inducing: "*Environmental factors ... have been shown to be equally important in determining both vulnerability to stressors and subsequent resilience.*" (Watt et al, 1995: 212).

Egeland et al are quite outspoken about the role of environmental factors: "*Rather than being a childhood given or a function of particular traits, the capacity for resilience develops over time in the context of environmental support.*" (1993: 518). The writer therefore assumes, that were there to be a lack of environmental support, resilience would be hampered.

The writer will now discuss those extra familial factors operating as protective factors, as environmental factors incurring risk will be discussed in section 2.5.

PEERS ... CHURCH ... SCHOOL ... NEIGHBOURS ... COACHES ...COUNSELLORS



DIAGRAM 4

PROTECTIVE EXTRA FAMILIAL FACTORS

Masten et al (1990: 438-439) rates schools and churches as compensatory, protective systems comparable to the protective system of a family, in that they "... *provide competent role models and nurturing adults who support and reinforce the development of skills and improve problem-solving, motivation, and later socioeconomic opportunities.*" (p. 438) Furthermore, they emphasise the role of the church and school in fostering socially

acceptable values, which is protective. Education in itself is also rated as protective because of its function of providing knowledge and problem-solving skills. In this sense, the writer hypothesises that the outcomes-based education, currently under the spotlight in South Africa, may well be more protective, in that it aims to provide learners with practical skills, one of which is practical problem-solving.

Religion is specifically seen to operate as a protective factor: membership of a church community, and faith in a higher being, are thought to strengthen individuals against risk (Masten et al, 1990: 430). The concept of religion as a protective factor makes sense to the writer, especially when comforting scriptures such as Isaiah 41:13, Psalm 50:15, and Matthew 11:28 are considered. McGinnis (1990: 48-51) echoes the idea of religion as a source of empowerment, attributing burnout to "... *a state caused, . . . not by external pressure but by internal deterioration . . . 'a leakage of spiritual power.'*" (pp 48-49).

Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole (in Rolf et al, 1992: 278) view the role of religion slightly differently, suggesting that church membership provides a social support group which reinforces parental practices and provides a peer group consistent with parental beliefs, thereby eliminating disharmony and encouraging success. This also makes sense to the writer, especially as the parent-child relationship impacts on resilience; and given that peer relationships do hold potential for creating friction in the parent-child relationship.

In their study on the life course of resilience, Watt et al (1995: 242) emphasise the role of outsiders in the support of resilient behaviour: "*The majority of our resilient subjects sought and found emotional 'anchorage' and guidance in parental surrogates outside the home.*" Rak and Patterson (1996: 369) also suggest that resilient children generally have role models or mentors, who are not family members, throughout the various stages of development. These role models include teachers, coaches, clergy, good neighbours, school counsellors, after-school programme supervisors, community centre workers and mental health workers. Werner (1995: 83) supports the above opinion, stating that "... *resilient youngsters tend to rely on peers and elders in the community as sources of emotional support and seek them out for counsel and comfort in times of crisis.*" Werner is especially

emphatic regarding the role of the teacher as a source of support to children at risk, stating that all of the resilient high-risk children in the Kauai study, conducted by herself and Smith, could refer to at least one teacher who had bolstered them throughout. However, the writer is of the opinion that it is not only outside support which bolstered resilient youngsters, but that resilient youngsters had to avail themselves of such support in the first place, thereby implicating the idea of responsible choice and reciprocity. Thus, resilience for the writer includes a social maturity which encourages reciprocal social behaviour.

Like Werner, Fergusson and Lynskey (1996: 287) suggest that peer affiliations play a role in the shaping of resilience, and posit that resilient teenagers in their study were distinguished by having fewer alliances with delinquent peers.

In her study of resilient single mothers, Anne Brodsky (1996: 347-363) suggests that although there are multiple literary references to the heightened risk incurred when there is a lack of psychological sense of community, her study proves that in risky neighbourhoods, resilience is encouraged when identification and affiliation with the community is discouraged. Community cohesion in risky neighbourhoods is shunned in order to avoid compromising personal values and independence. A refusal to allow undesirable extra familial factors to impact boosts upward mobility and resilience.

It would, however, be inappropriate to conclude this section on extra familial factors without alluding to Vaillant's perspective, which suggests that resilience is not merely a by-product of extra familial factors. Rather, the factors promoting resilience are "... *bound together in a chicken-egg-chicken causal sequence rather than in a simple cart-and-horse casual sequence.*" (1993: 311). Thus, Vaillant views resilience as a complex product of individual and social factors, which interact and mediate one another in intricate ways. To quote Vaillant's profundity once more: "*Social experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you.*" (1993: 311).

The writer concurs with Vaillant's view completely. To view extra familial factors, and even familial factors, as purely causal, would be to irrevocably label the individual as a

victim. To view individual, familial and extra familial factors as interactive and reciprocal, is to allow the individual freedom to choose resilience. "*The human being will be victimised by circumstances and other people until he is able to realise, 'I am the one living, experiencing. I choose my own being.'*" (Corsini, 1984: 354).

In the following section the writer intends to discuss those factors which researchers have delineated as factors which have the potential to put youngsters at risk for eventual non-resilient behaviour.

2.1.5 Risk Factors

In chapter one, the writer refers to Higgins' definition of resilience as the consistent ability to "*snap back*" (1994: 1). Exactly what the resilient individual may be expected to '*snap back*' from, may well be seen as risk factors.

Risk factors may be understood to mean stressors which are likely to increase an individual's chances of being vulnerable to delayed development and/or maladjustment (Carson et al, 1992: 274-275). Risk factors are obstacles which prevent individuals from being invincible, or to quote Garnezy's words in the foreword to Werner and Smith's book (1982: xix), they are variables which undermine children remaining "... *keepers of the dream.*"

Keogh and Weisner (1993: 4) suggest that "*In a broad sense, risk may be defined as negative or potentially negative conditions that impede or threaten normal development.*" Furthermore, Keogh and Weisner report that risk factors may result from environmental factors, individual characteristics and/or conditions associated with problem development (for example, peri- or neonatal stress). Carson et al (1992: 275) suggest that the genesis of risk factors is either personalistic, familial or environmental. Ebata, Petersen and Conger (in Rolf et al, 1992: 322-324) view risk factors as being elicited by individual factors (including biological, gender and psychological factors) and social context factors (including familial and extra familial factors.) They also refer to Garnezy's research

(1985) which primarily attributes risk factors to the social context.

Keogh and Weisner (1993: 5-6) are of the opinion that risk factors (and protective factors) should be seen within their given context: "*Because so many risk or protective factors vary as a function of the context in which a given child or family lives, understanding the dynamics of risk and protection requires an ecocultural framework.*" (1993: 5). Egeland et al (1993: 517-518) suggest that developmental outcomes are not solely the result of genetic, biological, psychological and sociological factors, but rather developmental outcomes are a result of these factors operating within the confines of a context of environmental support.

Baldwin, Baldwin, Kasser, Zax, Sameroff, and Seifer (1993: 741-760) endorse the notion that the focus of research should be contextual: "*The study of psychopathology has evolved from an exclusive focus on characteristics of the individual to more interest in the contexts in which the individual is embedded.*" (p. 741). Within the framework of context, Baldwin et al classify risk factors hierarchically as either proximal, meaning variables which interact directly with the child; or distal variables, meaning variables which interact only indirectly with the child via a proximal variable. Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole (in Rolf et al, 1992: 258) explain this phenomenon as follows: "*We picture a causal chain beginning with the distal variable, proceeding through its consequences (the mediating variables), and finally impinging on the child through one or more proximal variables.*" Examples of proximal variables include parenting practices, maternal warmth, or inadequate nutrition, amongst others; and examples of distal variables include family education, poverty, or neighbourhood desirability, amongst others. So, for example, when poverty is the distal factor operating within the child's context, it will only impinge on the child if, for example, the mother has to work all day and returns home so irritable because of her tiredness that she has no time to spare for her child. In this case, her irritability is the proximal variable which hampers the parent-child relationship and so also resilience, as the parent-child relationship impacts on resilience. It is equally possible that although there is high distal risk, proximal variables will prevent the potential of such risk from translating into reality. Thus, when a child is at risk, because of a distal factor such as poverty, but is buffered from

this risk by excellent parenting skills, the context (in this instance the family), is resilient, and not necessarily the child. For this reason, the context must be acknowledged too when one analyses potential risk.

The writer concurs with the point of view that context plays a pivotal role in determining the potential for resilience. However, she is not convinced that it is sufficient to explain the complex concept of resilience, as there are everyday instances of whole families being exposed to the same contextual stressors without demonstrating uniform resilience or vulnerability. This suggests to the writer that in addition to the proximal and distal variables operating within a given context, individual characteristics may well play the stronger role.

Furthermore, risk factors are generally thought to be cumulative: "*... risk factors often co-occur, and when they do, they appear to carry additive and possibly exponential risks.*" (Masten et al, 1990: 426). Carson et al (1992: 275) concur, suggesting that eventual vulnerability is seldom the result of a direct risk factor, but rather "*... many risk factors that are cumulative and interactive, with the greater number of risk factors increasing the vulnerability of young children.*" Rutter (1983: 308) is equally vociferous about the effect of concurrent risks, suggesting that a combination of chronic stresses adds up to more risk than the mere sum of the individual risks. The writer is also of the opinion that risk must be viewed cumulatively. Even our idiomatic language refers to the cumulative process of risk with proverbs such as 'the straw that broke the camel's back' or 'the last straw'.

In the following table, the writer summarises the various risks referred to in current literature (Werner and Smith, 1982: 134-135; Garmezy and Rutter, 1983: 308; Seifer and Sameroff in Anthony and Cohler, 1987: 53-67; Carson et al, 1992: 275-277; Ebata, Petersen and Conger in Rolf et al, 1992: 322-325; Gore and Eckenrode in Haggerty et al, 1994: 19-56; Martin, 1995: 26-31). Thereafter, the writer will discuss each individual risk factor. Those which have already been discussed in previous sections, will not be discussed in detail. In discussing risk factors, the writer is mindful of Garmezy's (1983: 49) words:

"Children are not strangers to stress. Over a significant span of human history they have been more often the victims of the slings and arrows of an uncaring society than recipients of its beneficent protection."

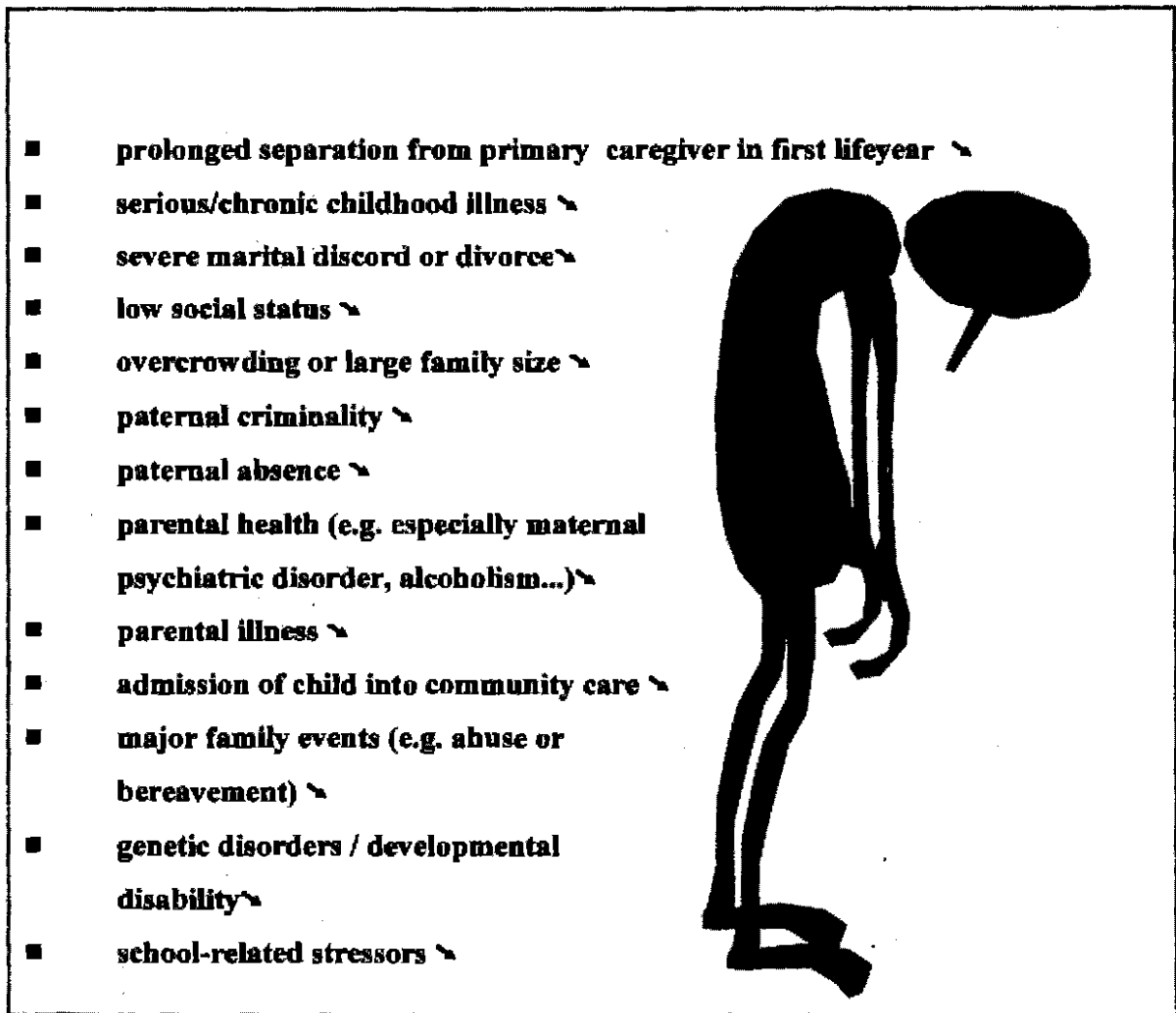


DIAGRAM 5

risk factors

- (i) *Prolonged separation from the primary caregiver in the first year of life* is thought to act as a risk factor (Werner and Smith, 1982: 134). Rutter is of the opinion that separation is at its most crucial between six and forty-eight months (Garmezy and Rutter, 1983: 58). Given that a warm, supportive relationship between child and primary caregiver is instrumental in producing a positive self-esteem and the capability to venture and trust, being denied this in the first and formative year of life, must necessarily act as a risk factor. Furthermore, prolonged separation, for whatever reason, "... seems to point to the disruption of the bonding or attachment process between mother and child which is a necessary precursor to subsequent healthy adaptation." (Garmezy and Rutter, 1983: 54).

What is of significance, however, are the reports of Rutter and Madge (1976: 206-207) and Garmezy and Rutter (1983: 52-59) pertaining to the potential risk of separation. Garmezy and Rutter are of the opinion that separation must be seen within its unique context for the true nature of risk to be assessed. When separation is preceded by a discordant or hostile family life, the risk for maladjustment is greater. Equally, when the source of separation is hospitalisation, one such incident may not hold dire risk, but multiple hospitalisations may. When maternal illness is the cause of separation, care giving by alternate family members, rather than an institution, also decreases the risk for a distress reaction.

- (ii) *Severe or chronic childhood illness* is often linked to maladjustment (Werner and Smith, 1982: 134; Pless and Stein in Haggerty et al, 1994: 317 - 353). According to Kapp (1991: 157) a chronic illness is "... one which follows a lingering course, which is continually present or occurs repeatedly." Although this is almost enough in itself to create risk, accompanied as it often is by discomfort, pain and uncertainty, research once again emphasises that the illness must be viewed within its given context. Family function and poverty, in conjunction with chronic illness, appear to make youngsters especially vulnerable to adverse emotional outcomes (Pless and Stein in Haggerty et al, 1994: 321 - 322).

- (iii) *Severe marital discord and divorce*, and their effect on family functioning, were briefly discussed by the writer in 2.1.3.3. Severe marital discord impacts negatively on the children, in that their self-esteem is hampered. Children from homes in which the parents share stormy relationships report more sceptical images of themselves and their bodies (Watt, Moorehead-Slaughter, Japzon, and Keller in Rolf et al, 1992: 294). The writer would like to repeat that it is now recognised that it is not divorce per se which leads to maladjustment in youngsters, but rather proximal environmental variables, such as the discord evidenced by the parents prior to and following the divorce (Richters and Weintraub in Rolf et al, 1992: 83-84). In her 1997 Children of Divorce Workshop notes, Dr Marita Brink makes the following statement: "*Whether children grow up to be confident, well-adjusted and successful does not depend primarily on the number of parents who live at home, but on how the significant people in their lives inside and outside the home relate to each other and the children.*" (p. 1)

Divorce frequently results in a diminished capacity to parent: parents (especially mothers) are often forced to find new employment, new accommodation and even new relationships, all of which may diminish the quality of time spent with the children. Furthermore, divorce is often accompanied by "... *greater disorder, poorly enforced discipline and diminished regularity in enforcing household routines.*" (Garnezy and Rutter, 1983: 277). This change in the quality of parenting experienced by the child impacts negatively and increases the potentiality for maladjustment. The writer feels that it is almost as if premature self-reliance is sometimes imposed on children of divorce, which may be potentially damaging.

The writer is of the opinion that what must be understood in terms of divorce and ongoing conflict is the insidious corrosion of the child's life-world, and its continuous nature. Thus the toll on the child's ability to demonstrate resilience is progressive. Furthermore, in the years following divorce, the children often become the focus of parental conflict in the form of custody disputes and visitation difficulties. The writer imagines that this ongoing discord, especially discord

centred on the child, is deleterious to potential resilience.

- (iv) *Low social status* is thought to create a risk for maladjustment. (Sameroff and Seifer in Rolf et al, 1992: 57-63) As this was discussed in detail in 2.1.3.5, the writer will not expand on the topic again. All the writer would like to add, is her opinion that social status must necessarily be impacted upon by proximal variables: poor parenting skills and marital discord, for example, are found at all levels of society, and the writer is therefore of the opinion that low social status be viewed contextually.
- (v) *Overcrowding or large family size* has also been discussed by the writer (subsection 2.1.3.1). Overcrowding and large family size are considered to be part and parcel of social disadvantage. Thus, these two risk factors cannot really be seen in isolation, as the context of overcrowding, or large family size, may include poor housing, physical neglect, ill or deviant parents, or marital discord, and so on (Rutter and Madge, 1976: 218-221). Therefore, overcrowding and large family size, are positively correlated with maladjustment, but “... to a considerable extent it seems that the association is important because of its association with other adverse factors rather than in its own right.” (Rutter and Madge, 1976: 181).
- (vi) *Paternal criminality* is also often one of multiple risk factors (Garmezy and Rutter, 1983: 308). Paternal criminality is especially implicated as creating risk: not only does the father provide a very poor role model, but the quality of supervision offered is poor too. Generally, criminal fathers are reported to be both neglecting and cruel (Rutter and Madge, 1976: 184). The father-child relationship would therefore not be conducive to developing emotional responsiveness or social competence, or even a positive self-concept, suggesting that the likelihood of resilient behaviour be reduced. Michael Rutter (in Rolf et al, 1992: 202) suggests that paternal criminality is merely an aspect of undependableness, with other features such as gambling, violence, poor record of work, and infidelity completing the picture. Such features are thought to increase the likelihood of depression in the

wife, and this must necessarily impact negatively on family functioning and resilience in return.

The writer imagines that should both parents be criminal the potential for maladjustment must increase further, as when the extended family has criminal elements too.

- (vii) **Paternal absence** was briefly discussed by the writer in 2.1.3.6. When the father is absent, it is thought to hold more risk for the sons than for the daughters. It was pointed out in 2.1.3.6 that quality mothering reduced the risks brought about by an absentee father. However, the writer should imagine that sustaining quality parenting must be very difficult for the mother, especially when the absence of the father implies that the mother has nobody to confide in or depend on. Furthermore, the writer would like to suggest that paternal absence need not only pertain to physical absence. The writer imagines that when the father is present but emotionally absent, the damage to both his spouse and children, in terms of the potential for resilience, might well be greater.
- (viii) **Parental health**, referring to psychiatric disorders and alcoholism, puts children at risk for succumbing to life's odds. Once again, parental health is not a risk factor operating in isolation: not only are the offspring at risk genetically, but they are also confronted by a plethora of associated familial and environmental risks, such as separation due to parent's hospitalisation, marital conflict, social stigma, disturbances in family life, stressed relationships within and without family life and so on (Richters and Weintraub in Rolf et al, 1992: 80).

Richters and Weintraub, (in Rolf et al, 1992: 67-91), further suggest that when a child is exposed to frequent and acute episodes of parental psychopathology, typically from when the child is younger, the stress generated by these episodes is cumulative. Thus the risk resulting from these episodes is not necessarily because of the young age at which the child was first exposed, as was traditionally assumed,

but because of the acuteness of the parent's condition. Furthermore, what is reported to be pivotal to the child's ability to adjust is the parent's level of functioning between episodes, rather than the parent's episodic attacks and hospitalisation. It is also reported that when the psychopathology of one parent leads to marital distress, the potential of ensuing risk for the child is greater.

Emery and Forehand (in Haggerty et al, 1994: 71-72) suggest that there is evidence that psychopathology may cause divorce, especially in the case of schizophrenia and alcoholism. Thus children of parents, who are not mentally healthy, face an increased risk, namely that of augmented parental depression, self-focus and labile mood which often follows the divorce.

When the mother is mentally ill (schizophrenic, or depressed, for example), the effect on her offspring is vast: "... *mentally ill mothers may provide a qualitatively different child-rearing environment that distorts their children's development in kind, rather than in timing.*" (Sameroff and Seifer in Rolf et al, 1992: 60). This is probably due to the fact that mentally ill mothers are emotionally unavailable to their children, generally uninvolved with their offspring and less positive. From section 2.1.3.1 it was clear that the relationship between child and primary caregiver is crucial to the development of a positive self-concept and ability to venture, and, in turn, the ability to demonstrate resilience. Thus, the mentally ill mother's inability to bond with her child may put the child at risk. This is borne out by the findings of Sameroff and Seifer (in Rolf et al, 1992: 58-61) who report that at four months, children of mentally ill mothers had more difficult temperaments and fewer adaptive behaviours; at twelve months these children were less spontaneous and mobile; and at thirty and forty-eight months these toddlers remained less responsive, and exhibited lower developmental and adaptive behaviour scores.

Radke-Yarrow and Sherman (in Rolf et al, 1992: 97-119) suggest that there is an additional facet challenging children of mentally ill parents and that is that

developmentally inappropriate demands are often made of them. Frequently they are expected to satisfy needs in their parents that necessitate behaviours and duties that are generally inappropriate to both their years and their roles as children, at a great cost to themselves. The writer feels that these children are robbed of their childhood, and so miss out on a vital stepping stone to adulthood: they are prematurely adult without ever having actualised the goals of childhood, on which the foundation of adulthood rests, thereby putting them at risk.

Thus it would appear that children are most at risk when their parents' health affects them directly either by means of a modified parent-child relationship or an altered home life in general. It would appear as if the clinical nature of the parent's problem is not as important as the social context within which it operates, as well as the impact of the disturbed parent's behaviour on this context.

- (ix) *Parental illness* is cited by Werner and Smith (1982: 134) as holding potential risk. The writer imagines that the factors pertaining to parental health are similar for parental illness, in that severe or chronic parental illness must alter the nature of the parent-child relationship and create age-inappropriate responsibilities and burdens for the child. Home life may be negatively affected, and should an atmosphere of doom ensue, the child may possibly not learn to hope or venture. The child's needs and goals may also not be actualised in deference to those of the ill parent. Parental illness may also lead to prolonged or frequent separation from the child, and the resulting experiences may be negative for the child, especially if there is no quality substitute caregiver.

Furthermore, Collins (1988: 333) points out that when a parent is severely or chronically ill, there is often much pretence of everything being well within the family. This leads to children suffering alone and feeling very afraid, which may drain the resources for resilient behaviour. If the family were open and confronted their pain, the risk may well be diminished.

- (x) *Admission of child into community care* may entail risk, primarily because of the disruption of the bonding process to the primary caregiver (Garnezy, 1983: 54). The bonding relationship is primary to the healthy emotional development of the child, and often institutions are understaffed, curtailing the opportunity for bonding with a caregiver. Garnezy (1983: 58) continues that when there are multiple placements in institutions, and even foster homes, there is significant risk for psychopathic and antisocial behaviour in later life. Furthermore, when the quality of care is poor, the child's intellectual and developmental process may be hampered, especially when the placement is long-term. All of these factors corrode the likelihood of resilience, because positive emotional and intellectual development act as protective factors.
- (xi) *Major family events* (abuse or bereavement for example) are potentially risk-inducing. Masten et al (1990 : 435) suggest that when acute psychosocial trauma occurs, a resilient outcome is least likely when children have witnessed horrific acts perpetrated against their attachment figures. The writer suggests that, in the face of the above statement, the capacity for resilience must be at a very low ebb among the many South African children who have witnessed the acute and chronic trauma which has almost become a part of the South African way of life.

Masten et al (1990: 435) further maintain that when psychosocial trauma is perpetrated by children's attachment figures, the capacity for resilience is equally low. "*Abuse is a profoundly disruptive, disorienting, and destructive experience for children.*" (Martin, 1995: 28). Child abuse is considered to hold substantial risk: within childhood it is associated with increased aggressive behaviour, and within adulthood, it is thought to correlate with parenting difficulties and risk of abusive behaviour towards the victim's own offspring (Rutter in Haggerty et al, 1994: 358). Furthermore, it is thought to put individuals at risk in that progression of self-mastery, social relationships and developmental stages are hampered (Martin, 1995: 28). In terms of resilience, aggressive behaviour and lack of self-mastery will not engender supportive relationships, or the kind of temperament

which is endearing, thereby minimising protective factors. Furthermore, the writer is of the opinion that abuse cripples the child's ability, and wish, to view the self positively, which in turn corrodes the potential for resilience. The child's self-talk mirrors the latent message in the abuse, often sabotaging self-actualisation.

Parent loss, via death, is a sad yet expectable life event. However, it is one which younger people relegate to an unknown future time, so that when the death of a parent occurs prematurely in terms of this expectancy, there is potential risk for youngsters: "*The chief psychological and psychosocial problems that bereavement poses ... have to do with the extent of their capacity to accept the tragedy of such a significant loss, their capacity to tolerate the anguish that ordinarily accompanies mourning, and their developmental need for the deceased parent in order to complete the goals of healthy maturation.*" (Clark, Pynoos, and Goebel in Haggerty et al, 1994: 100).

Bereavement in childhood has long been linked with vulnerability to adult psychiatric disorders, but more recent research points to this increased vulnerability as a correlation to serious lack of affectionate childhood care as a result of the bereavement, rather than as a direct correlation to bereavement. There is an interval of maximum distress, any time between one and fourteen months following the death, during which time psychiatric symptoms (such as depression, anxiety, encopresis, enuresis, suicidal ideation, amongst others) are noticeable. However, the duration of such symptoms is related to the child's context, such as the adjustment of the surviving parent and the general home environment. When bereavement leads to a lack of childhood affection, it is correlated with poor self-esteem and lack of confidence and is reported to point to later depression, conduct disorder and personality disturbance (Rutter in Rolf et al, 1992: 198-200; Clark et al in Haggerty et al, 1994: 106-108). Being robbed of secure childhood attachment figures, through bereavement, is also thought to leave children vulnerable, in the sense that "*... secure attachments led to a sense of confidence in their ability to meet challenges, whereas insecurity was followed by a tendency to give up under*

pressure." (Rutter in Rolf et al, 1992: 200).

Bereavement in adolescence appears to be more complex, especially as the adolescents are reported to be mourning the loss of a way of life, and not just the loss of a parent. Sadness, depression and anger are common immediate reactions. When the parent is lost in a violent death, prolonged anxiety is thought to be a common reaction. Furthermore, in the cases where a parent is lost by violent means, many adolescents assume emotional restraint, coupled with exemplary behaviour and premature maturation (Clark et al in Haggerty et al, 1994: 108-109).

The gender of the deceased parent is thought to have an impact too, with mothers' means of coping with the death of their spouses thought to be more in touch with the family's altered needs. Mothers are also thought to be more emotionally available to their offspring during bereavement. When the mother is lost, the adolescent's daily routine is also more affected. It is thought that it is simpler for mothers to add the role of breadwinner to their list of responsibilities, than it is for father to adopt a mothering role. In the case of adolescent boys, however, the loss of the father is thought to be more severe (Clark et al in Haggerty et al, 1994: 110-112).

It is therefore not as simple as seeing bereavement as a single risk factor with the potential for predisposing an adolescent to maladjustment. Rather, one needs to *"... view the death of a parent as a series of events preceding and following the key death, rather than as a single stressful event. Along with the experience of the death itself, the associated accumulation of events contributes to the emergence of psychological resilience or vulnerability."* (Clark et al in Haggerty et al, 1994: 112). Once again, therefore, the potential of bereavement to engender risk needs to be assessed contextually.

When adolescents are encouraged to cry openly for the deceased parent and are capable of doing so, eventual positive closure, rather than continued risk is

anticipated. Being provided with opportunities to talk about the deceased parent is also thought to minimise risk (Clark et al in Haggerty et al, 1994: 108-112).

Thus, the writer concludes that bereavement, in the form of the loss of a parent, has the potential to impact on the youngsters of the family in such a manner that lasting maladjustment (especially in the form of adult depression) may be indicated, depending on the impact bereavement has on the family as a whole. Werner and Smith (1982: 78) suggest that the loss of a sibling may also predispose the other siblings to nonresilient behaviour, especially when the family system involved siblings as alternate caretakers.

When bereavement is as the result of the loss of a good friend, especially when the friend has committed suicide, adolescents are thought to be at risk for a major depressive episode (Clark et al in Haggerty et al, 1994: 113-115). The writer can understand the impact of the loss of a friend at this developmental stage, given the adolescent's need to belong among his peers and to identify with them.

- (xii) There is thought to be a *genetic* component to risk, formally known as the "diathesis-stress model" which acknowledges "... *in principle, the potential roles of both heredity and environment in the development of psychopathology.*" (Richters and Weintraub in Rolf et al, 1992: 69). In other words, an individual may inherit anomalies which act as vulnerabilities that encourage risk: "*These vulnerabilities constitute an individual's diathesis, and are conceptualised broadly as characteristics of functioning that lower one's threshold of susceptibility to environmental stressors that may subsequently trigger the onset of maladjustment or psychopathology.*" (Richters and Weintraub in Rolf et al, 1992: 69). So the writer would assume that in terms of nonresilient behaviour, environmental risks may act as eliciting stressors for nonresilient behaviour only if the individual is already genetically predisposed to developing a certain psychopathology. In other words, the pattern of the individual's life will play a role in whether maladjustment occurs or not. The fact that there is a genetic predisposition is not enough of a risk

factor in itself. The writer is impressed by Richters and Weintraub's conclusion (in Rolf et al, 1992: 77) concerning the role of genetic components in maladjustment:

"In short, the fact that someone has a schizophrenic parent implies nothing necessarily about that individual beyond the fact that he or she has a schizophrenic parent. Obviously, this limitation applies not only to the risk for schizophrenia but also to other forms of maladjustment and psychopathology."

Developmental disabilities, which is when "... a child's total development, or certain aspects of it (language, motor ability, etc.), shows a conspicuous delay in comparison with that of other children." (Kapp, 1991: 26), create risk. Kapp (1991: 291) suggests that developmental deficits have serious consequences for the individual's cognitive, scholastic, physical and personality development. The negative implications for resilience are clear. Miller further emphasises this by reporting Werner's 1993 findings that birth weight and congenital defects predict risk, rather than resilience (1996: 259).

- (xiii) The writer is of the opinion that **school-related stressors** are perhaps underrated. Rutter (in Rolf et al, 1992: 196-197) makes mention of the role of positive school experiences, especially in the lives of girls from children's homes. Rutter suggests that when school is associated with pleasure, accomplishment and success, a sense of self-worth and feelings of ability to control what has happened in life, are positively correlated. The writer wonders how youngsters who perpetually face stress at school, and who have no alternate support system, fare, especially in terms of feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy. School forms a major part of a youngster's life and its impact may therefore not be underestimated, especially when a school environment has the power to influence the potential for resilience.

In conclusion to this subsection, the writer has become conscious that it is perhaps

inaccurate to refer to risk factors, and she supposes the same would apply to protective factors, in that there appears to be a definite interaction between risk factors, and protective factors, and indeed between risk and protective factors. Therefore, the writer imagines that it may be more accurate to speak of risk processes or protective processes, as this would also take the context of these interacting factors into account.

2.1.6 The Role of Therapeutic Intervention in Resilience

To intervene means to "*come into a situation in order to change it*" (Collins Reference English Dictionary, 1992: 257). Thus, therapeutic intervention seeks to change, and may be defined as a set of actions which is intended to alter the course of, or interrupt, future events or processes. The nature of the problem at hand, knowledge of the target-group, as well as timeousness, will necessarily impact on the type of intervention chosen (Pless and Stein, in Haggerty et al 1994: 318).

In terms of resilience, intervention is seen as a promotion of wellness, rather than as an exercise in repair, once things have already gone wrong. Thus, it would appear as if the function of intervention in resilience is a proactive, rather than a reactive, one: "*... the concept vivifies an emerging paradigm-shift in mental health, built around the intriguing possibility that psychological dysfunction can better be approached through prevention than by struggling, however valiantly and compassionately, to undo deeply-rooted damage.*" (Cowen, Wyman, Work, & Iker, 1995: 248).

It is largely accepted that in order to intervene effectively, risk factors need to be delineated: once those adolescents who are most vulnerable have been identified, intervention may follow the path of reducing stress and enhancing coping skills. Thus, the search for risk factors has dominated research in the field of resilience for the past three decades (Pless and Stein, in Haggerty et al 1994: 321-322). Cowen et al (1995: 248), however, view the task slightly differently, suggesting that research has and should focus on those attributes which differentiate between stress resilient and stress affected children, and then on the protective mechanisms underlying these adaptive

attributes. This viewpoint makes sense to the writer, especially as she is of the opinion that resilience is a dynamic process, implying then that all youngsters would benefit from intervention encouraging resilience. Such intervention would necessarily have to be founded on the protective processes underlying adaptation.

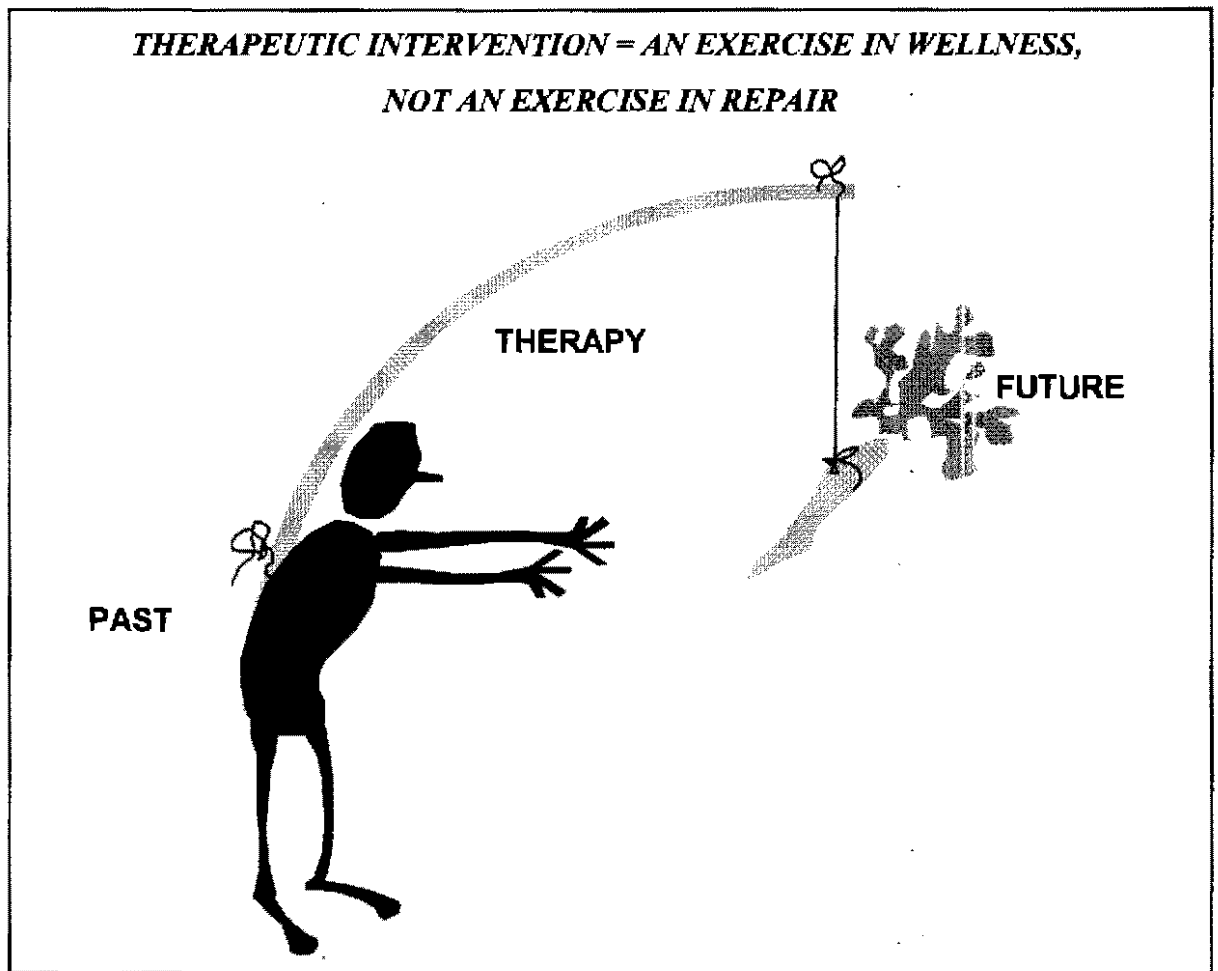


DIAGRAM 6

therapeutic intervention and resilience

Because of the concept of distal and proximal risk factors, Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole (in Rolf et al, 1992: 257-279) are of the opinion that intervention in high-risk environments and low-risk environments must necessarily be tailored to suit the specific distal and proximal variables which impinge on the given context, in order for intervention to specifically operate through proximal variables. In other words, one may not generalise from one child-rearing environment to another, if intervention is to impact positively on the potential for resilience, because successful intervention cannot remove risk factors. Rather, successful intervention works to create positive proximal variables, in order to cope with the negative distal variables. Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole demonstrated this intervention concept successfully in their Rochester Longitudinal Study.

Studies documenting the response to therapeutic intervention have shown the value of intervention in terms of increasing the potential for resilience. Beardslee, Wright, Salt, Drezner, Gladstone, Versage, and Rothberg (1997: 196 - 204) examined the long-term effects of two forms of preventative intervention aimed at augmenting families' understanding of parental affective disorder, and to prevent the development of depression in the children of these parents. The results showed conclusively that there was better long-term adaptive behaviour, despite the potential risk. Intervention occurred either in the form of lecture discussion groups, or in therapist-facilitated groups, and resulted in enhanced coping strategies, and understanding, as well as decreased feelings of guilt and responsibility for the youngsters. The parents who participated reported increased understanding of the risk and hurt their children faced. It was also evident that the therapist-facilitated group led to more pronounced mediation of risk, than the lecture discussion group.

In their report on therapeutic intervention with families afflicted by affective disorder, Focht and Beardslee also report that intervention strengthens the potential for resilience, especially as the children are assisted to cognitively surmount the obstacles their context has thrown at them: *"Helping children label and define what is happening to themselves and to their parents helps them to develop and to expect a sense of*

coherence regarding their emotions. It helps them to trust their own experience." (Focht and Beardslee, 1996: 421). McGinnis also emphasises the cognitive component of instilling resilience, and suggests that learning to monitor negative trains of thought is an important intervention-strategy (1990: 60-70).

There is also a move towards equating on-the-spot-counselling with vulnerable young people, accommodated in residential care programmes, with practical opportunities for therapeutic intervention. In this sense, intervention is seen as a gradual, ongoing process, with anticipated setbacks, by counsellors who are alert to every subtle sign within the relationship they build with the youngster at risk. This intervention is based on the notion that resilient youngsters model themselves after resilient mentors ((Fitzgerald, 1996: 9-17).

Modelling of a different kind is used in the intervention technique reported as successful by Quinton, Pickles, Maughan and Rutter (1993: 763-783), which uses supportive cohabiting relationships to empower vulnerable youngsters. In this intervention strategy, peers are used as models, with vulnerable, deviant peers being paired with resilient, non-deviant peers.

Berlin and Davis (in Dugan and Coles, 1989: 101-104) suggest that time-limited groups, which allow children to share the secrets that put them at risk (for example, alcoholism within their family) and to make sense of the disruptive events within their families, provide children at risk with therapeutic opportunities which boost the potential for resilience.

Pless and Stein (in Haggerty et al, 1994: 326-347) document various forms of successful interventions, ranging from support groups, therapist-facilitated intervention and educational or training approaches. The majority of these interventions have, as their premise, intervention rather than cure. Despite the success of many of these intervention studies, Pless and Stein raise their concern that few, if any, of these studies have been replicated. They believe the major reason for this to be a general failure to

delineate genuine risk and protective factors. The writer is reminded of Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole's admonishment that if intervention for the sake of resilience is to be successful, intervention must be tailor-made to suit the specific proximal and distal variables within the specific given context (in Rolf et al, 1992: 257-279). Therefore, the writer is of the opinion that it may well be fruitless to replicate intervention strategies.

Thus, in conclusion, intervention (in terms of boosting the potential for resilience) is seen as having merit, especially when it is used proactively and is tailored to suit the specific confines of a given context. Perhaps the most useful way of considering the impact of therapeutic intervention, which operates proactively, on resilience, is to quote Vygotsky (1962: 104) :

"What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore, the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions ... instruction must be oriented towards the future, not the past."

In the following section the writer overviews the impact of a learning disability on resilience.

2.1.7 The Impact of a Learning Disability on Resilience

Being learning disabled is thought to be a risk factor, in that it equals a stressful life-situation with many problems which "... may last into adulthood, affecting him in many ways, denying him access to the world of adult achievement." (Cordoni, 1990: 4). The interaction of this stressful life-situation with other life stresses often leads to non-resilient outcomes (Keogh & Weisner, 1993: 4 ; Spekman, Goldberg & Herman, 1993: 11). Nevertheless, within the population of learning disabled individuals, researchers have found many successful, well-adjusted individuals, as in other at risk populations where individuals have demonstrated the ability to be "*vulnerable but invincible*" (Werner and Smith, 1982: 3).

A learning disability may be defined as that phenomenon which hampers a child's learning and growth towards adulthood from progressing as desired, despite an absence of physical, visual, auditory and other handicaps. The mental potential, as well as the pedagogical and didactical environment, would be adequate, despite this failure to thrive (Kapp, 1991: 377). In other words the learning disabled child would present with a discrepancy between ability and achievement.

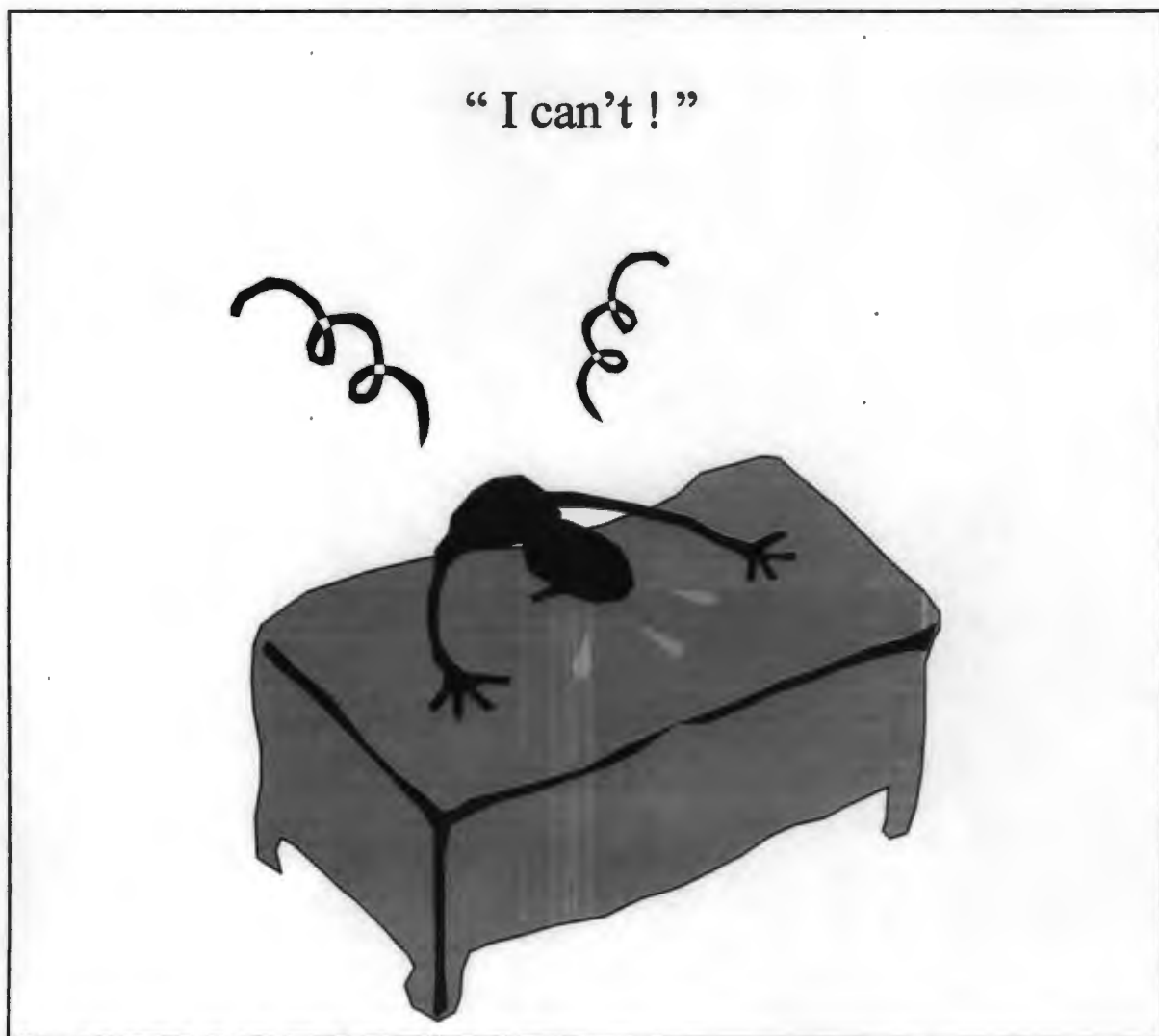


DIAGRAM 7

learning disability and resilience

Part of the risk of a learning disability is that diagnosis is often retarded, and the nature of the disability poorly understood by society at large:

“The learning disabled individual is a paradox, doing some things very well and others poorly. . . . He has no observable differences from anyone else, and that is why learning disabilities have often been called the hidden handicaps. Yet he is often ridiculed for things he cannot do.” (Cordoni, 1990: 4).

A learning disability also has a far greater impact than merely on the academic areas of the child’s life. It may present with deficiencies in motor functioning, auditory and visual perceptual ability, cognitive ability, language ability, as well as social and affective functioning (Kapp, 1991: 385-398). The writer has observed the especially deleterious effects of learning disabled youngsters’ social and affective functioning. Ironically, these are the facets of a learning disability least understood by parents and teachers, thereby minimising the likelihood for resilience even further.

Because of its wide-reaching impact, a learning disability does have the potential to cripple resilience. The writer feels that the learning disabled child is often caught in a sticky web of failure: most things are more difficult, from schoolwork, to peer relations, to relations with authority figures such as teachers, to relations with parents, and even to relations with the self. Thus, in terms of Jacobs’ Relation Theory, the learning disabled child’s experience, attribution of meaning and subsequent involvement must be at risk because of the complicated nature of his relations, which may negatively influence his self-talk, his self-concept and finally the will to self-actualise, or be resilient.

In cases where being learning disabled impacts negatively on the potential for resilience, the individual is thought to be at greater risk for negative emotional, familial and social results.

- Emotional maladjustment may result from the extreme frustration, a lack of perceived control and poor social interaction experienced by learning disabled individuals: *“Children with learning disabilities are often set apart from their peer groups because of their different behaviour. Sometimes they are seen as clumsy . . . Often, they do not know what to say, or they say what is inappropriate.”* (Cordoni, 1990: 5). The type of learning disability (right hemispheric dysfunction or a nonverbal type of learning disability) is also hypothesized to predispose the individual to emotional disorders. A language-based learning disability is thought to create particular risk, because if the basic problem is *“... in the understanding of and use of verbal language, it can be most distressing because our main form of communication is talking to one another.”* (Cordoni, 1990: 27). In addition, learning in schools is commonly language based. This results in extreme frustration and poor self-esteem for the learning-disabled youngster.
- Familial maladjustment is dependent on numerous factors, such as whether hyperactivity and behaviour problems are features of the learning disability, in which case negative familial outcomes are anticipated. Parental acceptance of the child’s academic handicap is also pivotal, as is the family’s ability to adapt in order to accommodate the learning disabled child (Morrison and Cosden, 1997: 54). Sometimes, *“Instead of seeing the handicap as only one small part of the child, the handicap is all that some parents see.”* (Cordoni, 1990: 39). An over-focusing on the learning disability is detrimental to both the child and family functioning. Parental feelings of helplessness and guilt further disturb family functioning, ultimately impacting negatively on the potential for resilience.
- The learning disabled youngster often fails to read social cues, which translates into social unresponsiveness or poor social skills. This impacts on friendships and sport. Possible other negative social results include school drop-out rates, delinquency and substance abuse (Morrison and Cosden, 1997: 45-54).

The writer would like to emphasise that the risk factors referred to in Diagram 5 apply

equally to learning disabled individuals. However, in the presence of a learning disability, the capacity for risk is considered augmented. The degree of risk accompanying the learning disability is contingent on:

- the specific type of learning problem (dysgraphia or dyslexia for example have wider impact on learning taking place at school),
- multiplicity of learning disability problems,
- the severity of the learning disability,
- the age of the child at identification (obviously the older the child at age of identification, the greater the risk),
- school disruption,
- and chronicity, or the fact that a learning disability is generally a lifelong condition (Spekman et al, 1993: 13-14).

The fact that a learning disability serves to act as a risk factor is confirmed by the many adults with learning disabilities who have not performed as well as may have been expected, given their socioeconomic status and IQ. Their under-achievement is demonstrated in terms of high school attrition rates, financial dependence, low-status employment, chronic poor self-esteem, emotional difficulties, and a tendency to continue to live at home (Spekman et al, 1993: 12-13). It is almost as if learning disabled individuals fail to realise that they have the resources to deal with life's daily stressors.

There are, however, learning disabled individuals who seem to halt the chain reaction of risk associated with a learning disability. In their cases, resilience is promoted amongst others by self-understanding, a sense of being in control, proactive planning, belief in themselves, setting realistic goals and the ability to reframe their learning disability experience (Miller, 1996: 265-267). As in the case of risk factors, the protective factors listed in Diagram 1, and Chart 1 also aid in boosting the potential for resilience in learning disabled children. Familial and extra familial factors promoting resilience, do so in the population of learning disabled children too.

In terms of intervention, the important point to grasp is that *“Assistance should be given to individuals with learning disabilities to help them to understand and accept their learning difficulties and to define themselves as more than learning disabled.”* (Spekman et al, 1993: 16). In other words, for intervention to be successful in encouraging resilience, in the face of the risk of a learning disability, it should target the individual as a whole. As was previously stated in 2.1.6, risk and stress are normal parts of growing up, therefore to attempt to eliminate the risk factors is not a realistic goal, especially in the case of the learning disabled child, who faces multiple stressors that will probably not go away. For this reason, a preparation for ‘life’, acceptance and understanding of the disability, and adaption strategies would greatly foster the potential for resilience (Spekman, Herman & Vogel, 1993: 63).

To quote Cordoni (1990: 150) one last time, intervention among learning disabled youngsters aimed at nurturing resilience must proceed from the following premise:

“When I began working with people with learning disabilities, I used to tell my graduate students to see them as potential butterflies still in the cocoon. Our job was to go out and free the butterflies.”

In the following subsection the writer will discuss the impact of the school programme, or teacher, on resilience

2.1.8 The Impact of the School or Teacher on Resilience

“... individual differences in resilience are not fixed. Planful behaviour can be developed through teaching and training ... and reinforced by resulting good experiences.” (Quinton, Pickles, Maughan and Rutter, 1993: 764). For this reason, school programmes and teachers have a role to play in the encouragement of resilience, in that behaviour and choices, which may result in resilience, can be inculcated. Teachers’ impact on the child’s self-concept, their choice of activities and the school programme as a whole, affect the course of resilience.



In their interaction with pupils, teachers carry the key to unlocking the potential for resilience.

DIAGRAM 8

school / teacher impact on resilience

Canfield and Wells (1994: 4) caution that *"It is possible to change self-concepts, possible for teachers to effect the changes - either way, both positive and negative."* In other words, teachers' interactions with their pupils may act as protective or risk factors. A positive self-concept has the power to spark a chain reaction in terms of the pupil's engagement in school, and compliant behaviour.

Good self-esteem is also linked to academic progress and success. The reverse also holds true (Finn and Rock, 1997: 221-224). Rutter (in Rolf et al, 1992: 196 -197) stresses the ameliorative effects of positive school experiences, especially in terms of increased feelings of self-efficacy and self-worth. It would seem then that teachers and school programmes may provide a key to unlocking the potential for resilient behaviour. The reader is also reminded of the assertions made in 2.1.4 that a positive relationship with even one other, which research shows is often a teacher, can encourage the development of resilience in the face of risk. It would seem then that teachers have the potential to affect the course of resilience. Rak and Patterson (1996: 372) corroborate this: "*Each staff member has the potential to become a role model or mentor in the eyes of the children served, according to the retrospective reports of at-risk children who have overcome their adversities.*" Canfield and Wells (1994: 5) quote Abraham Maslow with regard to the effect of teachers on pupils' ability to become fully functioning or self-actualising human beings, in which he emphasises, among others, the teachers' "... *insistence on remaining as realistically human as, say a plumber or carpenter; all of these created a classroom atmosphere in which suspicion, wariness, defensiveness, hostility, and anxiety disappeared.*" When a teacher conducts him/herself in a fully human way, by implication then, resilience would be encouraged.

The writer is of the opinion that teachers act as a powerful source of feedback for pupils, and for this reason the pupil's self-concept can either be buoyed or scarred by teachers. In their feedback to pupils, teachers also have power to encourage or dash any future expectations the pupils may hold. This is of concern to the writer, as the vulnerable child may lack the resources which would typically encourage positive teacher feedback in the first place. In the case of an undiscerning teacher, the negative cycle may be perpetuated and in the process, what little potential for eventual resilience existed, may be drained rather than augmented.

There are specific activities teachers can pursue, which encourage resilience as the end-result. By engaging in positive classroom strategies, such as encouragement of creative problem solving, goal setting, critical reflection, interpersonal skills and support networks,

teachers have the means to empower their pupils, and in so doing, the potential for resilience. Prevention strategies used by teachers in individual interventions will also encourage wellness. Such strategies include prosocial skills; encouraging physical activity, self-monitoring, realistic self-evaluation, relaxation exercises; and providing external messages of worth (Bruce, 1995: 179-186). In other words, teachers can choose to engage in activities which will result in the inculcation of personal protective factors, thereby promoting the potential for resilience. When the class teacher also goes out of his/her way to allow pupils to experience some form of success, no matter how small, the pupil's self-esteem and motivation is boosted (Fontana, 1981: 134), which in turn acts protectively and encourages resilience.

Berliner and Benard (1996: 4) point out that research clearly indicates that individual factors which buoy resilience are reinforced by "*... caring relationships that are trusting, compassionate and respectful; high expectations that are explicitly communicated and adequately supported; and meaningful opportunities for engaging in valued family, school and civic activities.*" The writer is of the firm opinion that the three factors mentioned in the quote from Berliner and Bernard can be provided for within the school programme and the teacher-pupil relationship, suggesting again that resilience can be fostered, or sabotaged, by the school environment.

Berliner and Benard (1996: 5) further suggest that if resilience is to be encouraged as an outcome of schooling, then the traditional focus on risk factors, with its incumbent labelling, should shift to a focus on resilience and the necessary adaptations in terms of learning environment and relationships, curriculum, teaching methods, grouping procedures and evaluation procedures. The following table, adapted from Berliner and Benard's table (1996: 5) summarises the necessary paradigm shift in education, if resilience is to be encouraged.

TABLE 2
PARADIGM SHIFT NECESSARY TO ENCOURAGE RESILIENCE

RISK FOCUS	RESILIENCE FOCUS
⊗ <i>Relationships</i> are traditionally hierarchical, fault-finding and controlling.	☺ <i>Relationships</i> are ideally caring, participative and foster positive expectations. ☺ Parent participation is also encouraged.
⊗ The <i>curriculum</i> lacks integration, is non-experiential, restricted and excludes multiple perspectives.	☺ The <i>curriculum</i> is thematically integrated, experiential, extensive and includes multiple perspectives.
⊗ <i>Teaching methods</i> only include a limited number of learning styles and are strictly authoritarian. Instruction is based on a perception of student deficits.	☺ <i>Teaching methods</i> include an extensive repertoire of learning styles and are facilitative, thereby encouraging participation. Instruction focuses on student strengths, experiences and interests.
⊗ <i>Grouping</i> is decided by ability and essentially fosters competition and feelings of alienation.	☺ <i>Grouping</i> is not dependent on ability and therefore fosters cooperation, shared responsibility and feelings of belonging.
⊗ <i>Evaluation</i> is based on a restricted understanding of intelligence, and relies on standardised tests in which there is traditionally only one correct answer.	☺ <i>Evaluation</i> concentrates on a broader understanding of intelligence, and utilises a range of authentic assessment means in which self-reflection is promoted.

The writer is of the opinion that the proposed Outcomes Based Education strategy should go a long way to fostering resilience, as it incorporates the resiliency focus, as tabulated above. To quote Berliner and Benard (1996: 6) again, in terms of the impact of teachers and school programmes on resilience, there is much positive potential: *“The notion of resiliency brings more than a message of hope; it brings the real possibility for positive developmental and academic outcomes for all children and youth.”*

2.1.9 The Role of Gender and Age in Resilience

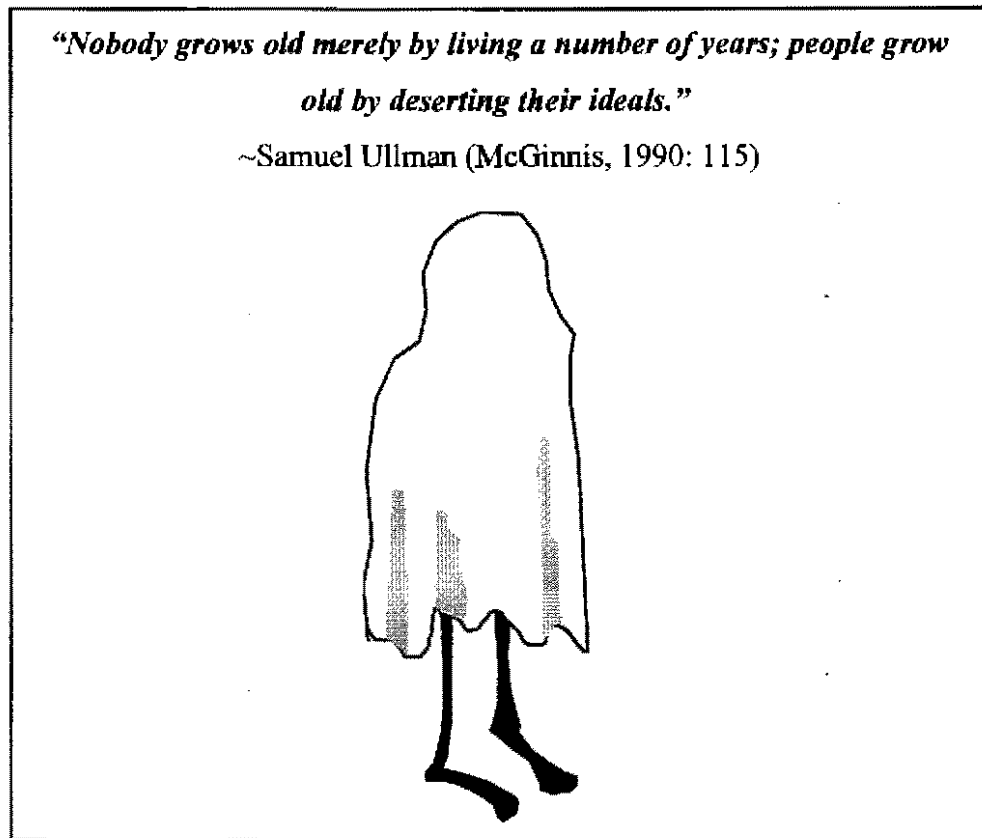


DIAGRAM 9

the role of age and gender in resilience

Age and gender have the power to operate as either risk or protective factors. Generally, boys are shown to be more at risk than girls (Rutter in Rolf et al, 1992: 189; Carson et al, 1992: 275). Not only do boys show a higher incidence of emotional and behavioural disturbances, but when the entire context is taken into account, boys show greater

vulnerability too. For instance, as family discord increases, the potential risk for boys, rather than girls, increases too. A possible reason for this difference is that boys are believed to be more vulnerable to a greater range of both physical and psychosocial hazards. For example, it has been found that parents are more likely to fight in front of boys than girls; and following a break-up, boys are more likely to be placed in institutional care than girls. Boys are also more likely to react aggressively or oppositionally in the face of stressors than girls, which elicits negative responses from significant adults in their lives. Caregivers have also been shown to behave more punitively towards boys (Rutter in Rolf et al, 1992: 189-191). Girls are further advantaged in that sex differences apparently have social impact too: "*Girls may be more socially oriented and connected, so that in a stressful situation they are both more inclined to seek help from a social network and more likely to receive it.*" (Masten, Garmezy, Tellegen, Pellegrini, Larkin and Larsen, 1988: 760)

However, Gore and Eckenrode (in Haggerty et al, 1994: 49-51) report on findings which indicate that gender differences may possibly not be so definitive, in that long term studies suggest that whilst boys certainly show more initial vulnerability, problematic behaviour among girls, only evidenced during adolescence, may well stem from earlier stressors. This implies that girls' earlier competent behaviour may well be a facade. The writer wonders whether girls may not be thought to be coping because of their more frequent passive, internalised roles, compared to the aggressive, externalising behaviour of many boys. Because of traditional gender roles, it may be easier to assume that girls are coping, whilst in actual fact they are struggling beneath their social masks.

Gore et al (in Haggerty et al, 1994: 33-34; 50) also report on findings indicating that when hardship occurs during adolescence, girls are at greater risk than boys. There is further evidence that girls are particularly vulnerable during adolescence, possibly because of girls' dependence on social ties and vulnerability to social feedback at this developmental stage. This is particularly risky as adolescence implies social change, which may deprive girls of their support group. The transition to high school is an example of this. Girls are thought to be more easily emotionally hurt at this stage, especially because of the pivotal place relationships and the expectations of others occupy in their lives during adolescence.

Ironically it is thought that "... girls' orientation to the expectations of others becomes highly problematic because the same social changes that expose them to new challenges also make for instabilities or deficits in coping-related resources such as self-esteem, internal sense of mastery and locus of control, and instrumental or task orientation." (Gore et al, in Haggerty et al, 1994: 34).

Thus it would seem to the writer that age and gender are interwoven: in the face of stressors, young age and male gender equal risk; and adolescence and female gender equal risk. It would therefore be inaccurate to assume that coping in one developmental phase necessarily predicts resilience in the next. Age and gender do not determine resilience; they merely play a complementary role, depending on the given context.

Finally, the writer is of the opinion that in many risk-laden contexts, being a child of either gender is sufficient risk in itself. Youth brings with it many restrictions which may be claustrophobic and emotionally crippling for the child. When the writer is confronted with children from dire circumstances, who are in effect trapped by age, she is reminded of Spike Milligan's (1972: 68) poem concerning children being added to our world:

New Members Welcome:

*Pull the blinds on your emotions,
switch off your face
Put your love into neutral,
this way to the human race.*

2.2 CONCLUSION

In conclusion to the literature overview, the writer would once again like to remind the reader that the division of the facets of resilience is merely an artificial one, done to ease the overview of current literature. In effect, resilience is a process dependent on the reciprocal interaction of its multiple components. The interaction of these components forms the backdrop for what categorises the resilient individual as one who exemplifies that:

*“Nothing splendid has ever been achieved
except by those who dared believe
that something inside them was superior to circumstance.”*

(Barton in McGinnis, 1990: 33)



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again!*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This brief chapter forms the vanguard to the empirical study. It attempts to explain how the empirical study, which will try to understand exactly what contributes to certain adolescents avoiding the 'Humpty Dumpty' syndrome, is to proceed. This chapter seeks to provide a synopsis of the aim and motivation of the empirical study, as well as the actual research design to be followed. This synopsis will include the research group, diagnostic media to be used, method of evaluation and possible results of this empirical study.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

3.2.1 Study Aim

The fundamental aim of this study is to analyse and describe the nature of resilience in the individual, especially the phenomenon of resilience as manifested by the learning disabled individual. This analysis and description are primarily sought in order to equip educational psychologists with an understanding of resilience, from an educational-psychological perspective, in order that they might intervene to encourage resilience, ultimately by equipping youngsters with the skills necessary to secure resilience. For such intervention to be successful, it must be based on an understanding of the personal attributes which anchor resilience.

3.2.2 Motivation for the Study

As delineated by the writer in Chapter One, it is a puzzling phenomenon that some youngsters can successfully negotiate life's curve balls, whilst others remain cowed and choose to adopt a 'Humpty Dumpty' attitude in the face of life's difficulties. The educational psychologist deals with both resilient and non-resilient youngsters. However, it is the latter to whom the educational psychologist needs to teach skills in order that resilience might be attained. For this reason the personal attributes contributing to the phenomenon of resilience must be researched, in order that the nature and role of such personal attributes be comprehensively understood, so that non-resilient children may be assisted to develop resilience skills.

3.2.3 The Research Hypothesis

As stated in chapter one, the writer proposes the following hypotheses:

- it may be empirically determined which personal attributes impact positively on resilience, especially as pertains to resilient learning disabled adolescents.
- it may be hypothesized that such attributes would include intelligence, ego strength, optimism, sociability, self-control, assertiveness and independence.
- it may be empirically shown that vulnerable learning disabled children typically lack such attributes.
- it may be shown what the role of personal attributes is in terms of resilience.
- it may be determined that the lack of such attributes acts as a potential risk for maladjustment.

- ✎ it may be shown that in the absence of personal attributes, which provide a buffering effect, vulnerable youngsters execute negative self-fulfilling prophecies.
- ✎ it is probable that the personal attributes contributing towards resilience do not function as isolated factors, but rather as a coalition of factors.

To these initial hypotheses the writer would now also like to add:

- ✎ It might be demonstrated that teachers are not reliable sources of identification of resilient and non-resilient adolescents, possibly because of the masks which non-resilient youngsters wear.
- ✎ Alternatively, it might be demonstrated that levels of resilience are not permanent, but a process which ebbs and flows.

3.2.4 The Research Design

The writer has chosen to employ an ex post facto method of research, as opposed to an experimental method of research. The primary reason for this choice is that the writer is concerning herself with already existing phenomena which she will seek to describe and interpret. Thus, the writer will not be manipulating the empirical situation in any way; she will merely be describing and interpreting, and so the chosen method of research may be seen as a descriptive method.

Descriptive research may be nomothetic (group-directed) or idiographic (concerning the individual) by nature. The writer has chosen an idiographic foundation for her study, as individual case studies will form the basis of the observational study. Individual case studies will be used to form a group profile to be studied, in order to understand, and describe, the phenomenon of resilience. The findings will be used to augment the educational psychologist's understanding of the phenomenon, rather than as a generalisation to any particular group.

Because the writer is not seeking to generalise findings to a particular population, but rather to understand the phenomenon of resilience, the writer has chosen not to use a nomothetic method of research. Furthermore, cost and time factors do not permit a nomothetic study.

3.2.5 The Research Group

The writer will draw the sample group from a homogeneous population of secondary school pupils with whom she has daily contact. The population is homogeneous in that all learners attending this school are learners with special educational needs: these learners have all been diagnosed as being learning disabled. The writer has observed that this disability in itself is often enough to hamper resilient behaviour. Furthermore, the group is culturally homogeneous, in that all the members of the research group are English mother-tongue speakers.

Twenty pupils will participate in this study. Ten of these pupils have been identified by their teachers as possessing resilient traits (as identified in the literature study), and the remaining ten have been identified by their teachers as lacking resilient traits (again as identified in the literature study.) The sample group consists of pupils from grades eight to twelve. The group is predominantly male (fifteen boys as compared to five girls) as the population of the school is skewed in favour of the male gender.

The teachers completed this identification by means of the following questionnaires:

VULNERABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Many individuals fail to bounce back after one of life's curve balls knocks them off their feet. Instead of rebounding, such individuals continue a steady downward trend after they have suffered the initial blow. Typically they are unable to adapt or demonstrate success. There may be multiple risk factors predisposing this individual to vulnerability, or there may be only one.

Please consider the pupils that you teach and comment on a pupil who strikes you as particularly vulnerable.

NAME OF PUPIL: _____

What is it about this pupil that makes him or her stand out as a vulnerable pupil to you:

Please describe the circumstances surrounding this pupil which you think might contribute towards, or even cause, such vulnerability:

In your opinion, what is there in this pupil's personality that may contribute towards a lack of resilience: _____

Please circle whichever is appropriate to this individual:

- enjoys self-pity
- possesses poor understanding of others/not empathetic
- has a poor self-concept
- is not future-oriented/dwells in the past
- cannot compromise
- lacks creativity/originality
- is selfish/feels life owes him/her



vulnerability questionnaire continued

- has no sense of humour
- denies own limitations
- cannot laugh at him/herself
- poor impulsivity control
- lacks a warm, stable family
- bears grudges and does not forgive easily
- possesses low frustration tolerance
- inflexible
- poor communication skills
- poor social skills
- external locus of control
- labile and difficult temperament
- dependent
- poor peer relations
- poor support system



**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR INVALUABLE
COOPERATION**

RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Resilience is popularly perceived to be the ability to clear life's hurdles gracefully and then to continue with the race. It is the ability to bounce back from life's curve balls.

This does not imply an invulnerability to life's blows, but rather the capacity to rebound from life's cruelty: pain, humiliation, fear, grief, betrayal, trauma, tragedy... and then to continue... to move forward once more, determined to take another shot at life, regardless of how hard she punched you previously.

Do you teach pupils who fit the above description? If so, would you kindly complete the following questionnaire:

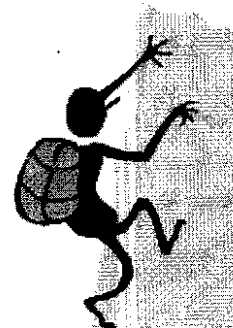
NAME OF PUPIL: _____

What are the special circumstances experienced by this individual which demonstrate his/her resilience, rather than vulnerability, which might well be expected under the circumstances?

What, in your opinion, contributes to this individual's ability to be resilient?

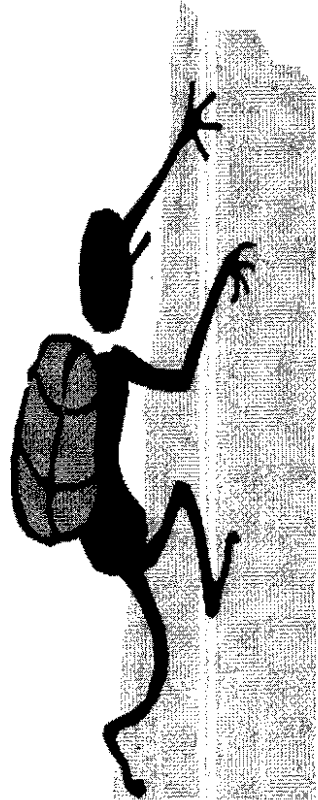
Please circle whichever is appropriate to this individual:

- avoids self-pity
- possesses an understanding of others/empathetic
- has a good self-concept
- is future-oriented



resilience questionnaire continued

- can compromise
- can be creative/original
- is unselfish
- has a sense of humour
- accepts own limitations
- can laugh at him/herself
- has a good relationship with at least one significant other
- has a warm, stable family
- does not bear grudges
- possesses high frustration tolerance
- can be flexible
- asks for what he/she needs
- good social skills
- internal locus of control
- good-natured temperament
- demonstrates independence



THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR INVALUABLE
COOPERATION

3.2.6 Data Collection

The data collection instruments will be varied and will include:

- Structured questionnaires, namely the *Adolescent Self-Concept Scale*, the *Emotional Profile Index* and the *High School Personality Questionnaire*.
- An *incomplete sentences questionnaire* designed specifically for the use of this study and targeting personal attributes as possible factors in resilience.
- Projection techniques, namely the *Draw-a-Person-in-the-Rain* and *Kritzberg's Three Animal Technique*, as well as the *Three Wishes Technique*, and *The Forest Adventure metaphor*.

The *Adventure in a Forest Metaphor* will be discussed in more detail below, as will the *Incomplete Sentence Blank*.

3.2.6.1 The adventure in a forest metaphor

The subject is told the following story, which is then embellished at various stages by him/her. The embellishments may then be symbolically interpreted in terms of levels of resilience. The writer has chosen to use this metaphor, which she has adapted from a popular quiz, because it is enjoyed by the adolescents at the school from which the target group will be drawn.

Once upon a time you began a journey into a large forest. You had never been to this particular forest before. There were many trees and plenty of birds and animals. The air was full of birdsong and other forest sounds. Every now and again something scampered away in the undergrowth. You looked around the forest as you journeyed. (1) How did you feel as you went along?

Presently the sun began to set and the light around you began to fade. You realised that night was falling and so you decided to settle down for the night. (2) What preparations did you make and where did you sleep?

*The following morning you set off on your journey once more. All around you little creatures were scurrying to and fro. The forest was a hive of activity. Birds called to one another and once you saw a snake slithering away. Suddenly, as you rounded a corner, a huge old grizzly bear lumbered out into your path. (3) What did you do?
.....*

Later on, around about midday, you reached a lake. As far as you could see, there was no way around the lake. You needed to continue your journey, however. (4) What did you decide to do?

*Finally, you neared the end of your journey. The trees were starting to thin and you could catch glimpses of blue sky. It was also much quieter now. You quickened your steps, eager to finish. Then, as you came up a rise you reached a solid, brick wall. It was huge and seemed to go forever in either direction. (5) How did you handle this one?
.....*

3.2.6.2 Incomplete sentences questionnaire

The writer has selected various incomplete sentences to create an incomplete sentence blank specific to this study. The proposed blank is as follows:

1. When I think of the future _____
2. Giving up _____
3. I am mostly _____
4. I often feel _____
5. I hope that _____
6. Sometimes I am afraid _____
7. I have failed _____
8. One day I shall _____
9. When the odds are against me _____
10. I look forward to _____
11. If I have a problem _____
12. Secretly _____
13. The only problem is _____
14. I can't _____
15. If I want to _____
16. Other people _____
17. My secret ambition in life _____
18. When luck turns against me _____
19. When I am older _____
20. I can _____

3.2.7 Data Evaluation

The Adolescent Self-Concept Scale will be used to evaluate the individual's self-concept. The High School Personality Questionnaire will be used to determine the level of ego-strength (factor C specifically) and the traits contributing to, or detracting from, resilience. The Emotions Profile Index will be used to determine the basic emotional dimensions operating in the resilient individual as opposed to the vulnerable individual.

The Incomplete Sentences Questionnaire will be used to evaluate the degree to which traditional personal protective factors, not measured by the above tests, operate in youngsters' ability to demonstrate resilience.

The data obtained from the projective techniques will be assessed in terms of factors pointing towards resilience. For example, the level of protection indicated against the rain will provide some clue towards the individual's need for protection against life's obstacles and hence the individual's level of resilience. The animals chosen will be assessed metaphorically as clues in terms of the levels of resilience, and the same applies to the wishes made. The metaphor of an adventure in a forest will serve to symbolically represent levels of resilience.

The individual scores will not be assessed to obtain individual profiles. The individual scores will be used to generate a group profile, in order that a deeper understanding of resilience compared to vulnerability may be obtained. The group profile does not qualify as a generalisation, as the sample group is not big enough. It primarily serves the purpose of providing a preliminary, descriptive understanding of the phenomenon of resilience as manifested by the learning disabled adolescent.

3.2.8 Possible Outcomes of the Study

- A clearer understanding of which personal attributes contribute towards resilience, and which detract from it.

- A clearer understanding specifically of the role of personal attributes in the phenomenon of resilience.
- A deeper cognisance of the phenomenon of resilience as evidenced by the learning-disabled child.
- A foundation for guidelines targeting the inculcation of resilience-skills, (and thereby the implication that innate determinants may be nurtured.)
- Further research into the efficacy of a programme to inculcate resilience skills.

In the following chapter, the empirical study will be reported and the outcomes discussed.



CHAPTER FOUR

REPORT ON THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

*"To keep you hidden, to lose you because of self-defeating ideas is to die.
Don't let that happen.
Your greatest responsibility is to become everything that you are ..."*
(Buscaglia, 1982: 264)

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In this chapter, the writer will provide the reader with an overview of the process of the empirical study and discuss the results originating from the study. As was explained in Chapter Three, twenty subjects were identified by their current teachers and the school's psychology department. Ten of the subjects are hypothesized to be resilient, whilst the remaining ten are thought to be vulnerable.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE TESTEES

Date of testing: 29 July 1998
Follow-up interviews: 30 July 1998 to 7 August 1998
Age: ranges from 14 - 18
IQ: ranges from average to above average

As stated in chapter three, the subjects forming the basis of the empirical study are a homogeneous group, in that all these adolescents are English-speaking and have been diagnosed as being learning disabled. For this reason they all attend the same school, which caters for learners with special educational needs. The writer sees their learning disability as a primary obstacle challenging the fruition of resilience.

The learning disability is not the only obstacle in the path of these children's self-actualisation, however. The following table summarises the background of the group of adolescents labelled as vulnerable by their teachers.

TABLE 3
VULNERABLE GROUP'S LIFE-EVENTS

LIFE'S BLOW	NUMBER IN GROUP AFFECTED
Death / unexplained long-term absence of a parent	2
Death of a sibling	1
Severe marital discord / divorce	7
Adoption / Foster Home	2
Financial difficulties	1
Rejection by a parent	4

The group characterised as being resilient has also faced, and continues to face, similar odds:

TABLE 4
RESILIENT GROUP'S LIFE-EVENTS

LIFE'S BLOW	NUMBER IN GROUP AFFECTED
Death / unexplained long-term absence of a parent	2
Severe marital discord / divorce	5
Adoption / Foster Home	1
Financial difficulties	2
Rejection by a parent	3
Chronically ill / depressed parent(s)	1

From the above it is evident that there are multiple stressors operating in the lives of the group of adolescents forming the basis for this study.

The subjects characterising the vulnerable group are persistently in serious trouble at school. This in itself suggests an inability to adjust to life's obstacles, in addition to their having been characterised as vulnerable by their teachers.

4.3 METHOD OF REPORT

The subjects will not be dealt with individually. Instead the writer will compile the results of each assessment medium as a group profile, and then compare the two profiles. The results obtained from each assessment medium will first be discussed individually. Once this has been completed, the writer will combine all the results and discuss them comparatively in order to reach a conclusion about the nature and role of personal attributes in resilience.

Before the writer commences with the results of the assessments, she would first like to comment on the behaviour of the subjects during testing.

4.4 BEHAVIOUR DURING TESTING

The subjects of this particular study are largely unknown to the writer, having been chosen by their teachers and members of the school's Psychology Department (excluding the writer.) Nevertheless, behaviour alone provided the writer with ample clues as to whom the non-resilient and resilient individuals within the group were.

The non-resilient subjects made no, or poor, eye-contact. Their concentration on the task at hand was also poor, often resulting in repeated instructions and individual attention from the writer. Furthermore, the non-resilient youngsters refrained from asking the writer for assistance, despite their lack of understanding. Instead, they either waited passively to be noticed, or disturbed their neighbours. Three of the boys labelled as non-resilient by their teachers, squabbled with, and threatened other members of the group. A further two members of the non-resilient group evidenced an acutely slow work tempo, completing the task a full eighty, and ninety three minutes respectively, after the rest of the group had

already completed all the tasks and left. One member of the non-resilient group complained from the moment the testing began and frequently requested to be allowed to go to the toilet. When the writer offered him the choice of discontinuing his testing, however, he chose to remain. In general, (with one exception) the youngsters thought to be vulnerable were sloppy and unkempt. Their body posture was also poor.

By contrast, the members of the group labelled as resilient by their teachers, showed high levels of self-help skills and autonomy. They were unafraid to request assistance when needed. They also used their initiative and worked more quickly and diligently than the youngsters hypothesized to be non-resilient. The writer gained the impression that the youngsters thought to be resilient were keen to cooperate. They also showed a sense of humour. In general (with two exceptions) the youngsters thought to be resilient were neatly dressed and their body posture was good.

4.5 FINDINGS OF THE INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION MEASURES

The writer will now discuss the results of each subtest used to measure resilience individually. As stated previously, only once the results of all the subtests have been discussed, will the writer put the findings together, and draw comprehensive comparisons and conclusions.

4.5.1 Draw A Person in the Rain

Each subject was requested to draw a person in the rain. The writer will interpret the drawings only in terms of elements providing clues to the potential for resilience, or lack thereof. The drawings may be found in the appendix preceding the bibliography.

4.5.1.1 The vulnerable group's drawings

Only one of the ten drawings contained an element of hope, in the form of the sun half obscured by the rain cloud. This individual was also the only individual to allude to the rain

eventually abating in the interviews held to discuss the drawings. In the other nine drawings, the rain is copious, described as such, and the figures appear forlorn. With the exception of the three figures drawn skateboarding, the subjects typically described their persons as either sad, unhappy or lonely. One individual explained that his person was lost, and it felt like he spent his life watching others who knew exactly where they were going to.

Seven of the ten drawings showed some form of protection against the rain, typically an umbrella, or a hat, or both an umbrella and a hat. Three of the drawings showed a person completely unprotected against a deluge of rain. The overall message conveyed was one of vulnerability, as the protection drawn generally appeared inadequate. The persons drawn **look** vulnerable.

Four of the drawings showed a distraction against the rain. One included other people, with the person that the drawer identified with, being a small child between two adults, clinging to their hands for protection. The other three included skateboards, skateboard ramps and cigarettes. In the interviews concerning the drawings, one individual summed up the need for this distraction by saying: "*Check, as long as the dude can skateboard, life's cool!*" This same individual emphasized the importance of his passion by also drawing an umbrella for his skateboard. Another went on to describe the worst incident in his life as being the occasion his parents confiscated his board for lack of progress at school. The writer drew the conclusion from the interviews that these youngsters used their hobby as a means of escaping the ugliness of their reality. Two of the boys also described this hobby as the only area in which they felt capable and confident, hence their quasi obsession for it. Two of the three also referred to marijuana as a means of their person coping with the storms of life. The three boys who added skateboards to their drawings described their persons as angry and/or stoned, compared to the emotionally vulnerable answers of the rest of the group.

One of the drawings including a drawing of a skateboard also includes a a drawing of a gun. The individual expressed his anger at the world, and at his father in particular. Using the medium of the drawing, he expressed anger vociferously: "*He's stuffed. His life's*

*stuffed ... it's his *#@!!* father. He might as well just blow his brains out ... that would teach the *#@!!* bastard!*" Of significance to the writer was that the gun was not being used in self-defence, and that the person drawn remained defiant in the face of being shot (a "zap sign" illustrates the defiance.) Of further significance is that there is nobody holding the gun. The writer understood this to illustrate the helplessness and continuous threat experienced by the subject in his relationship to his life world, and his father, in particular.

When the drawings are analysed in terms of the position of the drawings, two positions dominate. In six of the drawings the person is placed in the centre of the page, suggesting a stubbornness, tension and a basic insecurity. In the remaining four drawings, the person is placed in the top half of the page suggesting that there is a high level of striving, but that the striving is experienced as futile.

Seven of the ten drawn figures are relatively small, suggesting possible feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Half of the figures are drawn in profile suggesting the possibility of difficult interpersonal relationships, as well as an unwillingness to face given circumstances or a basic evasiveness.

Five of the drawings contain colouring in, suggesting anxiety. Three further drawings contain short, sketchy lines also suggesting anxiety and insecurity.

In at least half of the drawings, the arms (or the arm not holding the umbrella) are stiffly at the person's side(s). This suggests tension and defensive feelings, as well as a certain passivity.

There are further isolated indications of anxiety and inferiority in various individual drawings (for example: baselines, buttons, no hands, bowed body posture, no feet) suggesting that anxiety and inferiority are themes running throughout the drawings of this group.

In conclusion, the writer found stylistic evidence of:

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| ■ anxiety | ■ tension |
| ■ insecurity | ■ evasiveness |
| ■ inferiority | ■ futile striving |
| ■ difficult interpersonal relationships | ■ stubbornness |

During her interviews with the subjects, and by means of their projection, the writer became aware of:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| ■ anxiety | ■ tension |
| ■ anger | ■ insecurity |
| ■ despair | ■ rebelliousness |
| ■ difficult interpersonal relationships | ■ helplessness |
| ■ self-loathing | ■ feelings of vulnerability |
| ■ sadness | ■ depression |
| ■ recklessness | |

4.5.1.2 The resilient group's drawings

Half of this group's drawings showed a person with no protection against the rain. Of these five, two persons were depicted as enjoying the rain, despite the lack of protection. In the later interview, these two subjects described their persons as happy and enjoying the gentle rain. A third subject projected that his person was so used to the rain that it made no sense any longer to try and use an umbrella. He described his person as having accepted the presence of rain in his life, and that his person was neither happy nor sad, but "O.K." The remaining two were evasive.

The remaining five drawings showed persons with protection against the rain: typically either a hat, or an umbrella, or a hat and an umbrella. Regardless of the presence or lack of protection, at least half of the persons drawn looked happy or cheerful, in contrast to the

pathetic-looking little figures of the vulnerable group. In general they were described as feeling friendly or happy. One person attributed feelings of stubbornness and sarcasm to his person.

As in the former group, there was one drawing of a person with a gun. However, in this specific drawing, the person drawn was large and capable-looking. Menacing almost. Despite the ragged apparel and poor environment drawn in, the person looks capable of self-defence. The subject also projected these qualities onto his person, stating that his person would never be a “loser” and would do whatever it took to defend himself. An aggressive drive for survival was obvious to the writer.

When the drawings are analysed in terms of position, five of the drawings are drawn in the top half of the page, suggesting a strong drive to achieve, possibly accompanied by feelings that such striving is futile. Of these five, two are placed in the top lefthand corner, suggesting high levels of insecurity and anxiety, coupled with a possible desire to avoid new experiences and return to the safety of the past. Both of these drawings are stick figures, and one is faceless, emphasising the levels of insecurity and difficulty with interpersonal relationships. The interviews with the two boys who drew these persons revealed very high levels of current upheaval in their lives, separate from the prior obstacles their teachers were aware of. The writer is of the opinion that their drawing is indicative of a need for support and therapeutic intervention, if their previous resilient behaviour is to be maintained.

Of the remaining five, four are drawn in the bottom half of the page. None of the drawings use the bottom of the page as a basis, however. The implication of this positioning is a tendency towards being calm and stable, or possibly even a tendency towards feeling down sometimes.

The remaining drawing is centrally placed, suggesting stubbornness and anxiety. This drawing is also the one containing the gun. The size of this figure adds to the notion of aggression.

Of significance is that, unlike the vulnerable group, not one of the drawings in this group is drawn in profile. All of the drawings are forward facing, suggesting an outgoing nature and willingness to interact socially. None of the drawings in this group contain extras which might be used as a distraction to disengage from reality as in the drawings of the vulnerable youngsters. Compared to the generally pathetic or stooped figures of the vulnerable group, half of the persons drawn by this group are not puny figures, which suggests capability and the will to face life.

In at least five of the drawings, the arms of the person are away from the sides, giving the impression of a desire to interact, and a need for love.

Four of the drawings contain shading, suggesting insecurity and anxiety. There are further isolated indications of anxiety and inferiority in various individual drawings (for example: baselines; buttons; dark, heavy lines;) suggesting that anxiety and inferiority are not foreign experiences to some members of this group. The amount of indications are fewer than those found in the previous group though.

Four of the drawings show eyes that almost appear to be unseeing (no pupil has been added.) This provides the impression of some emotional immaturity and egocentricity. With the exception of the subject who added the gun to his drawing, evidence of egocentricity and emotional immaturity was not found in the writer's interviews with the subjects.

In conclusion, the writer found stylistic evidence of:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| ■ calmness and stability | ■ outgoing nature |
| ■ social orientation | ■ aggression |
| ■ ambition | ■ anxiety |
| ■ futile striving | ■ insecurity |
| ■ willingness to interact | ■ desire for love |

During her interviews with the subjects, and by means of their projection, the writer became generally aware of:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| ■ acceptance | ■ tenacity |
| ■ cheerfulness | ■ friendliness |
| ■ anxiety | ■ tension |
| ■ anger | ■ ambition |
| ■ insecurity | ■ longing for happiness and love |

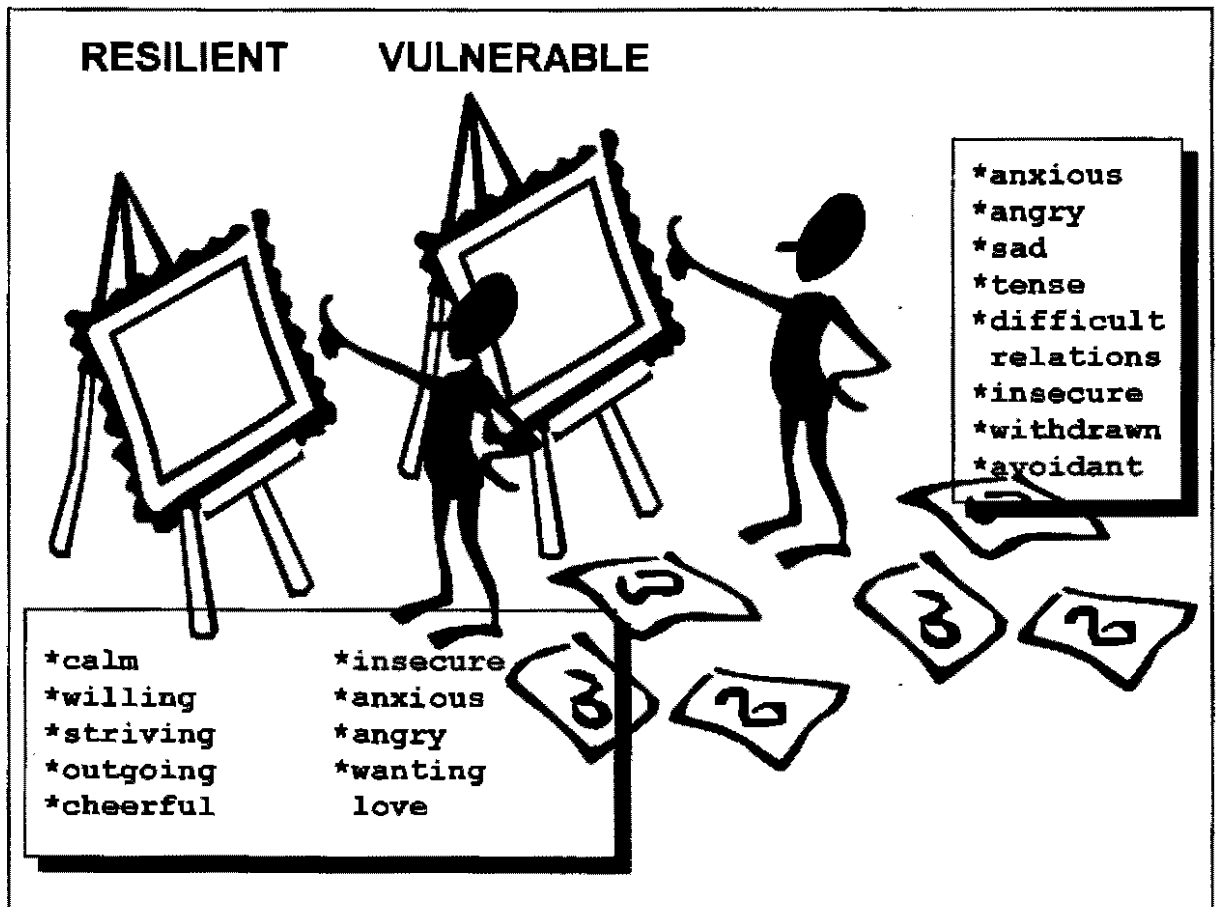
4.5.1.3 Conclusions reached about the drawings of the two groups using the draw a person in the rain:

When the writer compares the drawings of the two groups, it becomes apparent that the resilient youngsters' drawings allude to more positive personal attributes than negative, whilst the vulnerable group's points to predominantly negative attributes. Of special interest to the writer were the indications of a willingness to interact and a positive attitude found in the drawings and interviews with the resilient group, which were lacking in the vulnerable group. It seems to the writer that whilst the resilient youngsters are generally concerned with happiness and life's more positive aspects, despite recognised pain and anxiety, the vulnerable group is firmly lodged in unhappiness and anxiety.

The writer must also add that two of the drawings of the resilient group reflected a complete lack of resilience. The follow-up interviews affirmed and explained this, given current difficulties in these two youngsters' lives. The writer suggests that this may be as the result of their age (both are in grade eight, the grade in which a trend of extreme dissatisfaction and emotional upheaval is always noticed at their school); alternatively these two youngsters have worn a mask of resilience which has convinced their teachers; or resilience is an ongoing process which ebbs and flows, one, which for these two, is apparently currently ebbing.

The basic differences between the drawings of the two groups are summarised in the following diagram:

DIAGRAM 10



comparison of the draw-a-person-in-the-rain

4.5.2 Three Animals Technique

The writer asked each individual to choose the animal he or she would dearly like to be, given an opportunity to be changed into an animal. The instruction is repeated twice, each time assuming that the previously chosen animal is no longer available.

4.5.2.1 Report on the vulnerable group's animal choices

The vulnerable group generally selected fierce animals for fierce reasons, as depicted in the following table:

TABLE 5
ANIMALS CHOSEN BY VULNERABLE GROUP

ANIMAL	Number chosen by	GENERAL REASON GIVEN:
Bird (of prey)	6	* to fly away * to fly and see the world in a different way
Tiger	4	* a tiger is strong * a tiger is fierce
Snake	4	* a snake is powerful and dangerous * a snake is afraid of nothing
Shark	2	* it's deadly * it's not scared of anything
Cheetah	2	* it's fast and cunning
Animal of prey (lion, wolverine, jaguar, puma)	4	* it's powerful * it's fierce and strong * ability to do anything
Dolphin	2	* it can protect itself from getting hurt
Dog	2	* it can bite anyone it doesn't like * it can be friendly
Gentle animal (rabbit, tortoise, panda bear)	3	* it's cute
Scorpion	1	* it's deadly

What emerges strongly from the above projections, is:

- the need for freedom and escape (This need translates into a personal feeling of being trapped or frustrated.)
- the need for protection (This need translates into a personal feeling of being vulnerable and helpless perhaps.)

- the need to be empowered (This need translates into a personal feeling of helplessness and inadequacy.)
- the need to be nurtured (This need translates into a personal feeling of loneliness, or insecurity, or rejection.)
- a pervasive sense of anger and hostility

4.5.2.2 Report on the resilient group's animal choices

The resilient group chose very similar animals, but in general their reasons were different, as depicted in the following table:

TABLE 6
ANIMALS CHOSEN BY RESILIENT GROUP

ANIMAL	Number chosen by	GENERAL REASON GIVEN
Bird (of prey)	5	* to soar * fly high, without worries * possesses courage
Dolphin	4	* gentle * close to humans
Tiger	3	* beautiful * powerful
Cheetah	2	* its speed
Other animal of prey (lion, wild cat, panther, leopard)	6	* beautiful * powerful * free
Gentle animals (cat, dog, panda, monkey, fish)	5	* friendly * cute and cuddly * free
Shark	2	* never gives up * vicious
Snake	1	* keeps to itself
Elephant	1	* enormous strength
Dog	1	* to bite people

What emerges strongly from the above projections is:

- an appreciation of beauty
- an awareness of gentleness and people-oriented attributes
- a need for freedom
- an admiration of power and a possible need to be empowered

4.5.2.3 Conclusions reached about the two groups using Kritzberg's three animal technique:

When the projections of the two groups are directly compared, it appears that the vulnerable group feels frustrated, fearful, angry and rejected; whilst the resilient group reflects a positive awareness and appreciation of their life world. The differences are tabulated in the following table:

TABLE 7
GROUP COMPARISON, USING ANIMAL CHOICES

VULNERABLE GROUP	RESILIENT GROUP
* a need to escape suggesting a sense of frustration and unhappiness.	* a need for freedom, especially freedom from worries, suggesting a sense of concern.
* a need for fierce power and protection suggesting feelings of inadequacy and helplessness, and sometimes even a wish for revenge.	* an admiration of power and a wish to be empowered.
* a need to be nurtured and appreciated or even noticed, suggesting insecurity and perhaps feelings of rejection.	* an awareness of gentleness and people-oriented attributes, suggesting a positive orientation towards others.
* a pervasive feeling of anger and fear.	* a pervasive appreciation of beauty.

4.5.3 Three Wishes

The writer requested each individual to pretend that any three wishes may be granted to him or her. The wishes which the subjects then made have been thematically summarised by the writer.

4.5.3.1 The vulnerable group's wishes

In descending order the vulnerable group predominantly wished for:

- success in a hobby or sport
- money
- a chance to travel
- a successful future

There were only three wishes for successful relationships; three for altered family relationships; two for no more school; one for success at school; and one altruistic wish.

4.5.3.2 The resilient group's wishes

In descending order the resilient group predominantly wished for:

- money
- happiness
- a successful future

There were two wishes for altered family relationships and two to see a deceased/missing parent; two to live forever; one for success at school; one for improved personal appearance; one for success in sport; one for countless wishes; and one for love.

4.5.3.3 Conclusions reached about the two groups using the three wishes technique:

When the predominant respective wishes of the two groups are compared, the following becomes apparent:

TABLE 8
GROUP COMPARISON, USING THREE WISHES

VULNERABLE GROUP	RESILIENT GROUP
there is financial need	there is financial need
there is motivation to succeed in future	there is motivation to succeed in future
happiness is not a priority	personal happiness is important
concentration on a sport or hobby is important	there is little need to disengage from reality by focusing on a sport or hobby

It would seem then that the dominant dissimilarity between the groups is the focus of the resilient group on emotions (happiness in particular) whilst the vulnerable group chooses to focus on physical activity in the form of a hobby or sport, possibly because of its potential to allow disengagement from harsh reality or because it allows a sense of success. The writer sees this as a chosen avoidance technique, whilst she views the resilient group's focus on acquiring happiness as a choice to self-actualise and grow. Possibly the vulnerable group does also not dare to move from the concrete (sport or hobbies) to the abstract (happiness) because they feel out of control of their destiny, given their external locus of control.

4.5.4 The High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ)

Form B of the HSPQ was used. Fourteen personality factors can be obtained from the HSPQ. The reader is advised that scores obtained function on a continuum, ranging from a low score description (a score of 1 - 3 is considered low) to a high score description (a score of 8 - 10 is considered high) of the same factor. In her analysis of the factors impacting on the potential for resilience, the writer will ignore average scores of 5 and 6.

The low average score of 4, and the high average score of 7 will still be considered for possible impact.

4.5.4.1 HSPQ results of the vulnerable group:

The following results were obtained for the non-resilient group, resulting in an average sten per personality factor as indicated in the bottom row of the table:

TABLE 9
VULNERABLE GROUP : HSPQ SCORES

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	O	Q2	Q3	Q4	
4	1	3	10	7	4	4	1	7	4	7	5	3	5	
4	8	5	10	7	5	1	1	4	4	10	8	4	7	
5	5	3	7	7	5	4	6	2	4	6	4	5	6	
5	5	4	8	8	6	3	7	1	4	3	6	5	8	
3	6	6	5	7	6	8	3	6	5	4	7	7	4	
6	4	4	10	8	10	3	2	2	8	9	7	1	6	
2	5	3	5	7	4	1	2	4	8	7	6	4	6	
2	4	1	6	7	5	3	5	4	8	7	4	5	7	
2	7	5	10	8	6	3	6	7	10	5	7	5	5	
4	7	4	10	8	10	7	4	4	9	5	6	9	10	
37	52	38	81	74	61	37	37	41	64	63	60	48	64	total
3.7	5.2	3.8	8.1	7.4	6.1	3.7	3.7	4.1	6.4	6.3	6.0	4.8	6.4	Ave sten

Thus, a graph of the non-resilient adolescent's personality profile would look as follows:








CHART 2
VULNERABLE HSPQ PROFILE


LOW FACTOR		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		HIGH FACTOR
reserved	A			×								A	outgoing
concrete thought pattern	B					×						B	abstract thought pattern
emotionally vulnerable	C			×								C	emotionally stable
phlegmatic	D								×			D	excitable
submissive	E							×				E	dominant
sober	F						×					F	carefree
opportunistic	G			×								G	diligent
shy	H			×								H	bold
tough-minded	I				×							I	tender-minded
zestful	J						×					J	individualistic
self-assured	O						×					O	apprehensive
group-dependent	Q2						×					Q2	self-sufficient
uncontrolled	Q3				×							Q3	controlled
relaxed	Q4						×					Q4	tense
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

4.5.4.2 Discussion of vulnerable group's HSPQ results

Interpreted (according to the manual for HSPQ, 1974: 9-19), the above profile yields the following information:

TABLE 10
TABLE OF VULNERABLE HSPQ RESULTS

FACTOR	SCORE	SIGNIFICANCE:	Corroborated by:
A	3.7 	A tendency towards being reserved, cool, distrustful and sulky. There is a lack of willingness to become socially involved.	Draw-a-person-in-the-rain.
B	5.2	No significance. The vulnerable youngsters are apparently neither specifically abstract or concrete thinkers.	
C	3.8 	Poor ego strength is intimated. Associated features are: low frustration tolerance; evasion of responsibility; lack of perseverance; and general dissatisfaction with self and circumstances.	Choice of ferocious animals, suggesting a need for empowerment and protection.
D	8.1 	An inclination towards demanding, overactive and irrepensible behaviour. Their temperament would tend towards impulsivity and low frustration tolerance. Social feedback would probably be negative as a result.	Factor C and choice of animals.
E	7.4 	Assertive behaviour may border on aggression and stubbornness. May result in negative social experience and feedback.	Choice of fierce animals; factor D score and drawings.
F	6.1	The average score implies factor F is non-significant. Vulnerable youngsters are neither clearly serious nor happy-go-lucky.	
G	 3.7	Vulnerable youngsters quit easily and tend to disregard rules and norms. Associated attributes would be irresponsibility and unreliability.	Drawings; Factor D and E scores.
H	3.7 	Sensitivity to threat and emotional cautiousness are indicated. Associated attributes would be resentment and distrust.	Factor A score; drawings and three animals chosen.
I	4.1 	Tough-mindedness rather than tender-mindedness is indicated. A lack of empathy is implied.	Three animals.

J	6.4	Average score suggests no significance. Vulnerable youngsters are neither group-dependent or individualistic.	Drawings imply a greater tendency towards lack of interaction.
O	6.3	Average score suggests no significance. Vulnerable youngsters are neither self-assured or apprehensive.	
Q2	6.0	Average score suggests no significance. Vulnerable youngsters are neither group-dependent or resourcefully independent.	Factor J.
Q3	4.8 	A tendency towards uncontrolled behaviour is indicated. Associated attributes would be following personal urges rather than social rules.	Factors D and G; choice of dangerous predators, whose attacks are often unpredictable.
Q4	6.4	Average score suggesting neither a relaxed or tense stance in life.	Stiff-hands-at-their-sides posture in drawings suggests tension.

There are no apparent contradictions in the HSPQ profile of the vulnerable group.

4.5.4.3 HSPQ results obtained by the resilient group

The following results were obtained for the resilient group, resulting in an average sten per personality factor as indicated in the bottom row of the table:

TABLE 11
RESILIENT GROUP: HSPQ RESULTS

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	O	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1	3	4	6	8	7	7	7	4	4	5	7	3	4	
7	5	4	10	10	8	7	7	5	4	5	3	1	7	
2	4	6	8	8	8	4	5	6	5	6	7	9	7	
9	7	1	10	10	10	2	3	6	5	9	5	1	8	
1	4	6	4	8	4	5	5	5	4	10	7	3	4	
9	7	1	10	10	10	2	3	6	5	9	5	1	8	
3	6	3	9	2	4	3	4	9	7	6	10	5	7	
6	6	5	5	10	3	7	5	4	8	8	7	7	7	

5	3	5	7	8	4	3	5	5	4	7	5	4	4	
7	5	3	7	8	6	5	2	7	5	8	7	4	9	
8	7	6	5	6	7	8	6	7	7	5	8	7	6	
58	57	44	81	88	71	53	52	64	58	78	71	45	71	total
5.8	5.7	4.4	8.1	8.8	7.1	5.3	5.2	6.4	5.8	7.8	7.1	4.5	7.1	ave sten

Thus, if one were to plot a graph of the resilient adolescent's personality profile it would look as follows:





CHART 3
RESILIENT HSPQ PROFILE






LOW FACTOR		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		HIGH FACTOR
reserved	A					*						A	outgoing
concrete thought	B					*						B	abstract
emotionally vulnerable	C				*							C	emotionally stable
phlegmatic	D								*			D	excitable
submissive	E								*			E	dominant
sober	F							*				F	carefree
opportunistic	G					*						G	diligent
shy	H					*						H	bold
tough-minded	I						*					I	tender-minded
zestful	J					*						J	individualistic
self-assured	O							*				O	apprehensive
group-dependant	Q2							*				Q2	self-sufficient
uncontrolled	Q3				*							Q3	controlled
relaxed	Q4							*				Q4	tense
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

4.5.4.4 Interpretation of resilient HSPQ results

Interpreted (according to the manual for HSPQ, 1974: 9-19), the above profile yields the following information:

TABLE 12
HSPQ RESULTS, RESILIENT GROUP

FACTOR	SCORE	SIGNIFICANCE	Corroborated by:
A	5.8 	Average score suggests no significance. It is however significantly higher than the vulnerable group's score, suggesting a greater tendency to be outgoing. Associated attributes are attentiveness to others and better interpersonal relationships.	Drawings indicate a willingness to be socially involved; three animals.
B	5.7	Average score suggests no significance. Resilient youngsters are neither categorically abstract or concrete thinkers.	
C	4.4	Low score suggests resilient youngsters are not immune to life's blows and are affected by feeling.	Corroborated by Factor O and signs of anxiety in drawings.
D	8.1 	An inclination towards demanding, overactive and irrepensible behaviour. Their temperament would tend towards impulsivity and low frustration tolerance.	Not corroborated.
E	8.8 	Dominance is indicated: very assertive behaviour is suggested. Associated features are independence and creativity.	Aggression is not implied: three animals suggest an admiration of power, rather than a need to be all-powerful.
F	7.1 	Enthusiasm and cheerfulness are indicated, rather than a happy-go-lucky stance. An associated attribute would be an avoidance of self-pity and good interpersonal skills.	Drawings and three wishes.
G	5.3	The average score suggests that the resilient group is neither undependable nor overly conscientious.	
H	5.2	The average score suggests that the resilient group is neither shy nor socially bold.	Drawings and three animals suggest social sensitivity.

I	6.4 	The greater tendency is towards being tender-minded. Associated traits are empathy and sensitivity.	Drawings showed social orientation and a longing for love; appreciation of gentleness and beauty from three animals.
J	5.8	Average score suggests no significance. The resilient group is neither completely individualistic nor group dependent.	Matches factor H.
O	7.8 	Anxiety is indicated. There is a sense of the resilient youngsters being driven, and sensitive to others' approval or disapproval, implying a need for encouragement and social sensitivity.	Three animals suggests a need for freedom from worry.
Q2	7.1 	Self-sufficiency is indicated, suggesting a reliance on self rather than the group, and the ability to cope.	No need to identify with ferocious animal emphasises self-sufficiency.
Q3	4.5 	Lower average score suggests only a tendency towards following own urges, rather than social norms. Because this is really a low average score, it could be seen as evidence of spontaneity.	Factor D; need for freedom projected in three animals.
Q4	7.1 	A tendency towards frustration and tension is indicated.	Factor O; signs of tension in drawings.

When the profile is considered in terms of conflicting attributes, the traits suggesting anxiety and tension appear to conflict with the traits suggesting enthusiasm or optimism and self-sufficiency. The writer is of the opinion that these traits may complement one another, rather than conflict. Precisely because the resilient youngster chooses to be energetic and optimistic despite life's obstacles, his anxiety and tension levels are not higher. To the writer, the anxiety and tension scores show an awareness of reality, rather than a denial thereof, which in turn motivates self-improvement, rather than stasis or self-pity. Buscaglia (1992:92) also views anxiety as necessary: *"We have come to believe that anxiety is a state to be avoided at all cost . . . In reality, anxiety has a positive value,*

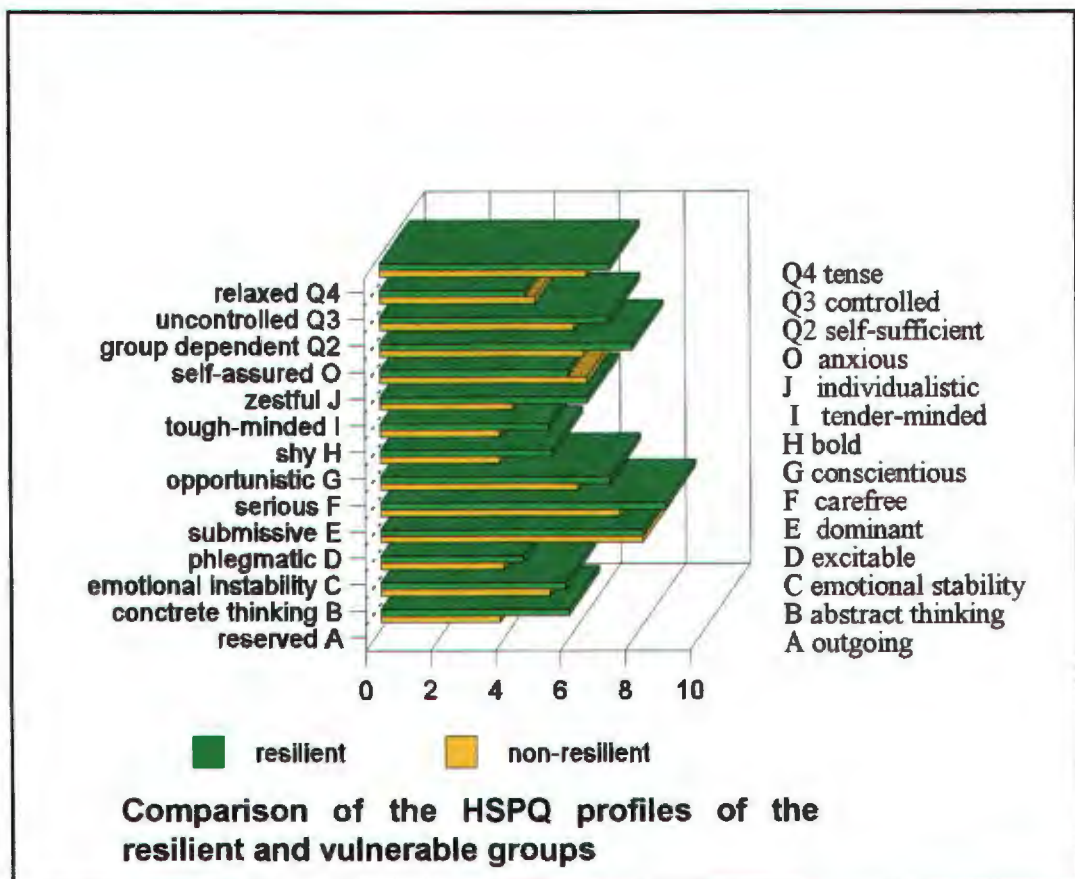
when we see it as a normal, human state, it can represent the first step from which all acts of psychic growth and survival build..”

The writer must also add that many of the scores on the two grade eight boys’ (mentioned in section 4.4.1.3) protocols were extreme for the anxiety and tension factors, as well as the emotional stability factors and this may have impacted on the group’s overall score.

4.5.4.5 Conclusions reached about the groups using the HSPQ:

A comparison of the personality profiles for each group yields the following profile:

CHART 4



When the resilient and vulnerable groups are directly compared, it becomes apparent that the resilient group is:

- more outgoing
- more emotionally stable
- more carefree
- bolder
- less individualistic
- more self-sufficient
- more abstract thinking
- more dominant
- more conscientious
- more tender-minded
- more anxious
- more tense

Based on Charts 2, 3 and 4, and acknowledging only the high (7 - 10) and low (1 - 4) scores, separate core profiles of personality traits can be obtained. These profiles are diagrammatically summarised for the reader.

The vulnerable adolescent's potential for resilience is obscured by the tendency to be:

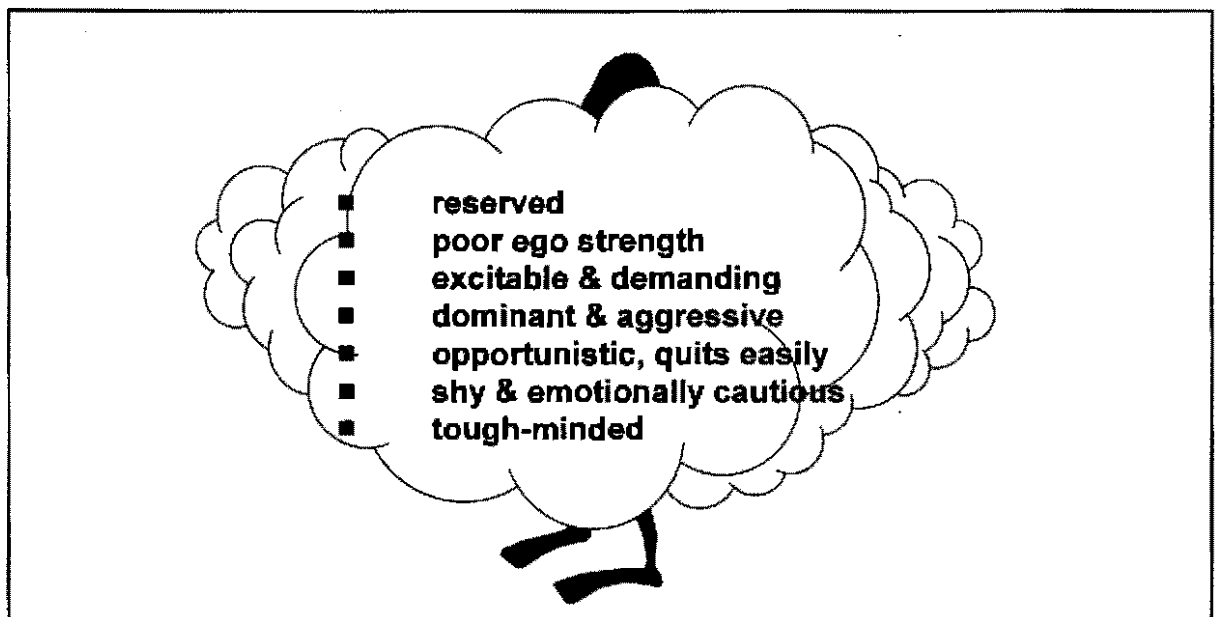


DIAGRAM 11

SUMMARY OF VULNERABLE CORE PERSONALITY TRAITS

In comparison, the resilient adolescent may be characterised as being:

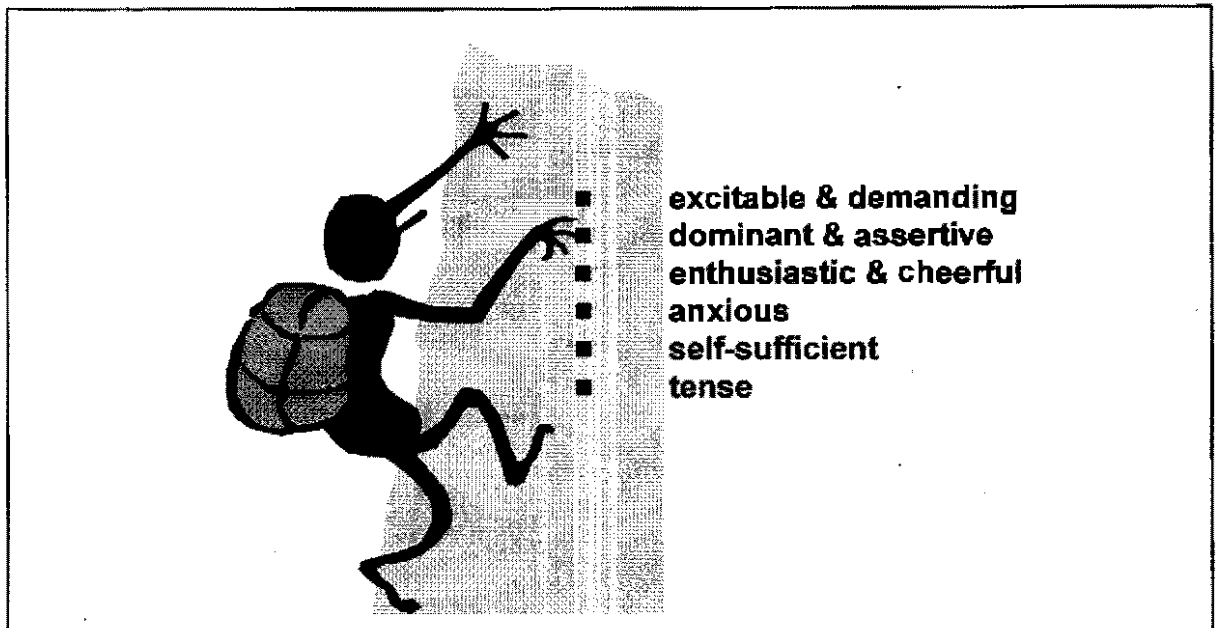


DIAGRAM 12

SUMMARY OF RESILIENT CORE PERSONALITY TRAITS

In conclusion, the two groups are at opposite poles of the personality spectrum in most of their core personality traits, except for dominance, control and excitability. The resilient group is more driven, given their anxiety and tension levels. They also manage to be optimistic and cheerful, whereas the vulnerable group quits easily, and is emotionally cautious. This, along with traits which stymie positive social interaction, puts the vulnerable group at a disadvantage.

4.5.5 The Emotions Profile Index (EPI)

The EPI is also a personality test, one designed to yield information about four basic bipolar dimensions of emotion, namely whether the individual is timid or aggressive; gregarious or depressed; trustful or distrustful; and controlled or dyscontrolled.

4.5.5.1 EPI results of the resilient group:

The test yielded the following information about the resilient group:

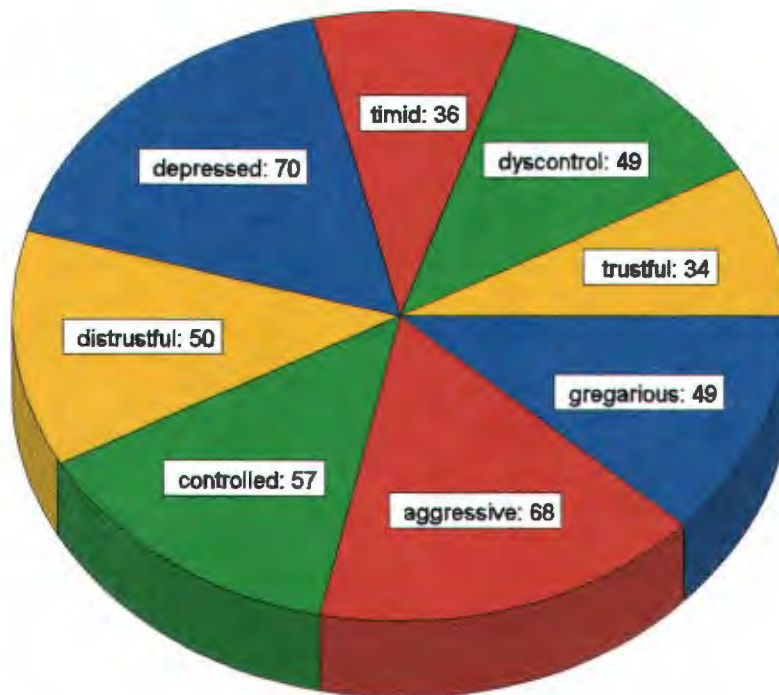
TABLE 13
RESILIENT EPI RESULTS

trustful	dyscon- trolled	timid	depressed	distrust	control- led	aggres- sive	grega- rious	bias
25	79	1	54	92	5	87	99	16
43	58	80	69	25	68	39	24	78
0	36	29	99	94	42	99	0	0
50	58	23	10	92	49	53	59	45
43	96	4	83	25	3	93	67	14
6	43	37	82	68	96	60	25	18
85	13	86	85	1	48	26	71	93
11	13	30	99	44	11	78	20	5
11	59	50	85	28	75	74	35	30
66	36	23	35	33	68	58	87	25
340	491	363	701	502	465	667	487	324
34	49	36	70	50	57	68	49	32

Of significance is the bias score at the thirty second percentile, indicating that in general the group has not chosen the more socially desirable alternatives in most cases. This suggests that the group in general is in touch with its emotions.

A graph based on the above percentiles would look as follows:

CHART 5
RESILIENT GROUP EPI PROFILE



Ideally, one would like a balanced profile, with matching highs and lows. The above profile does provide an approximated balance.

When the nature of the individual percentiles is analysed in terms of extreme scores (extremes being below 40 or above 60) the following emerges:

- The lower trustful score suggests that the resilient adolescents are not gullible and have learnt not to take anything at face value. However, given previous findings suggesting sensitivity and tender-mindedness, it may be assumed that the resilient youngsters are not so distrustful as to be cynical or critical.
- The lower timid score suggests an absence of timidity implying that the resilient adolescents will take risks and proceed less cautiously. This corroborates the HSPQ score for excitability. The resilient youngsters may behave impulsively.

- The higher aggressive score suggests that the resilient adolescents may well be strongly assertive and inclined to speak their mind. Again, this is consistent with the findings of the HSPQ, which suggested that the resilient youngsters were strongly assertive.
- The higher depression score suggests some sadness and gloominess, or a dissatisfaction with certain aspects of life. This percentile surprised the writer somewhat, given the sense of a positive attitude portrayed in the drawings, the interviews following the drawings, as well as the projections in Kritzberg's Three Animal Technique.

It must be noted, however, that none of the above scores are acutely extreme, suggesting then that the above analyses be seen to have only moderate effect.

4.5.5.2 EPI results of the vulnerable group:

The vulnerable group yielded the following results:

TABLE 14
VULNERABLE EPI RESULTS

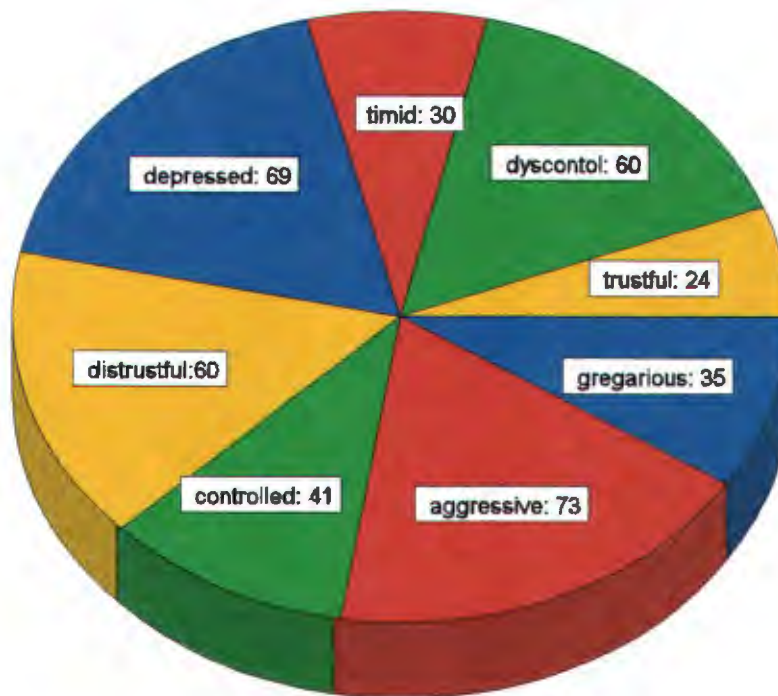
trust	dyscon- trol	timid	depressed	distrust- ful	control- led	aggres- sive	grega- rious	bias
34	35	37	59	68	33	74	59	21
50	79	42	26	41	61	32	59	60
58	15	49	74	41	81	14	75	60
17	79	6	92	64	0	99+	34	3
43	65	35	83	17	22	74	45	28
7	96	12	62	78	35	91	24	9
9	58	35	86	71	49	83	12	6
5	44	55	97	25	61	83	12	9
11	86	6	17	99	35	87	29	9
1	44	19	94	92	28	97	4	0

235	601	296	690	596	405	734	353	205
24	60	30	69	60	41	73	35	20

Of significance is the bias score at the twentieth percentile, suggesting that the vulnerable group was even less concerned with giving socially desirable answers. This suggests that there is an absence of concern with appearances.

A chart based on the above percentiles would look as follows:

CHART 6
EPI OF VULNERABLE GROUP



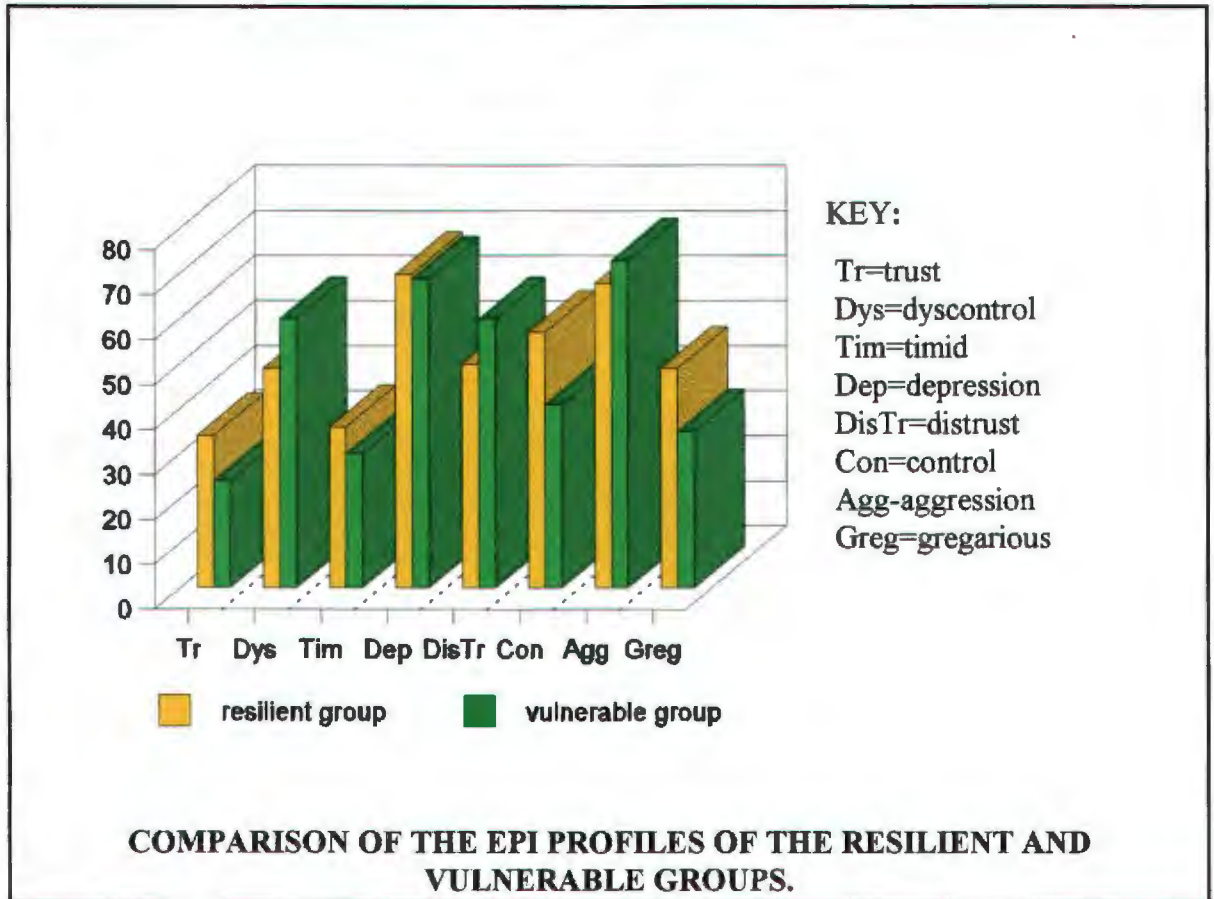
Just as in the profile of the resilient group, the EPI profile of the vulnerable group is balanced, with every low score having a contrasting high score.

In terms of extreme scores:

- the trustful score is very low, suggesting a tendency not to accept anything at face value and a tendency to be very critical. When a trustful score tends towards extreme lows, disobedience may also be indicated. This score corroborates the picture of emotional caution obtained in the HSPQ profile.
- the timid score is low too, suggesting an attitude verging on a devil-may-care temperament, with caution thrown to the wind. It would seem as if the vulnerable youngsters do not act in their own best interests, given their lack of respect for the consequences of risk. This score corroborates the opportunistic score of the HSPQ.
- the contrasting aggressive score is high, implying that vulnerable adolescents may have a great deal of anger which they express overtly. They may engage quite freely in externalising behaviour or rebellious acts. Once again, this is consistent with previous findings in the animal projections and the HSPQ.
- the depressed percentile is a high one, suggesting as in the resilient group, some sadness and gloominess, or a dissatisfaction with certain aspects of life. Given the low ego strength score of the HSPQ and the sadness reflected in the drawings, this score came as no surprise to the writer.
- the contrasting gregarious percentile is low, indicating a tendency towards being unsociable and emotionally isolated. Again, this percentile merely confirmed a growing picture of the vulnerable youngster as one who does not relate well socially.

A comparison of the previous two graphs showing the EPI profiles of the resilient and vulnerable groups, yields the following:

CHART 7



A direct comparison of the two groups' profiles suggests that the resilient group is:

- more trustful
- more controlled
- more gregarious
- more timid
- less distrustful
- less dyscontrolled
- equally depressed
- less aggressive

4.5.6 Incomplete Sentences Blank

What becomes overwhelmingly obvious on first reading the responses is the predominantly positive tone of the resilient group's responses, in comparison to the negative or mixed responses of the vulnerable group.

4.5.6.1 Results of the vulnerable group's sentences

An analysis of the responses yields the following results as summarised in the table which follows:

TABLE 15
DISCUSSION OF INCOMPLETE SENTENCES OF VULNERABLE GROUP

VULNERABLE GROUP	
general feel	<p>The pervasive feeling of the sentences is negative; or a mixture of negative and an attempt at being positive.</p> <p>Sentences such as <i>"I often feel lonely"</i>; <i>"I often feel upset..."</i>; <i>"I often feel sad"</i> and <i>"I often feel nervous"</i> predominate.</p>
repetitive themes	<p>There are themes that repeat, not only in each protocol, but also in the group as a whole. The themes which are constantly repeated are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * school failure and dislike of school * the desire for a future career * the desire to succeed at a sport or hobby <p>Of these three themes, the dislike of school and its association with failure, is predominant, occurring in nine of the ten protocols.</p> <p>The writer is aware that many of the responses are vague, suggesting an unwillingness to expose other issues which cause anxiety. Possibly the subjects of this group lack self-knowledge or prefer to maintain distance. The writer also gained the impression that many of the subjects in this group did not participate wholeheartedly in the completion of the protocol. This impression was gained both by observation, and the quality of the responses. This may well have influenced the nature of the responses.</p>
contradictions	<p>There are contradictions in at least half of the protocols. The contradictions mostly concern belief in the self and feelings relating to the self, suggesting conflict.</p> <p>For example, one boy wrote <i>"If I want to I can do anything"</i> and two sentences later <i>"When luck turns against me, I run."</i> Another boy wrote <i>"I am mostly bad"</i> and then <i>"I often feel good."</i></p>
locus of control	<p>There is a passivity in the majority of responses which suggests lack of an internal locus of control. Answers are either characterised by a sense of uninterest, or a need for support from others. There is no sense of being in control of personal destiny.</p> <p>For example, <i>"When luck turns against me, I don't care."</i> or <i>"I can't help being who I am."</i> or <i>"When luck turns against me, I feel like shrivelling up to die."</i></p>

<p>hypotheses of limitations arising from the content of the responses</p>	<p>There are areas of concern which come to one's attention based on the responses of this group:</p> <p>(1) future orientation is either negative (for example "When I see the future I see the end of the world." or "When I think of the future I think of how bad it's going to be.") or obsessively limited to one topic (for example "When I think of the future - skating." to "I hope that I am a good skater." to "One day I shall be a pro skater." to "When I am older I want to be a pro skater.")</p> <p>(2) the level of determination is generally poor.</p> <p>(3) the attitude to life's obstacles is generally negative or hostile (for example "When luck turns against me, I argue.")</p> <p>(4) either the orientation to others is negative (for example "Other people are nothing in my life.") or others are perceived negatively ("Other people don't think highly of me." or "Other people run you down.")</p>
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4.5.6.2 Results of the resilient group's sentences

When the responses of the resilient group are analysed in the same manner, the following conclusions are reached as set out in the table which follows:

TABLE 16
DISCUSSION OF INCOMPLETE SENTENCES : RESILIENT GROUP

<p>RESILIENT GROUP</p>	
<p>general feel</p>	<p>The pervasive feeling is a positive one, giving the impression that the resilient adolescents do not afford themselves victim status.</p> <p>Sentences such as "I am mostly prepared to try in life." or "I am mostly positive." or "I look forward to a challenge." provide the impression of youngsters bouncing back from life's blows.</p>

<p>repetitive themes</p>	<p>Unlike the vulnerable group, there are no themes shared by the group in general. The writer is of the opinion that this points to true self-knowledge, and the willingness to reflect on it, rather than a dependence on cliches.</p> <p>There are, however, individual themes within each protocol. The themes include ambition; a longing to leave a children's home; a longing for happiness; family relationships; boredom with school; interpersonal relationships; money; and sport. The writer was struck by the candid, frank replies in the majority of this group's responses.</p>
<p>contradictions</p>	<p>The writer was also struck by the congruency of the responses in each protocol. There were no contradictions: each subject answered congruently within the theme or themes of his or her responses. The writer received the impression that their participation in this task was whole-hearted and sincere.</p>
<p>locus of control</p>	<p>In the majority of the responses, locus of control appears to be internal. On reading the responses there is no overwhelming sense of anyone being a victim. Responses such as "<i>If I have a problem I solve it</i>" or "<i>When the odds are against me I sort the problem out.</i>" predominate. Even in the protocol of the boy longing to leave the children's home in which he currently resides, there is a sense of him being the author of his destiny, despite the sad tone of the majority of his responses. For example, he writes "<i>When I am older I will leave the home and get a job. I can become what I want.</i>"</p> <p>The predominant lack of self-pity in this group's responses suggests an internal locus of control. There is no denial of negative emotions or events, but there is no wallowing in them either.</p>
<p>hypotheses of limitations arising from the content of the responses</p>	<p>The writer considered the responses in terms of the same limitations arising from the vulnerable group, primarily to see whether there were matches in the resilient group:</p> <p>(1) In terms of future orientation, at least one response in each protocol suggests some fear of the future. However, despite this stated fear, the remaining responses relating to the future are positive and varied. It would seem, therefore, that the resilient youngsters are positively and realistically oriented towards the future. This does not appear to be a limitation as with the vulnerable group.</p> <p>(2) The levels of determination alluded to by the resilient group are generally good. Responses such as "<i>Giving up is one thing I do not believe in.</i>" and "<i>Giving up is not the thing to do; you should try your best first.</i>" predominate. The level of tenacity is therefore not a limitation as in the vulnerable group.</p> <p>(3) Their attitude towards life's obstacles is not defeatist. Instead the responses reveal a willingness to try, or a willingness to enlist support to overcome obstacles. Responses such as "<i>When the odds are against me I ask someone for help.</i>" or "<i>When the odds are against me I fight for how I want it.</i>" are characteristic of an attitude that refuses to be cowed by life. The attitude towards life's obstacles is therefore also not a limitation, as with the vulnerable group.</p>

hypotheses of limitations arising from the content of the responses (continued)	(4) The orientation towards others is mixed. A third of the protocols show appreciation for others. Another third of the protocols show disengagement from others (for example "Other people aren't like me") and the final third indicate a negative orientation (for example "Other people think I'm weird") However, in two of the latter, there is a desire for this to be different, suggesting a sensitivity to interpersonal relations and a basic positive orientation to them.
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4.5.6.3 Conclusions reached about the two groups using the results of the incomplete sentence blank:

When the results are directly analysed they can be tabulated as follows:

TABLE 17
COMPARISON OF RESULTS OF INCOMPLETE SENTENCES.

VULNERABLE		RESILIENT
negative	general feel	positive
contradictory responses suggesting some conflict	contradictions	congruent responses
three dominant intra group themes generally vague answers	themes	no intra group themes; individual themes per protocol candid, frank responses
external	locus of control	internal
poor future orientation poor levels of determinism negative perspective of problems negative social orientation	hypothesized limitations	realistic future orientation tenacious attitude autonomous, positive perspective of problems mixed social orientation with a desire for negative interactions to be righted

4.5.7 Adventure in a Forest Metaphor

The exercise was visibly enjoyed by the group.

4.5.7.1 Results of the vulnerable group's metaphors

TABLE 18

DISCUSSION OF VULNERABLE GROUP'S RESULTS OF METAPHORIC EXERCISE.

Paragraph 1	
Dominant feeling	Four of the responses suggested loneliness and fear. Three of the responses reflected excitement at the adventure. Three of the responses reflected calm and peace, because of being surrounded by nature.
Coping skills	Only the responses reflecting calmness alluded to a coping skill: the subjects used focussing on nature as a disengagement manoeuvre from any possible negative feelings that the strangeness of the surroundings might hold.
Paragraph 2	
Dominant feeling	Eight of the responses suggested a need for protection: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• four found a cave• two pitched a tent• one climbed a high tree• one made a hammock from vines

<p>Coping skills</p>	<p>All of the responses indicated additional measures to feel secure or nurtured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five mentioned building a fire (generally to ward off wild animals.) • Three protected themselves against the wild animals. A big stick, a rifle and traps were mentioned. • Two mentioned finding food. <p>The above measures suggest that challenging circumstances might well be experienced as threatening by many of the vulnerable group.</p>
<p>Inconsistencies</p>	<p>Three of the responses were inconsistent with the gist of the story being narrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one boy referred to the refrigerator from which he fetched food. • another boy mentioned the 'porno' channel he would watch before falling asleep. • a third boy mentioned going off to find a forest super model to join him. <p>The inconsistencies may reflect a denial of reality or an attempt at humour, which is inappropriate in the given context. The latter suggests deficient social perception.</p>
<p>Paragraph 3</p>	
<p>Dominant feeling</p>	<p>The dominant feeling was one of threat, with all the testees reflecting a need to do something to protect themselves.</p>
<p>Coping skills</p>	<p>The means of coping in the responses can be categorised as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a passive response. For example, standing still or playing dead. Four of the testees responded passively. • an active response. Five of the testees responded actively, four of which alluded to violence (shooting or stabbing the bear.) <p>It would seem therefore that this group's coping skills may be summarised as either violent or passive behaviour. The violent solutions may be interpreted as extreme defence in the face of threat.</p>

Inconsistencies	<p>Only one response was inconsistent with the gist of the story. The boy reacted to the threat of the bear as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"I offered him a drag of my joint and we went around the corner and got wings!"</i></p> <p>The response reflects a complete denial of the reality of the threat, and the use of drugs as a means of escape in order to cope.</p>
Paragraph 4	
Dominant feeling	<p>Half of the group acknowledged the obstacle and reacted positively and actively. The other half either reflected delayed reaction to the obstacle, or provided impractical or fanciful solutions. So, it would seem that half the group views obstacles as something which can be overcome, while the other half is daunted.</p>
Coping skills	<p>The five testees who viewed the obstacle as something which could be overcome, reacted actively and practically. (They either used logs or fashioned a raft of some description.)</p> <p>The remaining five responses were characterised by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ delaying finding a solution ▪ hoping that an unlikely action would present a solution ▪ fanciful notions
Inconsistencies	<p>Two responses were inconsistent with the gist of the story. Both referred to motorised transport which they had brought with them to get across the lake. This suggests a denial of the reality of the obstacle and a tendency not to attempt creative, practical problem solving.</p>
Paragraph 5	
Dominant feeling	<p>The wall was regarded as an obstacle by all. Seven of the respondents conveyed the definite feeling that it was a surmountable problem. Two made it seem surmountable too, but their solution left the writer wondering about their faith in this feeling. The final respondent viewed the wall as insurmountable and gave up.</p>

Coping skills	<p>Of the seven respondents who saw the problem as presenting a solution,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four provided creative, practical solutions (for example, building a platform of branches to get over.) • the remaining three merely suggested climbing over, but no method was suggested. In their case, they may have the appropriate feeling towards the obstacle, but no skill to surmount it. The writer sees them as helpless or dependent, despite their positive attitude. <p>Two respondents suggested completely fanciful solutions (one would use an electric drill; the other professed to having acid urine which could eat away the wall.) One respondent gave up and returned to his forest super models. These three responses suggested a lack of coping skill to the writer.</p>
Inconsistencies	<p>Once again, the responses contained elements which were inconsistent with the gist of the story. Electric drills, acid urine and forest super models do not make sense in the given context, again suggesting the denial of the reality of a problem, or a socially inappropriate attempt at humour. The attempt at humour and the reliance on powerful extras, such as drills, may even be an avoidance attempt.</p>

4.5.7.2 Results of the resilient group's metaphors

TABLE 19

DISCUSSION OF RESILIENT GROUP'S RESULTS OF METAPHORIC EXERCISE

Paragraph 1	
Dominant feeling	<p>Four of the responses indicated apprehension.</p> <p>Three of the responses reflected curiosity.</p> <p>Three of the responses reflected appreciation of the environment.</p>

<p>Coping Skills</p>	<p>The responses reflecting curiosity suggested that the curiosity in itself was a coping skill, because the curious respondents focused on seeing and knowing more, rather than on experiencing the forest as a threat.</p> <p>The responses reflecting appreciation, used awareness of the forest to reframe the experience so as not to perceive it as threatening.</p> <p>There was no allusion to possible coping skills in the responses delineating the experience as threatening.</p>
<p>Paragraph 2</p>	
<p>Dominant feeling</p>	<p>All the responses reflected a need for protection, suggesting that the strange surroundings of the forest at night, with its wild animals was perceived as threatening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four slept in a tree • two slept in a tent • two in a shelter (both testees built their shelter) • one in a soft and dry place • one under a hedge <p>It would seem that the majority of the respondents made do with what the forest had to offer.</p>
<p>Coping skills</p>	<p>Six of the responses indicated additional measures to feel secure or nurtured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five mentioned building a fire (generally to keep warm, provide light or cook food.) • Only one protected himself with a weapon. A rifle was mentioned. • Three mentioned cooking food. <p>The above measures suggest that challenging circumstances might well necessitate that just over half of the resilient group act decisively to feel empowered.</p>
<p>Inconsistencies</p>	<p>No inconsistencies were noted.</p>

Paragraph 3	
Dominant feeling	The dominant feeling was one of threat, with all the testees reflecting a need to do something to protect themselves.
Coping skills	<p>The means of coping in the responses can be categorised as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a passive response. For example, standing still or playing dead. Seven of the testees responded passively, viewing the threat as something which would eventually go away if not provoked. • an active response. The remaining three testees responded actively, by running away. <p>It would seem therefore that this group's coping skills may be summarised as either active or passive behaviour. Of significance is that not one member of the resilient group resorted to violence to solve the problem. The respondents either accepted the threat and waited for it to go away, suggesting a belief that trouble is temporary; or avoided it altogether.</p>
Inconsistencies	There were no inconsistencies.
Paragraph 4	
Dominant feeling	Eight members of the group acknowledged the obstacle and reacted positively and actively. The remaining two suggested impractical solutions. Nevertheless, the dominant feeling was positive, suggesting that the obstacle was one that could be overcome.
Coping skills	<p>The eight testees who viewed the obstacle as something which could be overcome, reacted actively and practically. They either used logs or fashioned a raft of some description. Of interest was that most of the respondents provided plausible detail concerning how the means of transport across the lake would be fashioned.</p> <p>The remaining two responses were characterised by impractical suggestions, reflecting a lack of coping skills and practical, realistic problem solving. The one suggested swimming, and the other suggested swinging across on a vine. These responses are considered impractical because it is explicitly mentioned that the other side of the lake cannot be seen.</p>

Inconsistencies	There were no inconsistencies.
Paragraph 5	
Dominant feeling	The wall was regarded as an obstacle by all except one. The respondent who did not see the wall as an obstacle conveyed the stubborn but positive belief that she would follow it until it ended and then simply go around it and follow it back to her path. One other respondent was daunted by the wall and turned back.
Coping Skills	<p>Of the eight respondents who saw the problem as presenting a solution,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six provided creative, practical solutions, which seemed plausible. • the remaining two merely suggested climbing over, but no method was suggested. In their case, they may have the appropriate feeling towards the obstacle, but no skill to surmount it. The writer sees them as helpless or dependent, despite their positive attitude. <p>The respondent who chose to believe that the wall had to end somewhere, may be seen as stubbornly optimistic. In her version, she does find the end of the wall and happiness beyond that. Her method of coping seems to be a refusal to give up. Rather than find a creative solution, however, she evidences acceptance.</p>
Inconsistencies	There were none.

4.5.7.3 Conclusions reached about the two groups using the Adventure in a Forest Metaphor:

The Adventure in a Forest metaphor lends itself to analysis of the groups' reaction to threat, and their ability to solve problems facing them. The differences between the groups are summarised in the following table:

TABLE 20
COMPARISON OF THE GROUPS' DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSE TO THE
METAPHORIC EXERCISE

VULNERABLE GROUP		RESILIENT GROUP
<p>The dominant feeling obtained from this group's responses is one of threat in response to obstacles. The feeling of threat generally translates into other negative feelings, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fear • hostility • inappropriate humour 	<p>dominant feeling</p>	<p>The dominant feeling obtained from this group's responses is one of threat in response to obstacles. However, the feeling of threat generally translates into positive feelings, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • curiosity • creativity
<p>Whilst positive, practical coping skills are evidenced, there is also substantial evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violence as a means of coping; • impractical, fanciful attempts suggesting helplessness and dependence; • delayed reaction or a postponing of problem-solving action; • passivity. 	<p>c o p i n g s k i l l s</p>	<p>Positive, practical coping skills are generally indicated, but there is also evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • passivity; • impractical attempts at coping, suggesting helplessness and dependence. However, these were in the definite minority. <p>There was no evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violence • postponement of action
<p>Inconsistencies run throughout, suggesting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • denial • avoidance • poor social perception 	<p>inconsistencies</p>	<p>No inconsistencies occur, suggesting positive orientation to life's challenges and an ability to adapt.</p>

4.5.8 Self-Concept Inventory

Both groups completed the self-concept inventory, which is specifically designed to measure a person's self-concept, or the image which the person has about himself or herself. A total test score is translated into a correlating stanine, with stanines 1 - 3 suggesting low self-concept; stanines 4 - 6 suggesting medium self-concept; and stanines 7 - 9 suggesting a high self-concept.

4.5.8.1 Results of the vulnerable group:

The results obtained by the vulnerable group were as follows:

- two members achieved a stanine of 2, suggesting a low self-concept.
- six members achieved a stanine of 1, suggesting an extremely low self-concept.
- two members achieved scores lower than the minimum score required to achieve a stanine of 1, suggesting an acutely poor self-concept.

The average stanine for the group is therefore 1, suggesting an extremely poor self-concept.

4.5.8.2 Results of the resilient group:

The results obtained by the resilient group were as follows:

- one member achieved a stanine of 1, suggesting an extremely low self-concept.
- two members achieved a stanine of 2, suggesting a low self-concept.
- two members achieved a stanine of 3, suggesting a low self-concept.

- two members achieved a stanine of 4, suggesting a medium self-concept.
- one member achieved a stanine of 5, suggesting a medium self-concept.
- one member achieved a stanine of 7, suggesting a high self-concept.
- one member achieved a stanine of 8, suggesting a high self-concept.

The average stanine for the group is therefore 4, suggesting a medium self-concept.

4.5.8.3 Comparison of the results of the two groups:

The vulnerable group is characterised by an extremely poor self-concept, which would suggest that their tendency towards self-actualisation would be negatively impacted upon. Their interpersonal and intrapsychic functioning will be negatively affected.

By comparison, the resilient group evidences a low medium self-concept. Whilst the average stanine of this group is not high, it is nevertheless significantly higher than that of the vulnerable group, suggesting greater facilitation of positive interpersonal and intrapsychic functioning.

The writer is of the opinion that the demarcation of the study group, namely resilience within learning disabled adolescents, also impacts negatively on the self-concept scores of the two groups. In her work with learning disabled youngsters, the writer is frequently reminded of their generally poor self-concepts. For this reason, the writer did not anticipate higher scores in this specific subtest. However, in terms of ultimate resilience, the acutely low and low medium scores of the two groups are cause for concern, and will have to be a focus of intervention.

4.5.9 Conclusions About Resilience Based on the Composite Profiles of the Resilient and Vulnerable Group

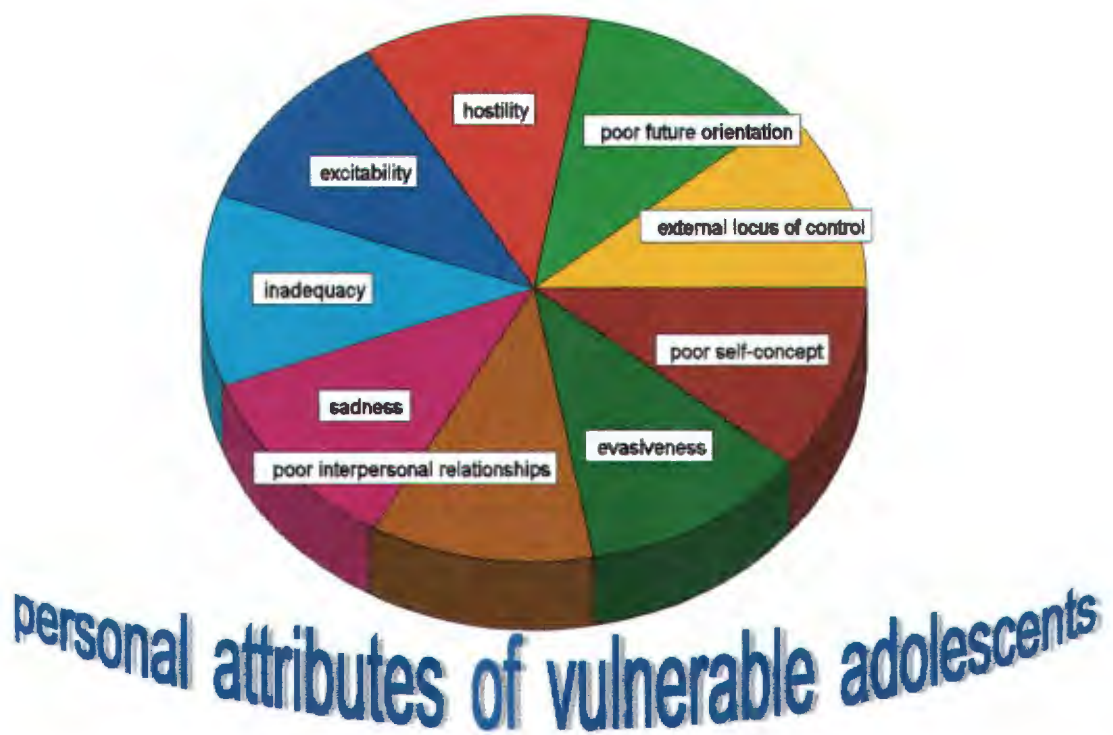
In the following section the writer will:

- a) put together a composite profile for each group
- b) draw a comparison between the groups' profiles
- c) draw conclusions concerning the nature and role of personal attributes in resilience, based on the profiles.

4.5.9.1 Composite profile of the vulnerable group

Based on the assessment as a whole, the profile which follows indicates those personal attributes which have consistently featured in the analysis of the results obtained by the vulnerable group. The writer will use the following chart as a basis for a brief summary of the personal characteristics inherent to the vulnerable adolescents studied.

CHART 8



Commencing with poor future orientation, and then proceeding clockwise, the writer will briefly embroider on the nature of the personal attributes characterising the vulnerable adolescents.

- (i) *Poor future orientation* suggests a lack of positive outlook on tomorrow and all the tomorrows thereafter. The vulnerable youngsters typically showed conflicting or negative views of their future. They often reflected anxiety and feelings of personal inadequacy with regard to the future, which in turn impacted negatively on their future orientation. Their poor future orientation corroborates their tendency to be evasive and to quit.
- (ii) The *locus of control* evidenced by this group was generally external. The vulnerable youngsters typically evidenced a hopelessness and lack of autonomy, that afforded them a victim status. Rather than believe that they might regain control over their personal life world, they indicated that they felt trapped. Tendencies towards reckless behaviour, or towards dyscontrol, or even giving up, were evidenced. This promoted a sense of recklessness or despair.
- (iii) An acutely *poor self-concept* characterised individuals in this group. Associated with the poor self-concept, was emotional instability and poor ego strength, suggesting difficult interpersonal and intrapsychic functioning, which must necessarily impact negatively on the potential for resilience. There was a pervasive sense of either despair or defiance in this group's projections, reflecting their abysmal self-concept.
- (iv) *Evasiveness* suggests a lack of drive, which translates into an avoidance of responsibility and a lack of dependability. The vulnerable group projected and demonstrated both evasive and avoidant behaviour. There was some lack of co-operation with the tester demonstrated by vague answers and non-compliance with instructions or requests. Their projections and test-scores suggested a tendency to not cooperate; or to quit, when the going gets tough; or to deny reality, either by engaging in fanciful ideas, avoidance tactics, or disengagement (by focussing on

a hobby or sport, or chemical substances). In this instance the writer was reminded of Maslow's words: "One for whom no future exists is reduced to the concrete, to hopelessness, to emptiness. For him, time must be endlessly 'filled'. Striving, the usual organizer of most activity, when lost, leaves the person unorganized and unintegrated." (1962: 214)

- (v) **Poor interpersonal relationships** were regularly projected. This may be linked to the vulnerable group's experience of negative social interactions. The vulnerable adolescents projected a tendency to be reserved and not outgoing, which would add to their difficulty in relating to others. They projected attributes of being tough-minded, aggressive and distrustful, which would further complicate interpersonal relationships. They also appeared to lack a fundamental willingness to become involved, or even to risk, within the arena of interpersonal relations. Furthermore, their tendency to be emotionally and socially cautious, which suggests an aloofness, would deny them invaluable social support in the process. Thus, the frequent projection of loneliness or hostility makes sense within the context of their poor interpersonal relationships.
- (vi) This group is also characterised by **a negative attitude**. They reflected feeling lonely, rejected and depressed. Attributes of anxiety and emotional instability seemed to add to their gloominess. There was a pervasive sense that they seemed helpless and needed to be protected, yet their emotional cautiousness precludes this support. Their sadness appeared to fuel their anger, and make them believe they are victims.
- (vii) A sense of **inadequacy** appeared to plague the vulnerable adolescents. They seemed to perceive themselves as not good enough, resulting in dissatisfaction; a critical attitude; and insecurity. Those vulnerable adolescents who do strive for better, typically seemed to experience their striving as futile. Ironically they wish for a successful future, emphasising the anxiety surrounding their perceived inadequacies. Their pervasive sense of inadequacy does not, however, translate

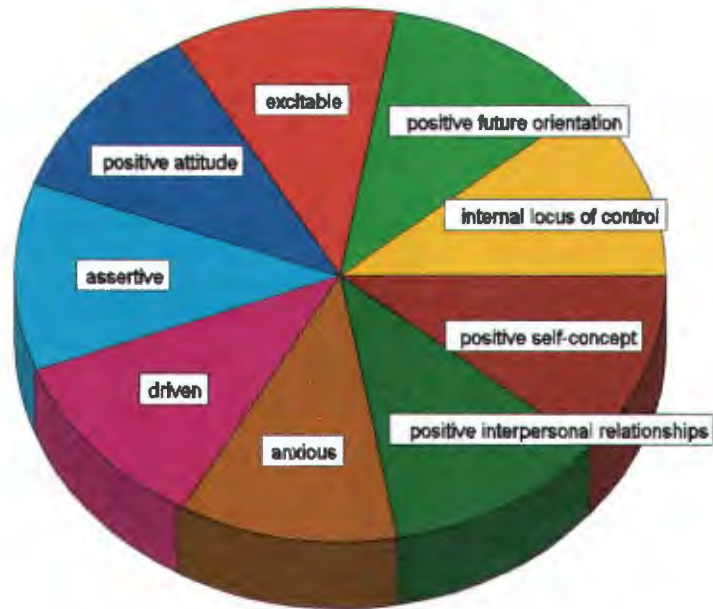
into motivation for change. Rather it appears to shackle them and stymie resilient growth.

- (viii) The attribute of *excitability* suggests an uncontrolled, impulsive nature. When taken to extremes this may result in recklessness and rebelliousness. The vulnerable group projected a negative, demanding attitude, which would merely serve to complicate their social relationships even more. Their impatient nature would also make it easier to quit when the odds are stacked against them. There were projections of recklessness and of being out of touch with reality which may be related to socially inappropriate excitability and a lack of social obligation.
- (ix) *Hostility* suggests that the vulnerable adolescent may behave aggressively, especially as the vulnerable group reflected much anger and tension. The anger which was consistently reflected by this group, would further suggest that they tend to take being assertive to its extreme, suggesting that for them dominance may verge on hostility too. Coupled with this attribute is low frustration tolerance and stubbornness.

4.5.9.2 Composite profile of resilient group

In contrast to the vulnerable group, the personal attributes taken from the assessment as a whole form the following profile:

CHART 9



personal attributes of resilient group

Commencing with positive future orientation, and then proceeding clockwise, the writer will briefly embroider on the nature of the personal attributes characterising the resilient adolescents.

- (i) A *positive future orientation* was projected by the resilient group, suggesting the possession of an optimistic view of what is still to come. Coupled to this they projected an achievement orientated attitude, and tenacity. Their projections lacked cynicism or insecurity.
- (ii) The resilient adolescents evidenced an *internal locus of control*. There was a repeated sense that although they do experience unhappiness and anxiety, they will not be ruled by their circumstances. In general they appeared to remain positive, always holding out for a better tomorrow. They seemed to accept their circumstances, but refuse to allow them to dictate their attitude. A general

unwillingness to adopt the attitude of a victim was projected.

- (iii) The resilient group projected a more *positive self-concept* than the vulnerable group, suggesting greater facilitation of interpersonal as well as intrapsychic functioning. Nevertheless, the self-concept of the resilient group is not high, and growth in this area should be encouraged.
- (iv) The *interpersonal relationships* projected by the resilient youngsters were mainly positive. A willingness to interact with others was consistently indicated. This willingness, coupled with a more outgoing nature, leads to positive social interaction, which in turn affords the resilient youngster much support and security. Their tendency towards being tender-minded and attentive towards others reinforces the overall inclination to experience positive interpersonal relationships. They also demonstrated a desire for love and an appreciation for what is positive and beautiful. The choice to want to be loved, and to notice what is worthy of appreciation, fosters good interpersonal relations, which in turn buoys resilience.
- (v) The resilient youngsters also projected *anxiety*, implying that their life world is not problem free, and they are not immune to its troubles. Their anxiety may be associated with depressive feelings and frustration. They may be fairly easily upset and can be sensitive. However, anxiety, given these youngsters' difficult circumstances, is not out of place, especially in the light of Maslow's words: "*Self-actualization does not mean a transcendence of all human problems. Conflict, anxiety, frustration, sadness, hurt, and guilt can all be found in healthy human beings. ... To be untroubled when one should be troubled can be a sign of sickness.*" (1962: 210)

Their anxiety may also be understood in terms of a sense of obligation, with ensuing responsibility. They projected an awareness of others' expectations and this creates anxiety. However, these youngsters do not deny their anxiety, but choose instead to work towards a more positive state of being in the future. The writer views their anxiety positively then, because rather than dissipate resilience,

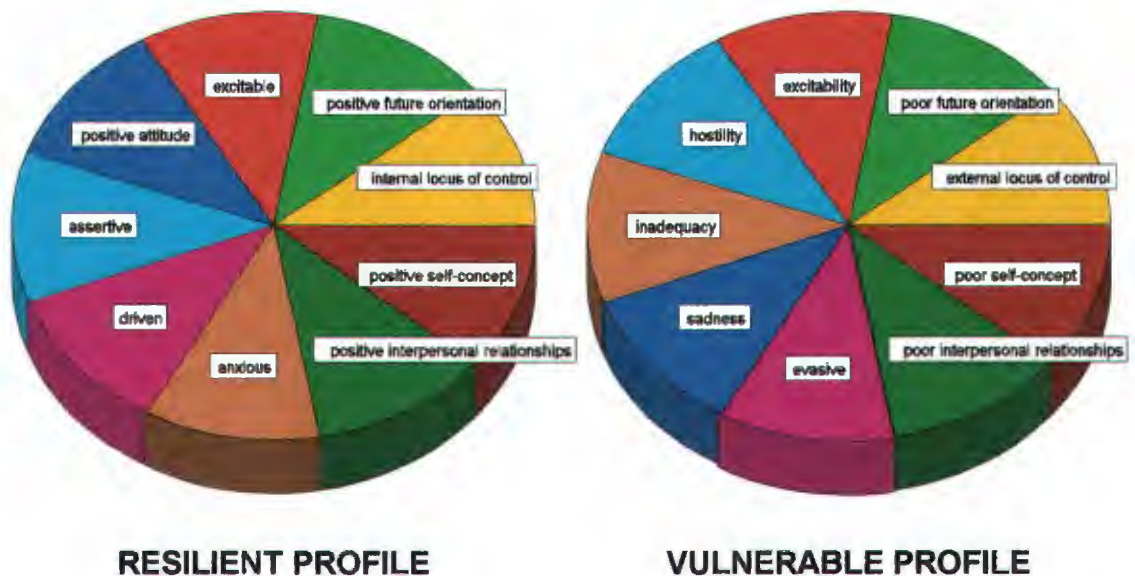
it appears to fuel resilient growth and may therefore be seen as motivating.

- (vi) Resilient youngsters are *driven*. They projected a curiosity about their life world and independent-mindedness. This appears to allow practical and creative problem solving. Drive can also translate into tension. Tension and frustration were projected by this group, because their striving is sometimes coupled with a sense of futility. Their attitude, however, was largely one of “*If I want to, I will!*” testifying to ongoing drive, despite circumstances.
- (vii) Despite being anxious, resilient adolescents are not pushovers: they both demonstrated, and projected, strongly *assertive* behaviour. Their functioning was projected as autonomous, and this coupled with an independent-mindedness, suggests that dominance is part of their personal attributes. Their assertiveness was frequently expressed as a determination to beat their odds. There was minimal projection of their assertiveness being expressed aggressively, possibly because of their social sensitivity and sense of obligation.
- (viii) A *positive attitude* is a salient characteristic of the resilient group. They frequently projected a cheerful, optimistic disposition. Happiness was projected as being important to them and they also projected distinct appreciation of beauty and strength. This does not imply that the resilient youngsters are immune to sadness, frustration or other negative feelings. These feelings were projected too, but the dominant attitude projected was positive, suggesting that the resilient youngsters are in control of their attitude.
- (ix) Resilient youngsters reflected *excitability* too. They scored highly on this attribute, suggesting that they can be overly enthusiastic, and even impulsive. However, their excitability is possibly tempered by their projected attention to others, which implies that they are aware of social feedback and mindful of the opinion of others. The dominant sense was one of enthusiastic spontaneity, rather than impulsive, socially inappropriate excitability.

4.5.9.3 Comparison of the two groups' composite profiles

The writer will now compare the groups' composite profiles (as indicated in the following charts) in order to see how the personal attributes differ:

CHART 10



comparison of composite profiles

When the composite profiles of the two groups are studied it becomes clear that there are both similarities and differences. This difference was emphasised for the writer throughout the individual analyses of each subtest, as well as during her observation and later interaction with the subjects of the groups. The writer will now provide a brief summary of the similarities and differences.

TABLE 21

SUMMARY OF SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS

VULNERABLE GROUP	RESILIENT GROUP
<p>Excitability is evidenced. Translates into demanding, impulsive behaviour.</p>	<p>Excitability is evidenced. Has the potential to translate into demanding, impulsive behaviour, but this potential is tempered by the group's positive social orientation and anxiety. Translates into enthusiasm and spontaneity.</p>
<p>Assertiveness is evidenced. Translates into aggression and hostility, given this group's pervasive anger and low frustration tolerance.</p>	<p>Assertiveness is evidenced. Translates into dominant, self-protective behaviour. Aggression and hostility are generally not projected, again because of the other personal attributes, such as social sensitivity and responsibility, which mediate.</p>

TABLE 22

SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS

VULNERABLE GROUP	RESILIENT GROUP
<p>Social orientation is negative. An unwillingness to become socially involved; tough-mindedness; a distinct distrust of others; and emotional cautiousness are projected.</p>	<p>Social orientation is positive. A willingness to become socially involved; tender-mindedness; a desire for love; and an appreciation of beauty and gentleness are projected.</p>
<p>Future orientation is negative. Projections concerning the future are predominantly bleak or unrealistic. Personal inadequacy and a tendency to quit or to avoid responsibility are projected, making the orientation to the future a gloomy one.</p>	<p>Future orientation is positive. Projections concerning the future are predominantly hopeful and realistic. An achievement orientated attitude and tenacity are projected, making the orientation to the future positive.</p>
<p>General attitude is negative. Insecurity, loneliness, rejection and sadness are frequently projected. There is a sense of pervasive anger. This attitude translates into angry, debilitating self-pity.</p>	<p>General attitude is positive. Although projection indicates that sadness and insecurity are felt, the pervasive projection is one of cheerfulness and optimism. This attitude translates into optimism and motivation.</p>
<p>Self-concept is acutely poor. Associated attributes are emotional instability and poor ego-strength, leading to poor interpersonal and intra personal relationships.</p>	<p>Self-concept is functional. This translates into adequate inter- and intra personal relationships.</p>

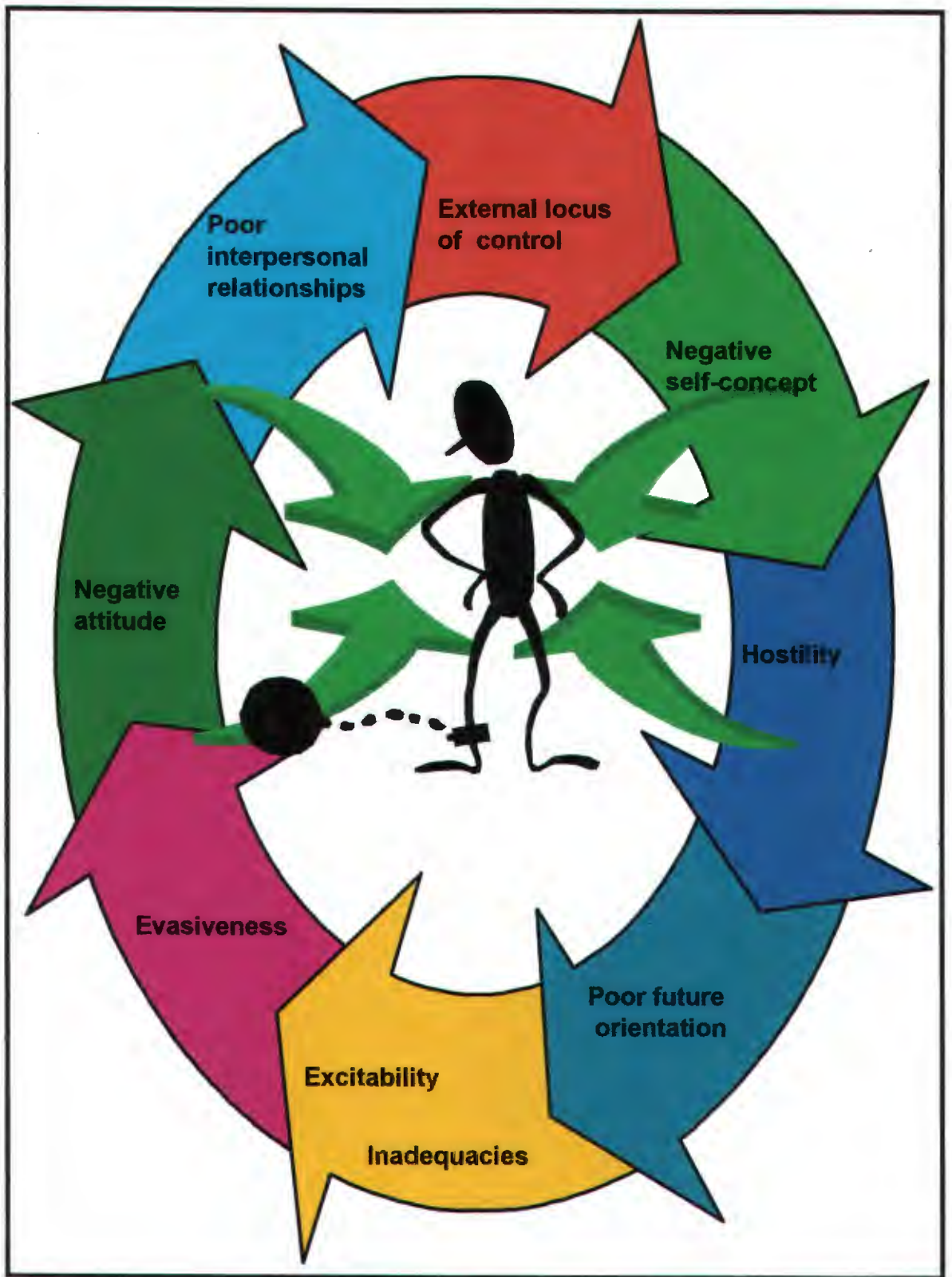
<p>Locus of control is external. This translates into a sense of helplessness and a lack of autonomy. There was a pervasive sense of feeling irreversibly trapped, which fuels an inclination to quit. Generally, vulnerable youngsters projected a victim identity.</p>	<p>Locus of control is internal. This translates into a sense of control, despite circumstances which are out of control. Autonomy and creative problem solving were projected. There was a pervasive renouncing of victim identity, which fuels positive psychic energy and a positive attitude.</p>
<p>A general sense of inadequacy is projected. This translates into dissatisfaction and a lack of willingness to persevere, or even to try.</p>	<p>Anxiety, rather than inadequacy, is projected. This translates into an awareness of personal limitations and a determination to improve. It also indicates sensitivity to others' opinions and social obligation.</p>
<p>Evasiveness is characteristic of this group. This translates into irresponsible behaviour and a tendency to quit, or to ignore social expectations and values. Disengagement from reality and avoidance tactics were projected.</p>	<p>Drive is characteristic of this group. This translates into tenacity and a refusal to quit. Reality is faced and accepted. Projections of curiosity, an appreciative attitude and creativity fuel this drive.</p>

An exploration of the differences in the personal attributes cannot be adequately explored without considering the role of these various attributes, which is what the writer will do now.

4.5.9.4 The role of personal attributes in resilience

The writer believes that resilience is not merely the adding up of personal attributes, but rather the complex interaction of the attributes identified in the preceding sections.

In explanation, the writer will commence with the vulnerable youngster, as depicted in the following diagram:



***CONTINUOUS INTERACTION OF PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES SHACKLING THE
VULNERABLE YOUNGSTER***

DIAGRAM 13

What has become clear to the writer from the results of the empirical study, is that the personal attributes of the vulnerable youngster occur in a reciprocal relationship in which each attribute endorses, and is endorsed by, the others. This is also clear from the above diagram. There are no attributes to temper the existing ones. Instead the personal attributes function in a vicious circle: the youngster, for example, feels trapped and without hope, leading to anger and concomitant feelings of inadequacy, resulting in a poor orientation to the future and perhaps reckless abandon, which invariably causes conflict with others, meaning that interpersonal relationships deteriorate, instigating sadness and anger, which again feeds feelings of insecurity and hopelessness, and so on.

The resilient group's attributes also impact on one another, but the lesser degree of some of the attributes (dyscontrol for example) and the combination of positive attributes, change the picture. The following diagram alludes to the different role which the personal attributes of the resilient youngsters play in contributing to an ability to keep to the path of self-actualisation, regardless of the circumstances. That the attributes mix and mediate, rather than function as a chain type of reaction, became clear to the writer during the empirical study. As shown in the diagram, instead of chasing around in a vicious, and possibly spiralling manner, the attributes in the resilient child interact and temper one another:

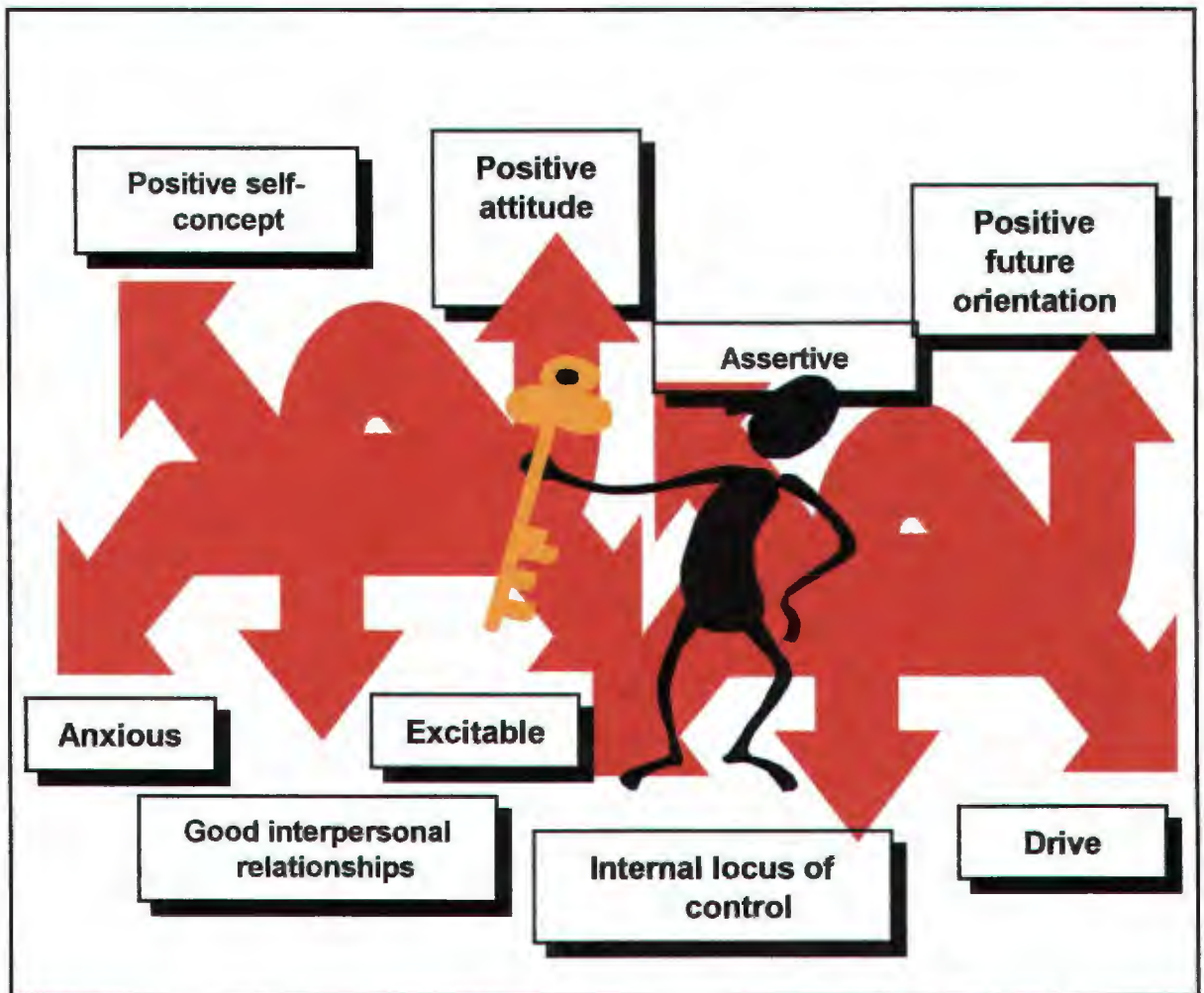


DIAGRAM 14

RECIPROCAL INTERACTION OF PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES EMPOWERING THE RESILIENT YOUNGSTER

What also became clear to the writer, is that the role of the attributes possessed by the resilient youngsters, is akin to the features of the self-actualising person, as delineated by Abraham Maslow. Maslow (1962) suggested that the self-actualising, or psychologically healthy, person possessed the following characteristics:

- acceptance
- spontaneity
- realism
- task involvement
- altruism
- interpersonal relations
- democracy
- ethical code

- air of detachment
- autonomy
- appreciation
- a peak experience
- sense of humour
- creativity
- individualism

The writer is of the opinion that the resilient youngsters reflected the majority of the above characteristics, as summarised in the following table:

TABLE 23
COMPARISON OF MASLOW'S SELF-ACTUALISING CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF RESILIENT YOUNGSTERS

SELF-ACTUALISING CHARACTERISTICS	RESILIENT YOUNGSTERS' CHARACTERISTICS
Acceptance	The resilient youngsters displayed acceptance of others by virtue of their outgoing nature and good interpersonal relations. They also displayed basic acceptance of themselves by virtue of their generally positive self-concepts.
Spontaneity	The resilient youngsters are self-sufficient and enthusiastic, which suggests that the resilient youngster will follow personal ethics. Allied to this is the suggestion that resilient youngsters are excitable, and so spontaneous, rather than rigid.
Realism	Resilient youngsters are not completely trusting and do not reflect a sense of being gullible. They are also anxious, which suggests being in touch with their own limitations. Nevertheless, they do not reflect a sense of being fearful, nor do they quit. This suggests a drive to win: reality is realistically measured by them without them being daunted by it.
Task-involvement	Resilient youngsters are curious and tenacious. They do not shirk their tasks. Maslow, however, intended task-involvement to imply self-transcendence. Although this is not evidenced in these youngsters (perhaps because the writer did not supply a means of evaluating transcendence), the writer must comment on the priority placed on transcending obstacles by the resilient group, compared to the priority placed on avoiding transcendence of obstacles by the vulnerable group. In the sense that the resilient group appeared to be problem-centred rather than self-centred, they do display task involvement.

Air of detachment	The writer found no evidence of this, but again she included no real means of evaluating an appreciation of privacy or an ability to remain aloof from trouble, simply because at the start of the study she did not anticipate resilience approximating self-actualisation. The evidence of anxiety and tension in these youngsters would nevertheless suggest an inability to remain completely aloof from trouble. Nevertheless, the resilient youngsters' projections show tenacity and a positive attitude despite their troubles.
Autonomy	Resilient youngsters are largely independent and self-sufficient. This suggests an ability to keep going, regardless of circumstances.
Appreciation	The youngsters in the resilient group reflected the ability to appreciate beauty and gentleness. Their projections indicate a propensity for enthusiasm and positive orientation which corroborates their tendency to be appreciative.
Peak-experience	The writer, as explained previously, did not anticipate resilience and self-actualisation being so closely allied. For this reason, there was nothing in the test battery to assess the experience of pinnacle moments. The reflection of the resilient youngsters as appreciative of nature, as enthusiastic and tense, may nevertheless suggest that the potential exists for them to have experienced mystical peak moments.
Altruism	Again, there is no direct evidence of altruism, but there are suggestions of being attentive to others, empathic and tender-minded. This implies an inclination towards caring for and about others.
Interpersonal relations	The resilient youngsters showed positive orientation towards others. There was not a sense of hostility or excessive distrust, as in the vulnerable group. The longing for love would suggest a tendency towards more meaningful relationships, rather than merely superficial socialising.
Democracy	No evidence of democratic values was found.
Ethical code	The resilient group, unlike the vulnerable group, did not reflect being opportunistic. Although they tend to be self-sufficient there was not a sense of their violating rules. Their higher level of anxiety, and their record of avoiding an infringement of school rules, also suggests that they would adhere to a moral and ethical code. They also came across as driven and tenacious youngsters, determined to succeed despite the odds.
Sense of humour	A sense of humour was evident to the writer during her observation of the group completing the assessment. In the follow-up interviews, the resilient group (bar two) also demonstrated an ability to laugh good-naturedly at themselves.
Creativity	There was evidence of the resilient group being able to supply creative, yet plausible, solutions to problems presented to them. They looked at presented scenarios in fresh ways, especially compared to the vulnerable group who often presented incongruent or fanciful solutions.

<p>Individualism</p>	<p>The resilient youngsters present as self-sufficient, autonomous youngsters who know how to derive optimal support from others when necessary, but who are not crowd-pleasers or weaklings. They could rather be characterised as assertive.</p>
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It would seem then that the personal attributes found in resilient youngsters mostly approximate those of the self-actualising person. The exceptions are an appreciation of privacy, a peak experience and democracy, which may only be exceptions because they were not tested for. Task-involvement and altruism as Maslow understood them are not categorically present either, but there are certainly indications of an inclination in that direction. The fact that ten of the fifteen core characteristics of a self-actualising individual are present in the profile of the personal attributes of the resilient group, strongly suggests then that the role of the personal attributes in resilient individuals is collaborative and self-actualising.

Something else occurred to the writer, however: what gives rise to the mix of resilience-contributing personal attributes, as compared to the chain-reaction vulnerability-forming personal attributes? Something which Young-Eisendrath propounded kept reoccurring to the writer, namely that: "*...the capacity to be resilient, to respond to difficulty with development, is rooted in many diverse factors, but it consistently depends on one thing: the meaning you, the individual, make of where you are.*" (1996:21-22). Thus, the writer began to suspect that the self-actualising role of the personal attributes in resilience was supported by something greater, and so she turned again to the writings of Maslow, as well as to those of Rogers and Buscaglia, who are renowned for their contributions to the understanding of the phenomenon of human growth.

Maslow holds that the pursuit of self-actualisation suggests an internal drive, or a personal choice to self-actualise, because the origin of behaviour is found in the person himself. In other words the individual cannot be forced to self-actualise or evidence resilient behaviour. Maslow asserts that "*A person is both actuality and potentiality.*" (Maslow, 1962: 10). In other words, the future exists currently within the individual, and the individual's power lies in his choice to actualise his potentiality. Whilst the power of social and environmental forces may not be gainsaid, Maslow contends that the factors of will

and decision are powerful determinants “...of the ways in which we *do* make ourselves by our choices.” (Maslow, 1962: 12). In other words, choice impacts forcibly on the potential for resilience. If Maslow is to be believed, the potentialities and capacities for self-actualisation . . . or becoming more fully human . . . or resilience, are part of every human being. The choice to activate them belongs to the individual (Maslow, 1962: 155-162).

Rogers’ view is a similar one. He perceives the actualising tendency to be cardinal: “*The actualizing tendency can, of course, be thwarted or warped, but it cannot be destroyed without destroying the organism.*” (Rogers, 1980: 118). This implies that the vulnerable group’s ability to be resilient has merely been thwarted, and that with assistance, they could be encouraged to choose differently and move towards resilient growth. The power of choice is further emphasised by Rogers’ observation that “*The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination. The direction which constitutes the good life is that which is selected by the total organism.*” (Rogers in Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990: 411). Persons who are not fully functioning are by implication choosing a direction which negates growth towards resilience.

Buscaglia is equally adamant about the power of choice: “*Those who suffer the illusion that they are nothing more than computers, manipulated by programmers over which they have no control, will never fully know love or live life.*” (Buscaglia, 1992: 111). The implication is that choice is fundamental to achieving a meaningful existence, regardless of the circumstances. Buscaglia continues : “*There are too many successful examples not to believe that we are free to alter who we are, what we believe, and what we see as our purpose and goals.*” (1992: 111).

The results achieved by the resilient group indicate a burgeoning tendency to choose to take control, rather than submit to their circumstances. To quote Buscaglia once more, it is as if the resilient youngsters have understood the power of choice, in that, “*We can either exercise control over our lives or lose precious time as victims of circumstance.*” (1992: 204).

In the light of what Maslow, Rogers and Buscaglia have to say about choice impacting on ultimate self-actualisation, the writer has come to the conclusion that what underlies the interacting web of personal attributes in the resilient group, is a personal choice to self-actualise regardless of life's obstacles.

Thus, in conclusion it may be said that the resilient group approximates Maslow's requirements for self-actualisers. They are positively socially orientated, driven, excitable, assertive, anxious; possess a positive future orientation, self-concept, and attitude; and have an internal locus of control. All of these personal attributes work co-operatively and mediatively in order to attain self-actualisation in the face of obstacles. Significantly, the entire process is underpinned by a personal choice to exercise control over their lives and become the best that they might be, regardless of obstacles.

In contrast, the vulnerable group do not evidence the characteristics of self-actualisers. Instead they are negatively socially orientated, evasive, excitable, hostile, sad, and possess a negative future orientation, negative self-concept, external locus of control and a perception of personal inadequacy. Their personal attributes assume a chain-reaction motion, which becomes self-perpetuating. They do not risk choosing to alter their status quo for the better. Leo Buscaglia's words are perhaps an apt summary for this group:

"To try is to risk failure. But risk must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, and is nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, live or love. Chained by his certitudes or his addictions, he's a slave. He has forfeited his greatest trait, and that is his individual freedom. Only the person who risks is free."

(1982:264)



CHAPTER 5

GUIDELINES TO ANCHORING RESILIENCE

*"Life is not the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it is.
The way you cope with it is what makes the difference."
(McGigginis, 1990: 5)*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The guidelines which will be given in this chapter, derive from the empirical study with resilient and vulnerable adolescents. The aim of these guidelines is to inculcate resilience in vulnerable youngsters and to strengthen resilience in already resilient youngsters. The guidelines will be made according to the core personality profiles and conclusions, found in the previous chapter, in section 4.5.9.

Guidelines are given for the resilient group too, because the writer is of the opinion that resilience is a dynamic phenomenon, which ebbs and flows.

A comparative summary of the core personal attributes of the two groups looks as follows:

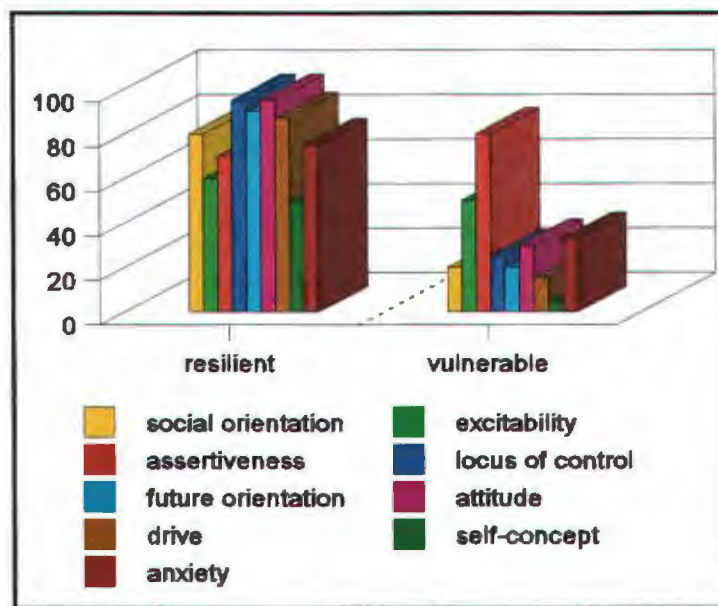


CHART 11

The reader is advised that the highs and lows of the above chart may be interpreted as follows:

TABLE 24
INTERPRETATION OF HIGHS AND LOWS OF CHART 11

Personal Attribute	High	Low
Social orientation	Positive orientation	Poor or negative orientation
Excitability	Enthusiastic	Demanding
Assertiveness	Assertive	Hostile
Future Orientation	Positive orientation	Negative orientation
Attitude	Positive/cheerful/ appreciative	Negative/sad
Drive	Driven/tenacious	Evasive/quitting
Self-concept	Medium	Very poor
Anxiety	Anxious/sensitive to others' opinion	Self-perception of inadequacy / dissatisfied
Locus of Control	Internal/optimistic	External/pessimistic

5.2 GUIDELINES

The writer wishes to caution the reader that the recommendations for guidelines which follow, are by no means exhaustive. The guidelines which she will give are either ones with which she is familiar (given the nature of her occupation) and confident in, or ones that she believes will go a long way to encouraging the personal attributes needed to anchor resilience.

5.2.1 Social Orientation

In the case of the vulnerable adolescents, much intervention is necessary in order to orientate them positively to others. Other human beings are not necessarily the enemy, and in order for these youngsters to develop healthy self-esteem, and the potential for resilience, they must be taught to participate favourably and to derive optimal benefit from social relations. The following guidelines are recommended:

- Social skills training is recommended, especially for the vulnerable learning disabled youngster whose social interaction is often negatively impacted upon by virtue of the learning difficulty. In other words, the vulnerable adolescent needs to be taught socially acceptable behaviour.

- Social skills training should focus specifically on how to interact optimally with other human beings. Special attention should be paid to:
 - a) communication skills, including:
 - ✓ body language
 - ✓ tone of communication
 - ✓ facial expression
 - ✓ listening skills (including appropriate eye-contact and not interrupting)
 - ✓ appropriate expression of negative and positive feelings
 - ✓ reading of verbal and non-verbal cues
 - ✓ initiating and maintaining conversation

 - b) external frame of reference skills, including
 - ✓ expression of empathy
 - ✓ cooperative behaviour, such as sharing, taking turns and being unselfish
 - ✓ understanding how own behaviour impacts on others

c) negotiation skills, including

- ✓ being suitably cooperative
- ✓ finding alternative solutions
- ✓ conflict management
- ✓ appropriate assertiveness
- ✓ perspective taking

The resilient youngsters, who typically relate well socially, would still benefit from having their repertoire of social skills extended. For example, they might also be encouraged by exploring Martin Buber's concept of "I" and "Thou", which suggests that every individual is a very special person deserving of treatment as a "thou" (Buscaglia, 1982: 192). Such a mind set would encourage optimal social interaction, thereby encouraging continued resilience.

5.2.2 Excitability

Excitability may be positive, when translated as enthusiasm and spontaneity. However, when excitability is extreme, its manifestation as demanding, impulsive behaviour is not endearing. The vulnerable youngsters, who typically display low frustration tolerance, need to be taught impulse control, which is tantamount to basic behaviour modification. Because of the high level of excitability in the resilient group, they would also benefit from impulse control strategies. The writer must add that she is of the opinion that excitability levels are exaggerated in the group forming the focus of this empirical study, given the demarcation of the study as a group of learning disabled youngsters, who typically feature impulsivity and excitability.

This said, both groups would benefit from impulse control skills, such as:

- identifying personal physical arousal cues (sweaty palms or tightened stomach muscles are examples) in order to halt the excitability cycle.
- identifying situations commonly associated with losing control.

- delaying tactics, such as counting to ten before acting.
- thinking about, or verbalising, or writing out the proposed retort or action first; then briefly evaluating the probable results, in order to decide whether proceeding would be worthwhile.
- relying on an association (such as envisaging a huge, fiery red stop sign) in order to halt or avoid impulsive or demanding actions.

Role play may also provide valuable insight for these youngsters, especially when impulsive, demanding, pushy behaviour is realistically acted out and its ugly consequences analysed. This exercise would also foster the development of an external frame of reference.

Teaching the youngsters in both groups a repertoire of relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing exercises, or progressive muscle relaxation; or encouraging the use of laughter and soothing music to relieve excitable, out-of-control tendencies, is also recommended.

Another technique useful in controlling excitable behaviour is used at the school from which the two groups come, namely that the youngsters are videotaped (with their prior knowledge) in typical classroom situations. The novelty of being videotaped soon wears off, natural behaviour reverts, and the result is evidence of extreme excitability. Watching and discussing the video with the therapist fosters excellent awareness in the youngster of the negative impact of impulsivity. Such awareness tends to inhibit extreme excitability, which in turn impacts positively on resilience in that there is less negative feedback for the youngster from significant figures in his or her life, and fewer negative consequences (such as being labelled or reprimanded), which halts the generally damaging cycle.

Enthusiasm and spontaneity could be contrasted to impulsivity and a demanding attitude. The former should be encouraged, as spontaneity and enthusiasm are socially endearing, thereby encouraging resilient self-actualisation. Vulnerable youngsters need to be encouraged to choose to live a full life, and resilient youngsters need to be encouraged to continue living the full life they have chosen to live. Gestalt techniques will bring these

youngsters in touch with themselves and bibliotherapy (among others: Leo Buscaglia; Alan Loy McGinnis; Cassandra Walker; Earl Hipp; Canfield and Hansen) may be used to fuel inspiration. Learning to be spontaneous and enthusiastic is intrinsic to living fully, and youngsters need, therefore, to be reminded of Buscaglia's (1982: 169) words:

"We're afraid of living life, therefore, we don't experience, we don't see. We don't feel. We don't risk! We don't care! And therefore we don't live - because life means being actively involved. Life means getting your hands dirty. Life means jumping in the middle of it all. Life means falling flat on your face. Life means going beyond yourself - into the stars!"

5.2.3 Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a skill which endorses resilience in that it fosters autonomy and an internal locus of control. In the vulnerable group, hostility and anger typically replaced assertiveness, perhaps because they have inadequate means of appropriately expressing their wants, needs and values. Youngsters who show a lack of resilience need to be taught assertiveness skills.

The following, among others, may be included:

- a true understanding of assertiveness, as defined by Nathaniel Branden (1994: 118-119):
"Self-assertion does not mean belligerence or inappropriate aggressiveness; it does not mean pushing to the front of the line or knocking other people over; it does not mean upholding my own rights while being blind, or indifferent to everyone else's. It simply means the willingness to stand up for myself, to be who I am openly, to treat myself with respect in all human encounters."
- an understanding that assertiveness entails personal responsibility. Cognitive restructuring will be necessary to achieve this paradigm shift.

- a personal bill of rights (as suggested by Bourne, 1995: 278 or Hipp, 1996: 95) is important to remind youngsters of their basic rights and taking responsibility for upholding these rights. The writer would suggest that the above-mentioned references only serve as examples, and that both resilient and vulnerable youngsters are then encouraged to write their own personalised bill of rights.

- practical skills which endorse assertiveness, such as:
 - a) fogging
 - b) coping statements
 - c) broken record technique
 - d) nonverbal assertive behaviours

These practical skills will need to be modelled, role-played and reinforced.

5.2.4 Future Orientation

A positive future orientation echoes Werner and Smith's description of the resilient youngster who "... *works well, loves well and expects well.*" (1982: 153). The implication, then, is that the youngster who is positively orientated to the future copes adaptively with the present and also enjoys good interpersonal relationships. Wyman, Cowen, Work and Kerley (1993: 658) take the impact of positive future orientation one step further: "... *expectations may importantly determine how children structure their own environments, in terms of both responses they evoke from others and their choices of settings and people for their interactions. . . . On the plus side, it suggests that children are capable of overcoming great odds ... if their life conditions help them to develop ... expectations of a responsive environment and views of themselves as competent.*" In the light of their view, and in the light of the positive view of the future generally expressed by the resilient group, compared to the vulnerable group's dismal orientation to the future, it is important that the following interventions be made:

- cognitive restructuring focusing on equipping the vulnerable youngster with the definite understanding of choice, namely that: *“There are really only two ways to approach life - as a victim or as a gallant fighter - and you must decide if you want to act or react, deal your own cards or play with a stacked deck. And if you don't decide which way to play with life, it always plays with you.”* (Shain in Hipp, 1996: 116).
- listing all goals for, and decisions about the future, which have impacted on orientation to the future (including the choice to be negatively orientated) in order to facilitate cognitive restructuring. Hipp (1996: 116) suggests that each item on the list should be marked as either a conscious choice, or something which has always been that way. The writer believes this would provide insight into passive acceptance or active decision making in order to facilitate understanding of conscious choice.
- guidelines for effective goalsetting, namely that goals should be conceivable, believable, achievable, controllable, measurable, desirable, stated with no alternative and growth facilitating (Canfield and Wells, 1994: 200-201).
- reality therapy techniques, to ultimately equip vulnerable youngsters with a realistic, attainable and measurable plan which should lead to their feeling in control of their destiny, which should in turn ensure positive future orientation and current adaptability.
- the reality therapy techniques alluded to in the above point, may also be further used to help the youngster arrive at a realistic, positive personal vision and mission statement for the future, which may be periodically assessed to ascertain whether he or she is still on track, and positively orientated to the future.
- vulnerable and resilient youngsters should be encouraged to monitor their self-talk, as their self-talk impacts on their orientation to the future too. Not only should they be coached to monitor self-talk, but they should also be encouraged to create

positive self-talk in advance and repeat it to themselves often.

Canfield and Wells (1994: 234) call positive advance self-talk an “*affirmation*” and suggest that it has six basic ingredients, which must be taught to, and rehearsed with, youngsters:

- ☺ it's personal
- ☺ it's positive
- ☺ it's specific
- ☺ it's visual
- ☺ it's present tense
- ☺ it's emotional

Canfield and Wells emphasise that affirmations work most successfully when they are visualised.

5.2.5 Attitude

Whenever the writer considers attitude, she is reminded of Frankl's words: “*The ultimate freedom is the right to choose my attitude in any given situation.*” (1963: 137). Given this wisdom, the writer believes that it is crucial that the youngsters in the vulnerable group are taught the truth of Frankl's words, and that the youngsters in the resilient group are reminded of them.

The following guidelines may be followed to inculcate Frankl's profundity:

- Legitimise feelings. In other words it is alright to feel sad, or angry, or defeated, when circumstances in our life warrant these feelings. To fight these feelings is to sometimes cause greater problems. However, once these feelings have been

acknowledged, they must be dealt with and resolved, in order that the youngster's overall attitude is not negatively impacted upon in the long term. What this means then is an ultimate choice to lay the demons to rest and actively assume a positive attitude.

- Emphasise choice. Buscaglia teaches the art of being fully human: "*To me, probably the most exciting thing in the world is the realization that I have the potential of being fully human. I can't be a God, but I can be a fully functioning human being!*" (1982: 131). The choice of being fully and wonderfully human, with its concomitant positive attitude, needs to be taught to vulnerable youngsters.

The choice to live in a fully human manner must be informed by the following skills (Buscaglia, 1982: 129-140), which are in many ways akin to Maslow's self-actualising characteristics, as discussed in Chapter Four:

- ✓ the ability to like oneself
- ✓ the commitment to become the best one can become
- ✓ the will to risk
- ✓ the will and capacity to forgive
- ✓ the capacity for a sense of humour and a commitment to laughter
- ✓ the will to risk being spontaneous
- ✓ the will to behave in a democratic manner (that is the will to acknowledge that everyone else is human too.)

- Gestalt techniques, providing self-knowledge, are recommended to assist the youngster towards a greater self-understanding and so a more positive attitude.
- script analysis exercises (based on transactional analysis) may also be used to show the youngster his or her basic attitude, and the origins of this attitude, in order to coach a more positive attitude.
- monitoring self-talk is also recommended, in order to facilitate choice of attitude.

- McGinnis (1990: 97-107) emphasises that an optimistic, cheerful attitude is possible even when there are no grounds for happiness. He encourages cheerfulness as part of the armour against life's obstacles, and provides the following hints to attain a cheerful attitude, which should be taught to both vulnerable and resilient youngsters:
 - ☺ Begin the day well, by getting up early and choosing to appreciate the inherent worth and potential of each new day.
 - ☺ Use laughter as an antidote and choose to build some fun into every day and choose to laugh, even if laughter would not be akin to the individual's present mood. McGinnis is of the firm opinion that feeling follows action, so that laughing can elevate moods and so attitude.
 - ☺ Insist on celebrations even during hard times, as this affirms that every moment of life is precious, which in turn strengthens a positive attitude.
 - ☺ Use uplifting music to achieve an improved mood and in so doing a more positive attitude.
 - ☺ Vigorous physical exercise is an important aid in beating negative feelings and sustaining a positive attitude.
- Encourage an appreciation of beauty. An active striving to be aware of that which is positive will impact positively on an overall attitude.

5.2.6 Drive

Abraham Lincoln is quoted by Canfield and Wells (1994: 115) as having said: *“The path was worn and slippery. My foot slipped from under me, knocking the other out of the way, but I recovered and said to myself, ‘It’s a slip and not a fall.’ ”*

Lincoln’s message of tenacity must be taught to vulnerable youngsters, who typically evade responsibility or quit when things become too difficult for them.

In order to encourage tenacity, vulnerable youngsters should be assisted in the following ways:

- an acceptance of the problematic nature of their existence is encouraged. If vulnerable youngsters could echo Branden’s (1994: 163) *“I accept the reality of my problems, but I am not defined by them. My problems are not my essence. My fear, pain, confusion, or mistakes are not my core.”* then tenacity would probably be encouraged because circumstances would no longer be so personally threatening.
- their personal strengths should be investigated and identified, in order to provide some initial empowerment.
- models of tenacious individuals who persevered despite great odds may also be presented to them. Nelson Mandela or Abraham Lincoln may be used, for example.
- failure must be destigmatised. Vulnerable youngsters should be taught that failure may be seen as a starting point rather than as an ending, or as an *“... opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”* (Henry Ford in Canfield and Wells, 1994: 114). In other words, failure must be reframed.
- they should be assisted to live purposefully, thereby accepting responsibility for themselves and their actions in life. Allied to the idea of living purposefully is the idea of realistic goal-setting, because goals commensurate with ability will lessen

the tendency to quit. Again, reality therapy techniques would be useful in order to assist youngsters to live purposefully and set realistic goals.

- self-discipline skills must also be taught, including the deferment of immediate gratification, and maintaining appropriate persistent behaviour, in order to achieve goals. Being self-disciplined would encourage tenacity and, in so doing, resilience.
- the existential psychotherapy approach of teaching a client to substitute “I can’t” with “I won’t” may also be useful to teach vulnerable youngsters (who either evade or quit their responsibility) to assume responsibility, thereby encouraging them to remain driven.
- finally, vulnerable youngsters need a challenge orientation, meaning that they are assisted to reframe obstacles as challenges. Having the ability to be challenged by obstacles, rather than daunted by them, will go a long way to decreasing evasive or quitting behaviour.

5.2.7 Self-concept

According to Branden, “*Self-concept is destiny. Or, more precisely it tends to be.*” (1994: 15). Jacobs and Raath (1993) concur: “*...self-concept need not be stagnant. The self-concept is dynamic and therefore can change. ... This dynamic quality creates the possibility that the child who has developed a negative self-concept can be assisted to accept himself and to form a realistic-positive self-concept.*” (Jacobs, 1993: Preface). For this reason, the self-concept of both groups needs to be targeted in order that a positive realistic self-concept may be reached.

The following guidelines are given:

- self-acceptance is crucial if growth in the youngsters' self-concept is to occur. Given the problematic nature of these youngsters' existence, they especially need to be guided to a point where they can acknowledge themselves as worthwhile, valuable, unique human beings, despite their circumstances. Buscaglia's message that: "*Since you are one of a kind, the message here is clear. You have something to offer that will never again be possible. To devalue this is not only a tragedy for you, but, in fact, for the world.*" (1992: 45) is the type of message these youngsters need to learn to accept and make their own, rather than merely agree with. Bibliotherapy (using videos in addition to books) and Gestalt Therapy techniques may be used to stimulate self-acceptance.
- such self-acceptance relies on realistic personal evaluation. Adolescents need to be taught that they have the choice to see themselves as someone special and important, precisely because: "*there is no value judgement more important to man - no factor more decisive in his psychological development and motivation - than the estimate he passes on himself.*" (Branden, 1994: 45). A personal evaluation should also result in self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is crucial to self-acceptance.
- self-expression is important too. Adolescents need to be taught how to express their feelings regarding themselves and their needs, if a positive self-concept is to be encouraged. Self-expression should, however, be taken a step further. Adolescents should be taught to do things for themselves, to develop their uniqueness, and in that way express themselves. In other words they should be taught to be unlimited, authentic human beings, not merely fulfillers of roles.
- teaching youngsters the skill of monitoring self-talk will assist them to remain positively oriented towards themselves. Encouraging at least one positive self-statement daily would encourage more positive self-talk too, and hence a positive self-concept.
- advance coping statements are a means of maintaining a positive self-concept.

Such coping statements generally derive from positive self-talk, and youngsters can be coached to have a ready and credible repertoire of such statements.

- build self-esteem actively by encouraging a feeling of achievement. Encourage these youngsters to be actively involved in a hobby or sport which will allow them a measure of success.
- self-care skills are important too. By self-care skills the writer means that youngsters should be coached to know when they are approaching their personal limit and to request assistance or space at this stage, in order not to corrode the self-concept by the feelings of frustration and inadequacy which inevitably accompany being out of control.
- youngsters should also be encouraged to be good to themselves. This would entail eating nutritiously; sleeping enough; exercising; spending time with people they like; laughing; appreciating beauty; and even at times of extreme stress, lowering their expectations of themselves temporarily. Being invitational to themselves would encourage a more positive self-concept.
- allied to the idea of being good to themselves, is the concept of nurturing their inner child, or that childlike part of oneself which expresses one's deepest emotional needs; which is playful and energetic; and which carries with it pain and emotional trauma, typically derived from actual childhood. Cultivating a relationship with the inner child would entail:
 - ☺ overcoming negative attitudes to one's inner child, typically derived from one's parents' attitude;
 - ☺ bringing out one's inner child, using visualisation or communication via letter, for example;
 - ☺ nurturing one's inner child on a daily basis, by buying oneself flowers or watching the sunset or listening to a motivational tape, for example (Bourne, 1995: 306-313).

- encourage youngsters to love, as a loving relationship will provide a deep sense of security which will feed the self-concept. As Buscaglia (1992: 23) explains:

“When we are fulfilled in love, we can begin to feel a real sense of security, peace and contentment; one that does not fluctuate with the trends of the moment. A loving relationship gives us an inner wealth that outlives the greatest of external pleasures.”
- assertiveness is important in the protection of a positive self-concept. Buscaglia (1982: 65-66) relates the anecdote of his Japanese teacher shutting him up quite vehemently with the admonition: *“Don’t walk in my head with your dirty feet!”* This admonition should be taught to youngsters to protect them from unwarranted negative or critical influences which corrode a positive self-concept.
- self-forgiveness is very important too, if a realistically positive self-concept is to be reached. Youngsters need to learn that perfection is impossible and that as stepping stones, mistakes are almost desirable. They need to learn to let go of negative labels derived from past mistakes. They need to choose to forgive themselves and actively cultivate new, positive labels.
- transcendence should be encouraged too, as there is therapeutic value in assisting someone else, and in the process, forgetting oneself. The sense of being able to help someone else buoys the self-concept.

5.2.8 Anxiety

Typically, anxiety is viewed as something undesirable. It does, however, have positive value when not taken to extremes: *“It is only when we allow anxiety to overpower our reason that problems arise. But when we see it as a normal, human state, it can represent the step from which all acts of psychic growth and survival build.”* (Buscaglia, 1992: 92). Both the vulnerable and resilient youngsters need to be made aware of anxiety’s potential

role, and of skills to prevent it from becoming overpowering and rendering one inadequate, as manifested by the vulnerable group in Chapter Four.

The following recommendations are made to manage, and positively, harness anxiety:

- youngsters should be taught to identify physiological signs of anxiety in order that the anxiety may be recognised and managed. When anxiety symptoms are recognised, the source of the anxiety can be dealt with timeously and the cycle halted.
- coping statements are an important aid in preventing anxiety from spiralling. They should be prepared and rehearsed, in advance, so that the youngster has a ready repertoire to use against anxiety.
- an awareness of self-defeating statements should also be encouraged as such statements merely exacerbate anxiety. The youngsters may be taught how to make counter-statements in order to empower them against spiralling anxiety.
- relaxation exercises are an important aid in counteracting anxiety. Breathing exercises and progressive muscle relaxation exercises should be taught.
- thinking styles may contribute directly to anxiety. Ellis' ABC technique should be taught in order to provide cognitive restructuring and counteract negative thinking. Another option is to teach youngsters to distract themselves from negative preoccupation. However, the writer would only recommend the latter as an additional skill and not in place of Rational-Emotive Therapy.
- perfectionism should be discouraged. In its place realistic goals may be encouraged, along with a process rather than an outcomes orientation. In other words, youngsters should learn to credit themselves for trying, rather than focusing only on an inadequate outcome, thereby feeding anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

- allied to the previous point is teaching youngsters not to emphasise the importance of small mistakes, and to choose rather to see mistakes in perspective. Mary Pickford (in Canfield and Wells, 1994: 223) may be quoted in this conjunction:

“If you have made mistakes ... there is always another chance for you ... You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call ‘failure’ is not the falling down, but staying down.”

- anxiety is allied to an inability to express feelings (Bourne, 1995: 260-261) and for this reason youngsters should be encouraged to express their feelings, either by:

- ✓ talking it out, or
- ✓ writing it out, or
- ✓ discharging sadness (by using a feeling journal, or crying, for example), or
- ✓ discharging anger (by chopping wood or hitting a punching bag or throwing eggs into a bathtub, for example.)

- the need for approval seemed to underlie the reason for anxiety in the resilient group. These youngsters need to be taught that although everyone craves some degree of approval, an excessive need for approval (leading to anxiety) generally stems from a poor self-concept and may be counteracted in the following ways (Bourne, 1995: 228-231):

- ✓ develop a realistic view of others’ approval, meaning that rather than take it personally, alternative views are consciously chosen to explain an unwarranted lack of others’ approval.
- ✓ deal with criticism in an objective manner, meaning that before criticism is allowed to impact, one chooses to:

- a) evaluate the source of criticism;
- b) ask for detail, especially when blanket criticisms are made;
- c) and decide whether the criticism is in fact valid.

✓ recognise and relinquish co-dependency, meaning that when others' needs are consistently put first, one consciously chooses to begin to love and take care of oneself again.

- the youngsters also need to be taught acceptance of their inability to always control life, or "*the art of contentment*", to coin McGinnis' phrase (1990: 152). In other words they need to learn to be flexible; to take life as it comes. In this regard, letting go of perfectionism or knowing how to employ relaxation techniques would be useful. A sense of humour would also be invaluable, as well as believing that sometimes the book title quoted by McGinnis (1990: 153) is appropriate:

“ *All you can do is all you can do, but all you can do is enough.* ”

5.2.9 Locus of Control

Buscaglia (1982: 178) is very outspoken about locus of control:

“You have the power. You could do it. Nikos Kazantzakis says, ‘You have your brush, you have your colours, you paint paradise, then in you go.’ And if you want to paint hell, go ahead and paint it, but then don’t blame me, and don’t blame your parents, and don’t blame society - and for goodness sakes, don’t blame God. . . . You take full responsibility for creating your own hell.”

The capacity then to assume control, rather than assuming victim status, is the individual's choice, and this must be made abundantly clear to the vulnerable youngsters who are typically not authors of their own destiny.

An external locus of control needs to be converted into an internal locus of control, if resilience is to be anchored. The following recommendations are made to achieve an internal locus of control:

- the youngsters need to be taught that there are external forces in life over which they will have no control. However, what they do have control over is how they **choose** to respond to such forces. Regardless of circumstances, they may choose to have either a victor or a victim's attitude.
- in choosing to respond like a victor to life's curve balls, youngsters need to be taught the power of visualisation: "*One of the main things his [Dr. Charles Garfield's] research showed was that almost all of the world-class athletes and other peak performers are visualizers. They see it; they feel it; they experience it before they actually do it. They begin with the end in mind.*" (Covey, in Canfield and Wells, 1994: 40). In the same vein Wells (1990: 7) emphasises that "*Keeping your mind in mind matters because the quality of your thoughts affects the quality of your life. This means that you take charge of your life by taking charge of your thoughts, and you can take charge of your thoughts with the help of visualisation.*" For this reason, it is important that vulnerable youngsters are taught to visualise, in order that an internal locus of control may be encouraged.
- the vulnerable youngsters must also be taught to quit blaming and to accept responsibility for moving forward. Many vulnerable individuals are so caught up in indefinitely dwelling on their personal tragedies, that their lives are placed on hold. In so doing, they relinquish an internal locus of control. It might be necessary to hold a funeral for past hurts, and then thereafter, an internal locus of control may be assumed.
- youngsters must be encouraged to monitor the perspective they take of events, because their perspective will certainly impact on their locus of control. Ellis' ABC method would be useful in this respect too, because the youngsters will

learn to recognise and replace negative thought patterns.

- coping statements promoting an internal locus of control may also be learned in advance.
- youngsters should also be taught to analyse their beliefs, as constructive and destructive beliefs impact on the locus of control too. They should be encouraged to challenge destructive beliefs.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion to the guidelines suggested in this chapter, the writer would like to caution the reader that the separation of the various personal attributes which need to be inculcated, is merely cosmetic. In practice, the guidelines given would need to be integrated into a comprehensive programme, primarily because the personal attributes enumerated are mutually interacting, and do not function in isolation.

If the vulnerable youngster is to be assisted to surmount life's obstacles, a comprehensive programme is necessitated, targeting the following areas, as depicted in the diagram:

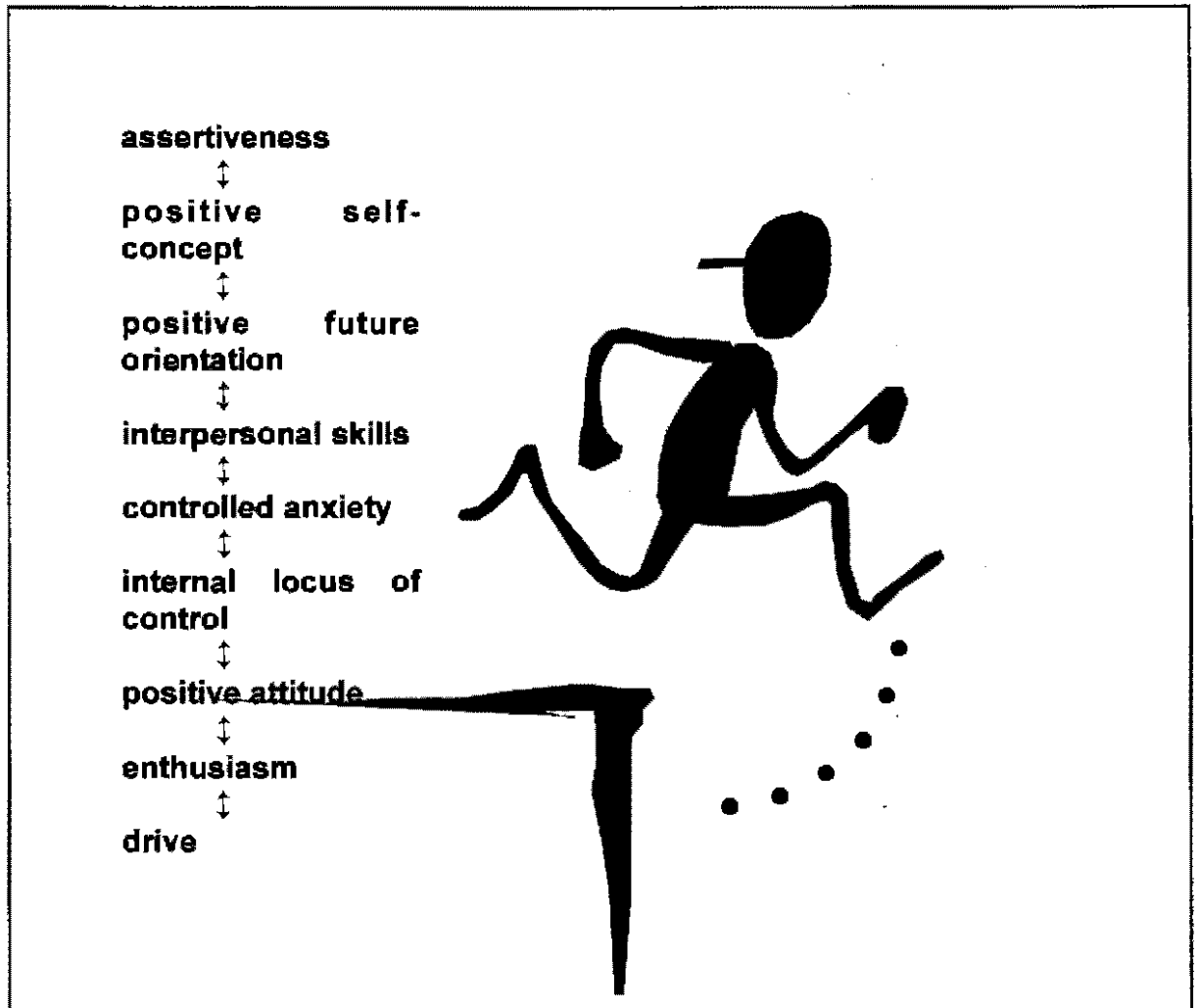


DIAGRAM 15

interacting personal attributes to be addressed
if resilience is to be anchored

In the following and final chapter the writer will provide a summary of the study.



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

*"You don't get to choose how you're going to die, or when.
You can only decide how you're going to live. Now."*

(Joan Baez in Buscaglia, 1992: 239)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem which initiated this study was the writer's puzzling observation that some youngsters are only buffeted by life's waves, whilst others appear to sink and drown. The writer especially noticed this phenomenon among learning disabled youngsters. She was particularly concerned with the personal attributes anchoring resilience. Thus, the study was conducted in order to understand the nature and role of the personal factors anchoring resilience, in order that educational psychologists may have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of resilience, so that vulnerable youngsters might be therapeutically assisted to choose a more resilient attitude and behaviour.

6.2 HYPOTHESES GOVERNING THE STUDY

The following table summarises the initial hypotheses and comments on their validity, given the findings of the literature and empirical studies:

TABLE 25
VALIDITY OF HYPOTHESES

HYPOTHESIS	CONCLUSION
<input type="checkbox"/> it may be empirically determined which personal attributes impact positively on resilience, especially in resilient learning disabled adolescents.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> it could be empirically determined which personal attributes are associated with both resilience and vulnerability.

<p>↳ it may be hypothesized that such attributes would include intelligence, ego strength, optimism, sociability, self-control, assertiveness and independence.</p>	<p>✓ all of the hypothesized resilient attributes were included. Intelligence was not directly assessed, but all the subjects were of average to above average intelligence. Ego strength in the resilient group was higher than that of the vulnerable group, but was nevertheless not strongly indicated.</p>
<p>↳ it may be empirically shown that vulnerable learning disabled children typically lack such attributes.</p>	<p>(✓) The vulnerable youngsters typically lack the attributes of the resilient group, because they score at the opposite end of the continuum of the attribute. The vulnerable and resilient group share the attribute of excitability. The difference though, is that the resilient group's excitability is tempered by their other attributes, whereas the vulnerable group's attributes provide no amelioration.</p>
<p>↳ it may be shown what the role of personal attributes is in terms of resilience.</p>	<p>✓ The role is shown to be interactive: the attributes mediate one another and so risk-inducing extremes are avoided, allowing self-actualisation in the face of obstacles to proceed.</p>
<p>↳ it may be determined that the lack of such attributes acts as a potential risk for maladjustment</p>	<p>(✓) Maladjustment is indicated only in so far as members of the vulnerable group projected the use of chemical substances to cope; six members of the vulnerable group have received more than one disciplinary warning from the school; and high depression and aggression levels were indicated.</p>
<p>↳ it may be shown that in the absence of personal attributes which provide a buffering effect, vulnerable youngsters execute negative self-fulfilling prophecies.</p>	<p>* This hypothesis was not confirmed in the course of this study. There were intimations supporting this hypothesis in the projective tests, but no significant proof.</p>
<p>↳ it is probable that the personal attributes contributing towards resilience do not function as isolated factors, but rather as a coalition of factors.</p>	<p>✓ The personal attributes are shown to interact mediatively and reciprocally in the resilient group, compared to a chain reaction cycle of functioning in the vulnerable group.</p>

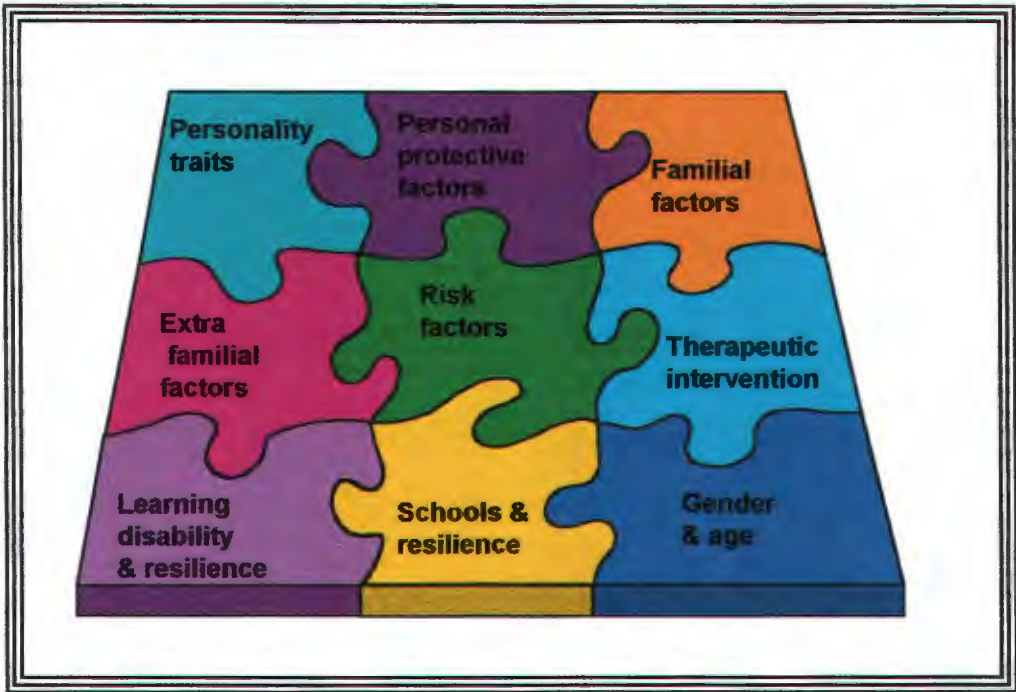
Two additional hypotheses were added in chapter three:

<p>↳ It might be demonstrated that teachers are not reliable sources of identification of resilient and non-resilient adolescents, possibly because of the masks which non-resilient youngsters wear.</p>	<p>✓ The writer is of the opinion that two of the youngsters hypothesized to be resilient are in effect wearing very convincing resilient masks. Their extreme scores in the empirical study suggest this.</p>
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<p>✎ Alternatively, it might be demonstrated that levels of resilience are not permanent, but a process which ebbs and flows.</p>	<p>✓ As a result of the empirical study the writer recommended therapy for two youngsters whose current circumstances are severely trying their potential for continued resilience. Their example suggested to the writer that resilience is a dynamic process.</p>
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6.3 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE LITERATURE




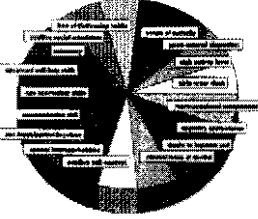
A great many questions were asked by the writer in Chapter One. The majority were answered by the literature study, in which the writer fragmented the phenomenon of resilience to facilitate a more comprehensive overview. The following diagram provides a schematic representation of the various components of resilience currently documented in the literature covering this field:


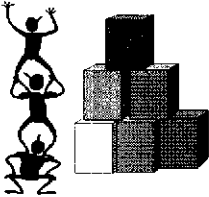












**DIAGRAM 16
RESILIENCE FRAGMENTED**

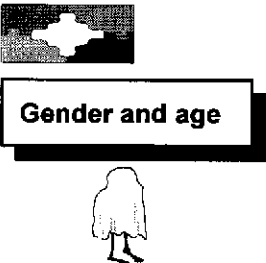
Current literature indicates that each of the pieces depicted in the above diagram impacts on resilience. For this reason, the writer maintains that her fragmentation of the phenomenon of resilience is merely an artificial one, done to facilitate a more comprehensive overview of resilience. In the table below, which summarises the findings from the literature overview, the same fragmentation is continued, again only to ease the overview of findings.

TABLE 26
CONCLUSIONS FROM LITERATURE OVERVIEW

 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;"> personality traits </div> 	<p>Certain personality traits are considered to be central to resilience. Werner and Smith (1982), Higgins (1994), Berliner and Bernard (1996), Rak and Patterson (1996) and Hart et al (1997) all acknowledge the predictive and anchoring role of personality traits in resilience. The key personality traits impacting on resilience (as summarised by the writer in Diagram 1) are emotional responsiveness; social competence; creativity; autonomy; and optimism.</p>
 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;"> Protective factors </div> 	<p>Protective factors are also thought to be central to resilience, given their mediating role against stressful life experiences. Protective factors are commonly dichotomised into personal protective factors, familial protective factors and extra familial protective factors (as indicated in Diagram 2, chapter two.) Although there is a school of thought (Werner and Smith [1982], Loesel and Bliesener [1994]) which holds that resilience is merely an absence of risk factors and a surplus of protective factors, the writer concurs with Rutter (1985) and Vaillant (1993), who believe that resilience is greater than the mere addition and subtraction of protective and risk factors.</p> <p>There are seventeen personal protective factors or intrinsic factors providing a buffer against life's obstacles. These factors distinguish resilient individuals from vulnerable individuals. The reader is referred to Chart 1 in chapter two for a summary of the personal protective factors.</p>

 <p>Familial factors</p> 	<p>Familial factors may operate as either risk or protective factors. Typically, familial factors may be categorised as parent-child relationship; additional caretakers; family functioning; rules and structures; socioeconomic status; and parent variables (as summarised in Diagram 3 in chapter two.) Where the parent-child relationship is healthy, or where there are additional caretakers to facilitate a healthy parent-child relationship or substitute for it, and when family functioning is functional and cohesive with clearly defined, reasonable rules and sound structures, resilience is facilitated. Clearly, when one or both parents evidence maladjustment and the remaining familial factors are also negative, the potential for resilience is corroded.</p>
 <p>Extra familial factors</p> 	<p>Extra familial factors are social or environmental factors, other than family factors, impacting on resilience. The impact may be either protective or risk-inducing.</p> <p>In particular, schools and churches are seen to be compensatory protective systems as they are sources of potential positive parental surrogates. Peer affiliations and neighbours are further sources of extra familial influence, which may be either positive or negative.</p> <p>The literature is clear that extra familial factors may not be viewed as causal, without taking into account that individual, familial and extra familial factors are interactive and reciprocal.</p>
 <p>Risk factors</p> 	<p>Risk factors are those factors which corrode the potential for resilience, and they may be individual, familial or extra familial. Risk factors must be seen in context as either proximal or distal, as the nature of the context may either buffer or exacerbate the stressor. Risk factors are also generally thought to be cumulative, with concurrent risk thought to be more deleterious than isolated risk factors. It may, therefore, in the writer's opinion be more accurate to refer to a risk process.</p> <p>There are at least thirteen different risk factors documented in current literature. The reader is referred to Diagram 5 for a summary of these risk factors.</p>

 <p>Therapeutic intervention</p> 	<p>In terms of resilience, therapeutic intervention is seen as an exercise in the promotion of wellness, rather than as an exercise in repair. In the past, it was popularly accepted that intervention entailed the elimination of risk factors and a reduction of stress. Currently, the focus has shifted to assisting vulnerable individuals to adapt, by facilitating protective mechanisms. Intervention may take the form of group therapy, individual therapy, or training. Regardless of the method of intervention used, if it is to have merit, then it must be both proactive and tailored to the specific context of the individual.</p>
 <p>Learning disability and resilience</p> 	<p>A learning disability is thought to qualify as a risk factor in itself, placing the learning disabled individual at greater risk for negative emotional, familial and social experiences. The standard risk factors are thought to operate in the learning disabled youngster's life, with the additional risk factors of parental non-acceptance, family rigidity or disorganisation, school disruptions and school failure augmenting general risk.</p> <p>For intervention to encourage resilience, it should target an understanding and acceptance of the disability, rather than merely the academic aspects thereof. There are youngsters who demonstrate resilience, despite their disability. The standard protective factors function in their case, with special emphasis on an internal locus of control, proactive planning, self-belief and -understanding, and realistic goals.</p>
 <p>The school's / teacher's impact</p> 	<p>Teacher interaction with pupils may have either a protective or risk-inducing impact. Teachers have the potential to affect the course of resilience, primarily by virtue of their relationships, expectations and opportunities, and activities afforded by them to their pupils.</p> <p>If schools are to encourage resilience, a paradigm shift (as summarised in Table 2) from focusing on risk factors to the facilitation of resilience, is necessary.</p>

	<p>Age and gender may operate as either risk or protective factors. They do not determine resilience though; they merely play a complementary role, depending on the given context. In the face of stressors, young age and male gender equal risk; and adolescence and female gender equal risk. It cannot be assumed then that coping in one developmental stage will predict resilience in the next.</p>
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In conclusion then, the literature overview provides nine interacting facets of resilience, which form a gestalt, from which the phenomenon of resilience emerges.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In Chapter One, the writer wondered what the personal attributes contributing to resilience are. The empirical study sought to answer this question, by distinguishing the personal attributes which differentiated the resilient group from their vulnerable counterparts. The distinguishing attributes of the resilient group were as follows:

positive self-concept, suggesting a good relationship to the self, and positive self-talk.

positive attitude, suggesting the ability to remain cheerful and optimistic.

positive future orientation, suggesting tenacity, orientation to achieve and optimism.

assertiveness, suggesting autonomous functioning, independent-mindedness and the ability to fight for deserved personal rights in a socially appropriate manner.

enthusiasm, suggesting a tendency towards excitability and spontaneity.

drive, suggesting a curiosity about life, as well as tenacity and creative problem-solving ability. Drive is also associated with tension to achieve goals.

good interpersonal relationships, suggesting positive social orientation and the ability to derive optimal benefit from social interaction. Empathy and a desire for love are associated with this attribute.

internal locus of control, suggesting a sense of authorship or choice over one's destiny, even if such choice only pertains to attitude.

anxiety, suggesting sensitivity and a sense of obligation, which translates into increased drive and a sense of responsibility.




DIAGRAM 17
SUMMARY OF RESILIENT ATTRIBUTES

The personal attributes of the vulnerable group differ from those of the resilient group in that they are found at the opposite end of the continuum of the given attribute. The only exceptions are in the attributes of excitability and assertiveness. With these attributes, the vulnerable group does not feature at the opposite end of the continuum: the manifestation of these traits is merely more extreme. The reader is referred to Tables 21 and 22, chapter four, for a summary of the similarities and differences between the groups' personal attributes.

The nature of the resilient group's personal attributes is interactive and reciprocal (see Diagram 14). Rather than cause a chain reaction, the mix of personal attributes mediates, thereby facilitating an avoidance of extremes, which would necessarily sap the potential for resilience. In contrast, the personal attributes of the vulnerable youngsters provide no mediating effects. The result is a continuous cycle of spiralling negativity (see Diagram 13).

The role of the personal attributes among the resilient youngsters is more than just an adding up of factors to facilitate protection against life's blows; rather the role is a self-actualising one. The personal attributes of the resilient child facilitate self-actualisation in the face of obstacles.

Underpinning the personal attributes is the notion of choice. Based on the results of the empirical study, showing that the personal attributes characterising the resilient and vulnerable groups generally appear to be on opposite ends of the same continuum, the writer concluded that personal choice to self-actualise, regardless of life's obstacles, underlies the interacting web of personal attributes. In other words, the writer concludes that resilience can be chosen. In terms of this conclusion, vulnerable youngsters can be coached into choosing differently, and hence, more resilient behaviour.

In chapter one the writer also wondered what the nature and role of resilience had to say about the learning disabled child who typically lacks resilience. For this reason the writer indicated that learning disabled youngsters would form a part of the demarcation of her study. The study showed that:

- learning disabled youngsters are capable of evidencing resilience.
- resilient learning disabled youngsters show high levels of excitability as a part of the matrix of personal attributes. Excitability may well be influenced by the generally impulsive nature of the learning disabled child.
- resilient learning disabled youngsters show only a low average self-concept. This may also be due to the generally negative nature of the learning disabled child's academic and social experiences.
- therapeutic intervention among learning disabled youngsters, aimed at cultivating resilience, would certainly be worthwhile and should especially focus on moderating levels of excitability and nurturing a positive self-concept.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The writer is of the opinion that the following limitations apply to her study of resilience:

- ⊗ A definite limitation of this study was its size. In order to be able to generalise the findings reliably, this study would have to be conducted nomothetically.
- ⊗ A further limitation may well have been the subjects chosen by the teachers. The writer is of the opinion that two of the subjects, characterised as resilient by their teachers, really wear resilient masks which are wearing thin, and this may have impacted negatively on the overall profile of the resilient group. The method of selection was therefore possibly too subjective, thereby limiting the study.
- ⊗ In retrospect, the writer feels she may have limited the study by working generally with adolescents from grades eight to twelve. It may have been more prudent to have worked with one grade, in that there are definite trends noticed with certain grades at the school from which the study group was drawn. For example, it is

generally felt by the staff of this school that grade eight pupils are particularly difficult and exceedingly negative, often wanting to mainstream during this year and then settling down beautifully by the following year. It may be that the writer's failure to control this variable may have impacted on the results of the study, especially as six of the twenty subjects were from grade eight.

- ☹ Finally, although learning disabled adolescents formed a demarcation of the writer's empirical study, this demarcation in itself, may well be a limitation of the study, in that the results of the empirical study could probably not be generalised to the adolescent population in general. The very nature of the learning disabled youngster may also be seen as a limiting factor, in that factors associated with learning disability in general, such as impulsivity and poor self-concept, could have impacted on the results of the empirical study, thereby skewing the findings.

6.6 CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE STUDY

The writer is of the opinion that her study made the following contributions:

- ☺ To the writer's knowledge, this study is the first South African study to document the personal attributes of resilience, with the focus on learning disabled adolescents.
- ☺ The findings from current literature were summarised in table or diagram form, facilitating an easy overview of the current literature.
- ☺ The most important contribution, from the writer's point of view, is the finding of the study that learning disabled youngsters can evidence resilience. For the writer this means that via therapeutic intervention, the traditional view of the learning disabled youngster as typically vulnerable, can be challenged and adapted. Thus, the study facilitated a more positive view of learning disabled youngsters, which may be used to encourage them, as well as their parents and teachers.

- ☺ The finding of the literature study suggesting that teachers may play a definitive role in the life of their pupils is important, especially at a time when many teachers are demoralised. The knowledge that the relationship the teacher shares with a pupil can be the ultimate factor encouraging resilience, and a life well spent in the long run, will empower the true teacher.

- ☺ The study aimed to facilitate an understanding of the nature and role of the personal attributes anchoring resilience, especially as pertaining to learning disabled youth, in order that the educational psychologist might come to understand the phenomenon of resilience more deeply. In this manner, the study makes a contribution to the educational psychologist's professional frame of reference.

- ☺ The study provides preliminary guidelines for educational psychologists to assist the vulnerable learning disabled adolescent towards resilience, thereby attempting to make a contribution to the educational psychologist's therapeutic repertoire.

- ☺ Finally, in the writer's opinion this study provides hope. It illustrates that adolescents encumbered by an innate risk factor (in this instance, a learning disability), and then additional risks, can choose to rise above their circumstances and continue along their path of self-actualisation. Their example is inspiring: their journey is not without pain or anxiety, but it continues nevertheless, lending credence to McGinnis' (1990: 93) understanding of true survival, or resilience:

"Our lives are a continuing journey - and we must learn and grow at every bend as we make our way, sometimes stumbling, but always moving toward the finest within us."

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study certainly did not address all the questions posed in Chapter One concerning resilience. The unanswered questions raise valid issues which should be addressed, and the writer trusts that these aspects could propel a colleague into extensive future research, as the results of such research would prove beneficial to educational psychologists. These areas include:

- the correlation, if any, between the capacity for resilience and ego defence mechanisms.
- the correlation, if any, between resilience and resilient role models.
- the role of self-talk in the development and sustenance of resilience.
- the capacity for giving and receiving love as evidence of resilience.
- the correlation, if any, between significant future unfinished business and resilience.
- the correlation, if any, between social attractiveness and resilience.

A further recommendation is the creation of a detailed therapeutic programme (utilising the information rendered by this study in terms of personal attributes anchoring resilience), aimed at nurturing personal attributes which would promote the potential for resilience. The writer is convinced that such a study is both necessary and would facilitate life-enhancing growth.

A programme aimed specifically at educating parents to encourage resilient personal attributes in their children would also be worthwhile. Not only would parents then be

empowered, but they would also derive enormous benefit from the support such a group would offer. Ultimately, their children would benefit too. The writer would really encourage such a study.

The writer recommends that the attributes of the resilient child be included as a course in the training of teachers, especially the training of guidance teachers. Knowledge of what may shape resilience would empower the teacher, and ultimately the pupil then too.

During the course of her study, the writer became aware that vulnerability is increased by negative school experience. A study targeting the relation between school experiences and resilience might well prove enlightening, and possibly even reforming.

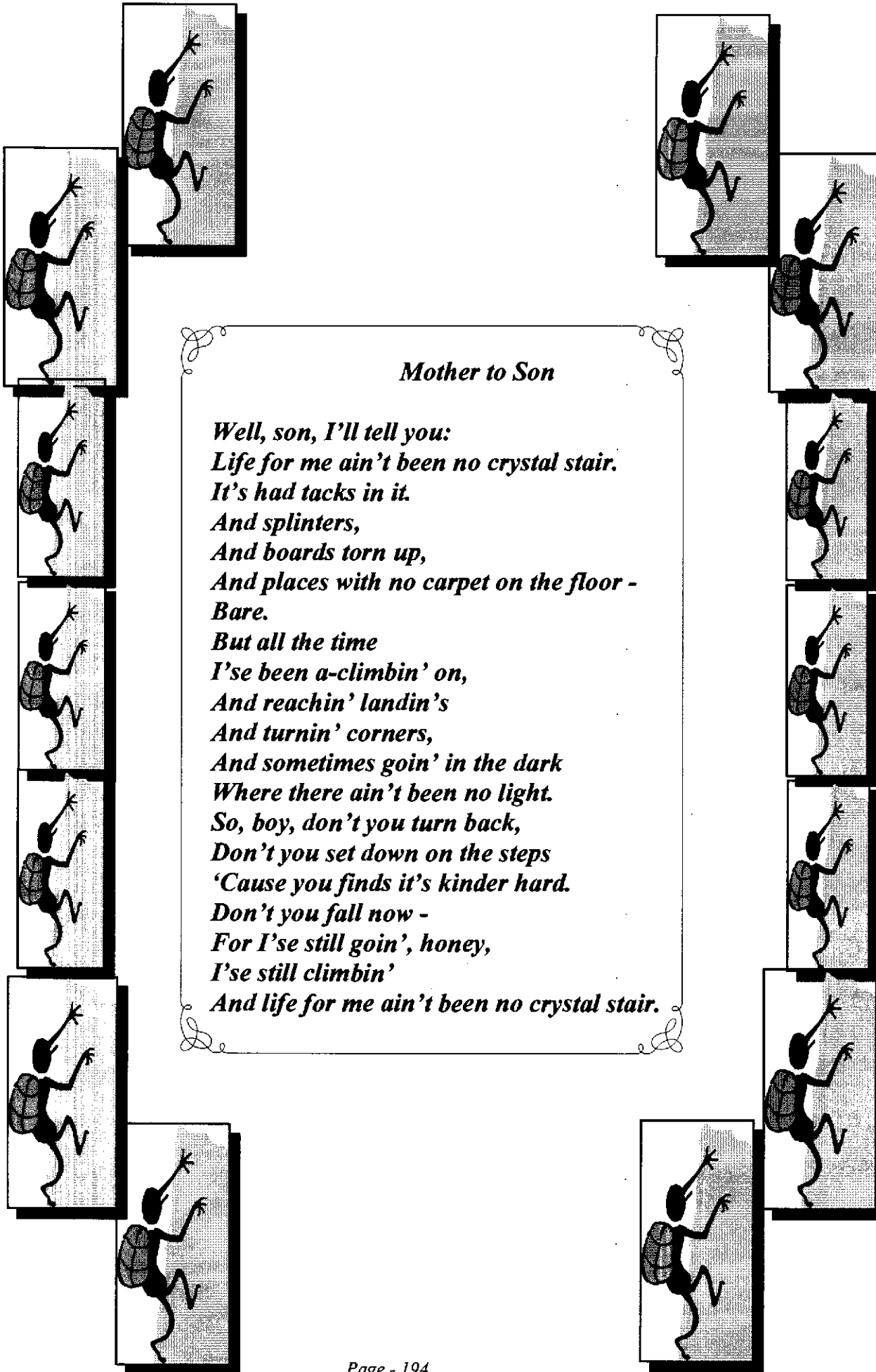
The writer imagines that group therapy could provide a powerful arena for nurturing resilience. Developing a programme for nurturing resilience, using group therapy, would be a very worthwhile undertaking.

Finally, an in-depth study relating the modern concept of resilience to Maslow's established theory of self-actualisation may provide enlightening insight into the still puzzling facets of resilience.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The writer chooses to conclude her study with a simple poem by Langston Hughes (in Canfield and Hansen, 1993: 239-240), which in the writer's opinion epitomises the essence of resilience, as it was presented in the literature study; but more especially as it emerged from the empirical study.

Resilience, then, from mother to son; therapist to client; person to person:



Mother to Son

*Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor -
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back,
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now -
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin'
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.*



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