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# The Factors Affecting Resilience and Recovery Following Traumatic Experience

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## **ABSTRACT**

Trauma is defined as exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor, which is characterised by a threat to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. Crime statistics show that traumatic events have become prevalent in people's lives, especially in South Africa. There has been substantial research conducted in the field of trauma in recent years, and much of this literature has focused on resilience. However, there are currently gaps in the literature on how adolescent crime survivors respond in times of trauma, particularly non-sexual trauma, and the factors that foster resilience in this group. Evidence suggests that youth are at a particular risk of being exposed to trauma and hence may not be well-equipped with adaptive coping skills. This study investigated female adolescent resiliency, as a means to understanding the ways in which this group manages trauma experiences. Eleven participants were recruited from a high school in the Western Cape. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, where the participants were asked to share their experiences with non-sexual crime-related trauma, as well as the coping strategies utilised to deal with this. The data was analysed using thematic analysis from which three main themes emerged concerning the factors that influence resilient coping. It was found that individual differences in response to trauma are the result of complex interactions between person, event and environmental factors, which in turn fosters a sense of resilience. This approach assisted in understanding the ways female adolescents, especially those in South Africa, cope with trauma, as the way that resilience is fostered in this group is often not adequately understood or researched. Directions for further research include the improvement of social support available to trauma survivors, and crime prevention programmes in South Africa.

**Keywords:** trauma; resilience; ecological model; female adolescents; non-sexual assault; crime-related trauma.

An interest in human triumph over trauma has captured the imagination of poets, artists and visionaries for centuries (Harney, 2007). Traumatic events are extraordinary not because they occur rarely, but because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life (Herman, 1992). All facets of trauma<sup>1</sup> such as violence, abuse, tragedy and catastrophes are not culturally bound, as trauma transcends boundaries of culture and communities across the globe (Harvey & Tummala-Nara, 2007). In South Africa, statistics reveal that 75% of the population experience at least one traumatic event during their lifetimes (Williams et al., 2007). This reality has led to increased interest in the field of trauma, and a need for a greater understanding of the nature and impact of traumatic exposure and responses among trauma survivors<sup>2</sup> from diverse cultural contexts (Harvey & Tummala-Nara, 2007).

More importantly, there is a growing body of research on individual resilience in responding to trauma, as a means to assess how survivors overcome such difficult experiences. It is a truism to say that not every individual develops distress following trauma, a fact that makes the study of resilience both interesting and important (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005). Therefore, the study of resilience is significant as resilience is a positive outcome of trauma, and identifying the factors that foster it offers the potential to improve upon the resources and support available to trauma survivors (Lynch, Keasler, Reaves, Channer, & Bukowski, 2007). However, there are currently gaps in the literature on how adolescent crime survivors, particularly of non-sexual assault<sup>3</sup>, respond in times of trauma, and the factors that foster resilience. Furthermore, it is evident from the literature that female adolescents, who are often survivors of non-sexual assault, have not been investigated in detail in previous research studies (Williams et al., 2007). As a consequence, the study which follows will investigate female adolescent resiliency, as a means to understanding the distinct ways that this group manages trauma experiences.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

In reviewing the literature, differing classifications of trauma responses will be investigated, one of which is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000). Research has highlighted that whilst some individuals develop PTSD, others

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<sup>1</sup> In this study the concept of 'trauma' refers to psychological trauma as opposed to medical or physical trauma.

<sup>2</sup> People who have experienced trauma will be referred to as 'survivors' as opposed to 'victims' as the connotations of 'survivor' typically include agency and strength, as opposed to powerlessness and weakness.

<sup>3</sup> Non-sexual assault is defined as a crime committed against another person by a non-partner, which involves physical contact (which may have included the use of a weapon), or a direct threat to life by the use of a weapon and without physical contact (Snyman, 2003 as cited in Edross, 2008).

develop a sense of resiliency, which can be described as a state of competent functioning despite serious threats, and which indicates the absence of psychopathology (Yehuda & Flory, 2007). This highlights the importance of examining those factors which influence resilience in individuals following trauma, as resiliency is a positive adaptive outcome. This entails examining different models of trauma and resilience, as well as individual, event, and environmental factors that impact on resilience after a traumatic event. Of particular importance, are the factors that foster resilience in female adolescent trauma survivors, as this group is not well researched.

### **Classifications of Trauma Responses**

Trauma is defined as exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor, which is characterised by a threat to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death (Herman, 1992). It was once believed that traumatic events were uncommon and thus early definitions of trauma described these events to be outside the range of usual human experience. These definitions, however, have had to be modified as trauma has become increasingly prevalent in people's lives across the globe, especially in South Africa (Yehuda & Flory, 2007).

Following a traumatic event, individuals may exhibit symptoms, which can be classified as PTSD. As detailed in the DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000), the criteria for PTSD specify that the traumatic event(s) experienced must involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, and that the emotional responses must involve fear, helplessness, or horror. These symptoms of PTSD are categorised as re-experiencing, avoidance and numbing, and arousal (APA, 2000) (See Appendix A).

Similarly, Herman (1992) outlines the symptoms of PTSD in three similar categories: hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction. Firstly, hyperarousal symptoms include persistent expectation of danger, startle responses, irritability, and sleep disturbances. Secondly, intrusive symptoms include reliving of the event, as though it were continually recurring in the present, interrupting the individual's life. In addition, experience of the trauma can become encoded in a different form of memory, which breaks into the person's consciousness unexpectedly, in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. Thirdly, constriction symptoms include numbness and distorted perceptions, partial anaesthesia or loss of sensations and time, which are all known to persist long after the actual traumatic event.

Although these symptoms of PTSD can develop following trauma, it has been found that many individuals appear to recover from traumatic events, and continue functioning,

within a short period of time. This surprised many theorists as it was believed that only individuals with exceptional emotional strength could be resilient (Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, & Vlahov, 2007). Therefore, research has shifted to investigate individual differences in response to trauma, in order to establish why certain individuals were resilient, whilst others developed post trauma symptoms (Yehuda & Flory, 2007). Following this, it became essential to investigate the ways in which individuals utilise protective factors and adapted in the face of adversity.

### **Models of Trauma and Resilience**

Theorists acknowledge that the expressions of trauma are varied, and that a uni-dimensional paradigm may be too limiting to account for the wide-ranging expressions of the phenomenon (Gilfus, 1999). In order to broaden understanding of the diversity of trauma responses, the influence of various factors affecting resilience have been investigated, which have included a multidimensional approach to trauma and resilience.

#### ***Harvey's ecological model***

Ecology is a science which focuses on the interrelationship between organisms and their environment (Harvey, 1996). An ecological model draws on the perspective of community psychology, which hypothesises that each individual's reaction to a traumatic event can be influenced by the combined characteristics of those communities to which they belong, and from which each individual draws their identity (Harvey, 1996). However, existing literature on trauma frequently overlooks the importance of environmental contributors to individual variations in posttraumatic response and recovery. In addition, much of the literature tends to underestimate the contributions of social and cultural influences as well as the possibility of recovery without clinical care. Harvey's (1996) ecological view of psychological trauma response and recovery incorporates the perspective of community psychology as a means to address these issues. This perspective advocates that the psychological attributes of people are best described in the ecological context of human community (Harney, 2007). As a result, this model attributes differences in individual responses to trauma to interactions between person, event and environmental factors. These interactions construct the dynamic relationship between the individual and community and provide the context for recovery (Harvey, 1996).

*Person/individual factors.* Person or individual factors such as age, developmental stage, intelligence, personality, initial distress of the survivor, coping skills, psychological functioning, life stressors, prior trauma, socio-economic status (SES) and access to resources,

amongst others, have been documented as potentially bearing significance on an individual's post-trauma response (Harvey, 1996). Of particular significance is the individual's cultural understanding of their trauma, together with the various kinds of care, comfort, and facets of hope and resilience provided by friends and family (Harney, 2007). Although research has been conducted concerning demographic and personality characteristics, less attention has been attributed to the factors that shape posttraumatic response in a survivor's community of reference (Sorsoli, 2007). The cultural meaning of trauma, resilience, hope, and tenacity within a community may influence an individual's understanding of their traumatic experience (Harvey, 2007). These factors help to determine an individuals' ecological relationship with their environments.

*Event factors.* Event factors describe the prominent characteristics of one or a series of traumatic events. The frequency, severity and duration of the trauma, the degree of physical violence and violation, the terror and humiliation withstood, and whether the trauma was experienced alone or in the company of others, may all impact on trauma survivors in diverse ways (Harvey, 1996).

*Environmental factors.* Many environmental factors are believed to influence posttraumatic response and recovery. These include the context in which the traumatic event was experienced, characteristics of the survivor's support system, and the degree of safety and control available to the survivor after the trauma (Harvey, 1996). The types of social support from significant others and the wider community constitute important elements of the survivor's recovery environment. Herman (1992) also acknowledges the significant role of the community and the social support available to trauma survivors, which is believed to have significant impact on recovery.

A study focusing on social relationships and trauma found that interpersonal friction, such as other people's reactions to the traumatic event, or negative relationships between family members, can cause increased posttraumatic distress (Zoellner, Foa, & Brigidi, 1999). Furthermore, Harvey's ecological model relates to feminist ideas that community attitudes, spirituality and religion, values, and social constructions of race and gender could mediate the meaning of trauma for an individual (Lynch et al., 2007; Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello, & Koenig, 2007).

Essentially, Harvey's model encompasses a multidimensional definition of resilience and proposes that individual differences in traumatic response are the result of complex interactions among person, event and environmental factors.

### *Alternative models of trauma*

In addition to Harvey's (1996) model of trauma and resilience, alternative models provided a more comprehensive understanding of the facets of trauma, and advanced other arguments to describe post-trauma distress and resilience.

*Person-process-context model.* In similar vein to Harvey (1996), Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes an ecological understanding of human development as being shaped throughout the lifespan by various relational, familial, social and cultural contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested a person-process-context model, which is similar to Harvey's (1996) person-event-environmental model. In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, psychological and developmental processes are examined as being integrated into the multiple, concentric contexts within which people are located. This model, consequently, guided a wave of research into the ways in which social contexts in childhood interact to affect psychological adjustment later in life. This is significant as the role of early attachment has been argued to have an impact on the cultivation of resilient functioning later in life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Harvey (1996), similarly, acknowledges positive attachment in childhood as an important factor in preparing individuals to cope with stress and adversity later in life. Therefore the early relational context of trauma survivors can significantly shape the degree to which they adopt resilient patterns of coping to trauma (Yehuda & Flory, 2007). Thus, both Harvey (1996) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasise the interdependence of person and context in the understanding of individually varied responses to traumatic events.

*Person x situation interactional model.* The person x situation model helps to identify the complex levels of interactions between the personal characteristics and situational factors which influence forms of resilient behaviour (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005). These interactions are specified according to five groups of variables: (1) personality characteristics, such as assertiveness and self esteem; (2) the capacity for affect regulation; (3) coping, and the ability to maintain a positive outlook; (4) the function of ego defences; and (5) the utilisation of protective factors, as well as resources available to aid coping. This model encompasses a person-environmental paradigm of resiliency with regards to perceiving and adapting to trauma. Essentially, the person x situation model relates to other models which consider the importance of the interaction between individual factors and the wider situational context (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005).

All of these models demonstrate the significance of considering an individuals' ecological system as a means of understanding their unique psychological response and resilience to trauma, as well as their subsequent prospects for recovery (Sorsoli, 2007).

### **Factors Fostering Resilience and Recovery Following Trauma**

Researchers have attempted to investigate the resilient nature of certain individuals' responses to adversity. Some theorists have described resilience as the process of adapting competently in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, and other significant stresses (Lynch et al., 2007). Resilience is also defined as the ability to overcome a negative experience, through flexible adjustment to the demands of one's life. Whichever definition researchers choose to define resilience, the main focus of research has typically concentrated on the specific factors that foster resilience in individuals (Yehuda & Flory, 2007).

Within Harvey's (1996) multidimensional model, several criteria are argued to contribute to trauma recovery. Firstly, authority over the remembering process and integration of memories allows an individual to regain control over memory recall, and to manage intrusive memories of the event. Secondly, the ability to deal with feelings and emotions associated with the event, as well as mastery over persistent symptoms, can assist in the recovery process. Thirdly the ability to replace self-critical thoughts with a positive view of oneself, results in restored self-esteem and self-cohesion. Additionally, safe attachment relationships to other people are important in restoring trust in others (Harvey, 1996). The importance of these connections is also supported by Lynch et al. (2007), who argue that the ability of trauma survivors to make and sustain positive connections with other individuals assists in their recovery. Finally, assigning new meaning to the trauma, allows the individual to embrace the belief that the trauma has yielded a new found strength or compassion (Harvey, 1996). Likewise, Herman (1992) argues that finding inner strength following a traumatic event is necessary in rebuilding a sense of control and restoring power to the trauma survivor. In essence, when individuals are able to utilise these aspects in an adaptive way, this can facilitate resilient coping.

In line with the multidimensional approach, Bonanno (2004) argues that there is no single way of maintaining equilibrium following trauma, but instead there are 'multiple pathways' to resiliency. Bonanno (2004) suggests that personality traits, such as hardiness, and coping styles play a role in fostering resilience. Hardiness involves being able to find a purpose and meaning in life; believing that one can influence one's environment; and that one can learn and grow from negative life experiences (Bonanno, 2004). Hardy individuals are

also able to use adaptive coping and social support, helping them to deal with trauma. This is supported by Lynch and colleagues (2007) who maintain that a process of self-change, which promotes hopefulness in difficult times, further influences resilience in trauma survivors.

In addition, Bonanno (2004) maintains that different coping styles also predict resilient outcome including the capacity for behavioural elasticity or flexible adaption to trauma. This links to Lynch et al.'s (2007) research which maintains that an individual's ability to be successful, and recognise and adapt skills within themselves, can further assist in their recovery. Moreover, the use of positive emotion and laughter can also help reduce levels of distress and promote coping following trauma (Bonanno, 2004).

This idea of coping, also results from the fact that some individuals cope with trauma in ways that are not always seen as adaptive. These include the use of self-enhancing attributes and biases, which can result in narcissistic behaviour; repressive coping, which is the avoidance of unpleasant thoughts and memories; and dismissive attachment to significant others. Despite the fact that these coping strategies are believed to be maladaptive, they often help people achieve resilience in the face of adversity (Mancini & Bonanno, 2006).

Focusing on crime-related trauma, these events can destroy an individual's assumptions about the safety of the world (Herman, 1992). Findings suggest that the degree of physical injury, level of threat perceived by the survivor, and the relationship between the perpetrator and the survivor, are further indicative of resilient coping. Another important factor is the cognitive appraisal of the event, as each individual experiences a traumatic event in a different and subjective way. This is significant as the way in which an individual interprets the event is imperative to their understanding of the traumatic experience (Kilpatrick et al., 1989).

These diverse contributors to resilience highlight the need to look at post-trauma reactions as a dynamic process. Within the process of recovery, research has also drawn attention to posttraumatic growth following trauma. The construct of posttraumatic growth is defined as a positive life change following a highly stressful or traumatic event. Related to resilience, posttraumatic growth involves meaning making and cognitive processing of restructuring beliefs about the self and the world. This results in an individual perceiving that they have grown through this process, and become a stronger person (Park & Helgeson, 2006).

It is evident that each individual cultivates resilience in a distinct and personal way. This involves a multifaceted interaction of these factors which can be shaped by an interplay of relational, social and cultural contexts (Harney, 2007).

### **Adolescents and Crime-Related Trauma**

The main difference between adolescent and adult trauma is that adolescents, unlike adults, are still growing and developing. Experiencing a traumatic event can hinder an adolescent from reaching certain developmental stages, as trauma creates a sensation of overwhelmed arousal to which adolescents can be particularly susceptible. With coping skills and sense of identity still developing, adolescents possibly cope less effectively than adults in the face of adversity (Keyser, Seelaus, & Kahn, 2000). In the literature to date, there is little research conducted on groups of adolescents, as research primarily focuses on resilience in adult survivors. Furthermore, documentation of trauma experiences has largely focused on the characteristics of sexual assault and abuse (Saul, Grant, & Carter, 2008). Therefore, there is a need to investigate non-sexual crime experiences of adolescents.

Evidence reveals that survivors of crime respond in different ways, however certain responses are more likely for specific types of crime (Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003). In other words, the type of crime can influence individual responses, for example the response of improving the security of one's home following a burglary (Wirtz & Harrell, 1989). Essentially, survivors of different crime types appear to select different coping actions in response to traumatic crime experiences. Therefore, adolescents and adults can differ in their responses to criminal trauma. More importantly, it can be argued that the factors that adolescents utilise in order to cope following a trauma, differ from those factors that have been identified in adult resilience studies (Saul et al., 2008).

Research has shown that once exposed to any type of traumatic event, female adolescents, in particular, are more likely than male adolescents to develop post traumatic symptoms (Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003). Likewise, studies suggest that youth are at particular risk of being exposed to trauma and hence may not be properly equipped with adaptive coping skills. This further suggests that younger adolescents are more likely to manifest distress symptoms than older adolescents (Kaniasty & Norris, 1992). The investigation of female adolescent resiliency is therefore imperative in understanding the distinct ways in which this group manages trauma experiences.

### **Conclusion of the Literature**

The range and scope of traumatic events that human beings experience and endure occurs every day worldwide (Harvey, 2007). However, there is often resilience amongst survivors in overcoming these traumatic events. Ecological theories of trauma maintain that individual differences in traumatic response are the result of a complex nexus of interactions among

individual, environmental and event factors. Interdependent interactions among these factors essentially shape the psychological processes that enhance or impede resilient responses to traumatic exposure (Harney, 2007). On the other hand, however, trauma affects communities differently. In terms of an ecological perspective, therefore, interventions need to improve social support and resources available to trauma survivors, to promote resilience in those individuals affected by this trauma (Harvey, 2007; Lester, 2006).

## **RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH**

When examining the literature surrounding trauma, evidence reveals that female adolescents, who are often the survivors of non-sexual assault, have not been extensively investigated in previous research studies (Williams et al., 2007). Therefore, our research aims to uncover the characteristics and factors that foster resilience and recovery in female adolescent crime-survivors. We also intend to uncover the distinct meanings of trauma of female adolescents, as well as the individual, event and environmental factors that encourage resiliency. In a country like South Africa, the use of an ecological approach such as Harvey's (1996) model is suitable because it attempts to capture the interconnectedness amongst contextual factors in the multiple expressions of trauma and resilience (Edross, 2008).

Our sample group consisted of female participants, as research suggests that females, in particular, have a tendency to be more willing to acknowledge and talk about their distress to others (Hartung & Widiger, 1998). Due to the sensitive nature of our research, female participants were also chosen in the hope that they would be more willing to share their experiences as both researchers are also female.

In order to gain insight into what factors facilitate resilience, it is valuable to understand what tools and resources can be provided to trauma survivors following a traumatic experience. Furthermore, our research could draw attention to those characteristics, which may predispose people to cope with trauma in a maladaptive way. This information, in turn, could assist in improving and developing programmes to target those most vulnerable groups, and could also highlight the areas for future research.

## **SPECIFIC AIMS OF STUDY**

This study seeks to:

- explore the factors that promote resilience in trauma survivors.

- determine the individual, event, and environmental factors that assist individuals in coping in an effective way after a traumatic experience.
- uncover the coping mechanisms that are specific to female adolescents, who have experienced a non-sexual crime-related trauma.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Setting**

A qualitative research design was used for the collection of the data as it allowed for the exploration of the resilient factors in detail. Through a qualitative method, it was possible to gain deeper insight into the participants' experiences, as opposed to a purely quantitative approach. Emphasis was placed on meanings and themes underlying the processes that contribute to resilience. This type of design also allowed for collaboration between the researchers and the participants, in the identification of meanings they attributed to the phenomena being studied. In contrast to a quantitative approach, whereby the researcher imposes their own definitions, with this design participants were encouraged to share their own meanings concerning resilience and trauma (Kelly, 1999).

The individual interviews were conducted at a high school in Cape Town, Western Cape. Each participant was individually interviewed in a venue that was suitable for our purposes.

### **Participants**

Once ethical approval was attained from the Department of Psychology at University of Cape Town (UCT) (see Appendix B), the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) granted permission to conduct interviews at the chosen high school (see Appendix C). This model-C school is comprised of students from middle to higher income SES groups. However, the SES of each individual participant was not able to be assessed.

The principal was given a letter that outlined the study and permission was requested for the research to be conducted at the school (see Appendix D). After permission was granted, the researchers approached Grade 8 to 11 classes during school times. Information was given to pupils concerning the research objectives and participant criteria.

Our final sample comprised of 11 adolescent females, between the ages of 14 and 18. The sample consisted of seven participants who categorised themselves as White, three as

African, and one who categorised herself as Coloured. However, the inclusion of the participants was not based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity or SES. Pupils who volunteered for the study were accepted on the grounds that they had experienced a crime-related trauma in the past five years. Furthermore, it was required that each participant had experienced the crime directly, and not vicariously. Due to the confines of our study, trauma resulting from sexual assault and rape was not researched. Therefore, age, gender and experience of trauma were the key criteria for which participants were included in the study.

Consent forms were then distributed to those pupils who were interested (see Appendix E) and the first pupils to return their forms were accepted for our study.

Of the 11 participants, four had experienced a house break-in, four an armed mugging, two an armed robbery at home, and one participant had experienced a hijacking. All the crimes experienced by the participants were committed by unknown male perpetrators and occurred on one occasion only, where none of the participants suffered any physical injury. Due to the nature of non-sexual crime, such as muggings and house break-ins, in our sample the crimes were not committed over a long duration of time and were never repeated.

### **Data Collection Materials**

Within a qualitative framework, individual semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the data. The use of this interview format gave the participants the opportunity to speak openly about the aspects of their experience, while also allowing the researchers to guide the interview to some extent. This encouraged development of rapport between the researchers and the participants, as well as produced a rich understanding of the participants' experiences (Willig, 2001). Furthermore, due to the sensitive issues explored, individual semi-structured interviews, rather than focus groups, were used because of the privacy and confidential nature of one-on-one individual interviews.

Harvey et al. (1994) developed an interview schedule designed to assess adult survivors' strengths as well as distress following trauma. This interview, known as the *Multidimensional Trauma Recovery and Resiliency Interview* (MTRR-I), has been used in studies, which have identified various factors that assist in the recovery of individuals following traumatic events (Lynch et al., 2007).

For the purpose of this research, an adapted version of the Harvey et al. MTRR-I (1994) was used in the form of individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix F). The MTRR-I, which was originally designed for adults, was modified for use with adolescents.

This interview schedule is freely available from the authors from the Cambridge Health Alliance and holds no copyright restriction.

The MTRR-I has previously been used in research studies on trauma and resiliency conducted in South Africa. One such study assessed the differences in experiences between sexual and non-sexual trauma survivors, and investigated post-traumatic growth (Edross, 2008). This research illustrated the MTRR-I can be applied successfully in a South African context because this model of understanding trauma accommodates diversity, subjectivity, and contextual variables. Therefore, the use of an adapted MTRR-I was appropriate for our sample group.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Consent forms were given to each pupil, who required the signatures of one parent, a witness and the pupil herself. In addition, an information sheet, which outlined the aims and instructions pertaining to our research, was provided. Once the sample group had been recruited, a date, time and place were arranged with each participant. Each interview was recorded using an audio tape recorder and notes were taken. The individual interviews lasted for approximately 40 minutes and were conducted in the chosen venue. The interview schedule was primarily a guideline, as the researchers intended the interview process to be directed and guided by the participants themselves. Following the interview, the participants were thanked for their time and cooperation, and asked if they had any questions regarding the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which involves the identification and analysis of patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Although it is believed that thematic analysis and content analysis involve a similar theoretical approach, thematic analysis has an advantage over content analysis. Content analysis involves the simple counting and picking out of certain words, whereas thematic analysis sorts, categorises and codes the data into themes. Therefore, thematic analysis is more sensitive to what is meant by the terms used (Willig, 2001).

In our research, thematic analysis was useful because this type of analysis helped to establish how the participants understood the meanings of trauma and resilience. For the purpose of our research, a deductive approach was used as opposed to an inductive approach, as our analysis was shaped by previous findings concerning the factors that foster resilience

following trauma. An inductive approach, on the other hand, is used to observe themes across the whole data range, without having a specific hypothesis about which themes will emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the fact that an adapted version of the MTRR-I (1994) was used, the data was analysed deductively using Harvey's approach and various other models prominent in the field.

Once the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed (see Appendix G), the participants' reported experiences were explored in an attempt to gain greater insight into the constructed meanings of trauma and resilience for each individual (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

## **Methodological Considerations**

### ***Language barriers***

The interviews were conducted at an English medium school in the Western Cape. Although English was not the first language of a few participants, they still had a good command of the English language and therefore there were no apparent difficulties with understanding and communication during the interview process.

### ***Reflexivity***

Reflexivity involves acknowledging the central position of the researcher in the construction of knowledge, and recognising that all findings are constructions of reality, of both the researcher and the participant. It also includes how the researcher is seen by the participant, as well as the possible effects of race, gender, age and class. Furthermore, subjectivity in qualitative research is often seen as unavoidable as the researcher's own position often shapes the research process (Banister, 1994). In order to reflect on our positions as researchers, a daily diary was kept in order to record our thoughts and feelings. This allowed us to consider our own subjectivity in the interviews (Finlay & Gough, 2003).

In investigating our central role as middle class adult females, studying at a tertiary education level, we were concerned that the adolescent participants might have felt intimidated by our age and status. In an attempt to counter these apprehensive feelings, the interviews were conducted in a comfortable and private environment. In addition, the questions were asked in a friendly and interactive way to elicit an informal interaction. The participants were also encouraged to ask any questions if they were feeling uncomfortable during the interview process.

The researchers were aged 22 and 24 years, whereas the participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years. Although there was a difference in age, we were, however, of the same

age cohort. Therefore, we felt that our age did not have a significant impact on the power relationship in the interview. However, as a result our status as university students, participants may not have felt that they could fully relate to us.

Due to the fact that both the participants and the researchers are female, various dynamics operating in the interview process needed to be considered. Feminist approaches have drawn attention to possible power dynamics which can be present when women interview women (Tang, 2002). It is suggested that, due to general gender subordination in society, a non-hierarchical relationship is developed when women interview other women, whereby the shared experience of subordination can function as a form of kinship and enable some measure of connectedness in the interview process (Frith, 1998). Therefore, we believe the social distance between us was possibly reduced, making the participants more willing to share their experiences. However, despite shared gender, other social attributes, such as age, culture, class, and race were present, which could have influenced the power relationship during the interview (Tang, 2002). Overall, the similarities and differences, based on social, cultural and personal characteristics, became salient at various times throughout the interview process.

It has been argued, that from an 'insider' position, researchers who share a similar background with their participants, can more accurately interpret their experiences. On the other hand, others maintain that from an 'outsider' position, those researchers who do not share similar characteristics of their participants are considered to be more distanced and therefore are not always able to relate and understand their experiences (Watts, 2006). In particular, differences in race have been argued to affect objectivity when conducting research. In our research, due to the fact that we are White, it became evident at times that the participants of other racial groups could have positioned us as the 'other' (Frith, 1998). For example, one participant of a different race stated she was happy that "girls like you [the researchers]" were interested in interviewing "someone like me [the participant]". In this particular interaction, the fact that she was African whereas we were White and therefore different, became apparent. As a result, we were aware that despite the fact that we were all females, she constructed herself as different from us.

Whilst it is believed that the researcher usually holds the power in an interview setting, this power can often shift to the participant (Finlay & Gough, 2003). In one instance, a shift in the power became evident when a participant took on the interviewer role and began asking us if we had experienced crime ourselves, and how we coped after these event. This may have occurred because of the relaxed and comfortable interview environment **we**

believed to have created, which encouraged a more collaborative interaction instead of the standard approach where the interviewer only asks the questions.

As a result of the sensitive nature of crime experiences in South Africa, the accounts of the participants' traumatic experiences often had an effect on us, where we were often left feeling sympathy for the participants, and ourselves distressed. This may also be attributable to the fact we have ourselves have been affected by crime. Additionally, the participants' crime experiences also had an effect on our sense of safety and security, and heightened our awareness to the dangers in our own communities.

By acknowledging the dynamics of the research process, we were able to reflect on how differences and similarities between the participants and ourselves, could have had an influence on the relationship during the interviews.

## **Ethical Considerations**

### ***Possible benefits***

It is our hope that this research was beneficial to the young females who participated in our study, as it allowed them deeper insight into their own experiences, and their actions that helped them cope adaptively. In order to gain knowledge about which factors facilitate resilience, it was useful to understand what resources and support systems the participants drew upon following a trauma experience. In turn, we hope that in the future, this information could assist in developing programmes to target other vulnerable groups, and could emphasise the areas for future research.

### ***Possible harm***

Due to the sensitive nature of traumatic experiences, it was feared that the questions might have elicited distress in the participants. In order to avoid this, the questions were devised in an open-ended and unobtrusive style. In addition, at the end of each interview, when assessing the emotional impact of the interviews on the participants, it was found that all participants reported that they were not significantly distressed. Throughout the interview process, the researchers took the utmost care to respect the participants and the experiences that they shared with us. In fact, some participants mentioned that talking about their experience had a therapeutic effect.

### ***Informed consent***

Permission for our research was granted by the principal, and the teachers of the chosen classes at the school. In addition, informed consent was attained from the participants, a parent and a witness. Consent with respect to the usage of the audio equipment was also attained prior to each interview. The participants were allowed to request that the audio recorder be switched off at any time during the interview. Additionally, participants were informed that if they wished to withdraw from the study, they could do so at any time, without giving a reason. Furthermore, the participants were also informed that their withdrawal from the study would not impact on their future application to UCT.

### ***Confidentiality***

Confidentiality was assured to each participant before the start of the interview. The participants were given the choice of whether to use their name or alternatively a pseudonym. However, it was decided that instead of using the names they provided, they were referred to as Participant 1 to 11 to ensure complete anonymity. We informed them that the information they shared with us would be kept strictly confidential and would only be viewed by ourselves, our supervisor, and the people responsible for marking the research project.

### ***Debriefing and referrals***

A debriefing occurred following each interview where we inquired if there was anything the participant would like to add or omit from the interview conducted. This allowed for the assessment of the emotional state of the participants, where any issues and emotions were addressed and dealt with. Furthermore, it was pre-arranged with the school counsellor, that the participants could be referred to her for further assistance. Additionally, a referral list was compiled with other sources of support such as trauma counselling at the local police station, and clinics in the area. Our supervisor at UCT, Adelene Africa, who is a clinical psychologist, was also on standby to offer counselling if any significant problems arose.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data generated from the qualitative interviews provided rich insight into the factors that influenced resilience in adolescents following crime-related trauma. In order to gain a detailed understanding of the various themes, the audio-recordings and the transcripts were analysed and explored in detail. In utilising an ecological approach, it was necessary to

examine the multifaceted interactions that shaped the relationship between individuals, and their social and cultural contexts. As a result, the multiple factors that had an impact on resilience were identified and categorised into three main themes: *individual factors*, *event factors*, and *environmental factors*. Each theme also consisted of several sub-themes, which further enriched the understanding of these factors.

The use of the term ‘distress’ in our results will refer to symptom-like responses of the participants, which were experienced long after the traumatic event. These symptoms included constant remembering and reliving of the event; flashbacks, nightmares and fears at night; attempts to block out memories of the event; startle responses to certain sounds; avoiding certain situations and places; fear and anxiety of walking alone; and being more cautious and aware of the surroundings. These symptoms correspond to Herman’s (1992) model of PTSD as well as the DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000) criteria for PTSD.

However, these symptoms related to PTSD were not assessed using any form of psychometric assessment or testing. This is due to the fact that it was not in the scope of our study or within our capacity as Honours level students.

The following factors are highlighted as mediating the effects of distress symptoms reported by the participants, and therefore as influencing resiliency. Extracts from the transcripts will be used to support these factors and themes. These results will be described within an ecological model of trauma and will be linked to the broader trauma literature.

## **Individual Factors**

### ***Personal characteristics***

Research has shown that age often has an effect on coping following trauma. In one study, Kaniasty and Norris (1992) found that younger participants coped less effectively following trauma. Similarly, in the present study, it was found that the younger the participants were at the time of the event, the less likely they were able to cope in an adaptive way. The younger participants (aged 10 to 14 at the time of the event) reported to still be experiencing distress, whereas the older participants (aged 15 to 18 at the time of the event) reported to be coping better at the time of the interview. Our findings further correlate with Kilpatrick and Acierno (2003) who reported that age of the survivor of a crime has an impact on coping and resilience.

Another personal factor which is believed to influence resilience is the experience of prior trauma. Contrary to previous research that suggests that prior trauma experiences can be detrimental to adaptive coping (Leymann, 1985; Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003), the current

research revealed that experiencing previous trauma or life stressing event, such as another crime or the death of a close relative, in fact assisted the participants in coping with their distress symptoms. By employing similar coping strategies, which had proven to be effective in the past, the participants were able to draw on these past experiences to cope with the present trauma. This finding indicates that prior experiences of trauma in essence helped, instead of hindered, resilient coping, in several participants. One participant, in particular, reported that after the deaths of her mother and brother, her experience of a home burglary was in comparison less distressing:

*Participant 8: ya, but I guess it was really scary to have him in my house, but it wasn't really as bad as some of the other things I've been through, like losing my mom and brother...and 'cause I knew I could handle that, I felt I could pretty much handle anything.*

This fact is further supported by Harvey (1996), who maintains that coping skills and strategies are considered to be significant in individuals' post-trauma responses. Our research findings suggested that those participants who used coping strategies considered to be maladaptive, also reported to be experiencing more distress following their traumatic experience than those who utilised adaptive coping strategies. In this sample, the maladaptive coping strategies reported by the participants included excessive eating and sleeping, and avoidant behaviour. This suggests that the manner in which an individual deals with stress can have an effect on the way in which they cope following a traumatic event.

Conversely, maladaptive coping such as repressive coping has been found to influence resiliency (Bonanno, 2004). In our sample one participant reported to actively avoid unpleasant thoughts and memories about the event:

*Participant 8: I make sure these memories don't jump into my mind, I just cut them out my mind completely. I feel like I have really gotten over it 'cause I don't ever think about it anymore.*

This illustrates the finding that some individuals use dissociation in stressful times to cope with the traumatic memories (Bonanno, 2004).

### ***Familial factors and social support***

Various kinds of support and comfort provided by friends and family are believed to significantly shape an individual's understanding of their crime experience (Harney, 2007). Family structure and conflict has often been seen to influence the quality of familial support (Zoellner et al., 1999). Of the 11 participants interviewed, seven reported to have been raised

by a single parent, commonly following divorced. Three participants came from families where their parents were still married, and one participant reported that although her parents were still married, there was continual conflict within her home. It was found that those participants raised by a single parent, commonly a mother, reported to have a close bond to this parent. Most of these participants also stated that following their crime experiences, they drew support from this single parent, and in most cases developed a closer bond with that parent. For example, several participants felt more safe and comforted by sleeping in the parent's bed after their traumatic event:

*Interviewer: What do you think helped you cope at the time of the event?*

*Participant 11: Well...after the mugging, I couldn't actually sleep in my own room, I had to go sleep with her [her mom] for comfort...*

*Interviewer: And you found that helped you?*

*Participant 11: Yes, it helped me a lot.*

Evidently, drawing on support from a significant other, such as a mother, can provide security and reassurance, which can assist in lowering levels of distress. In addition, several participants stated that drawing support from those people, who had experienced the crime with them, was particularly helpful, as they have a shared experience of the event.

A study focusing on social relationships, found that interpersonal friction, such as conflictual relationships between family members, can cause increased distress following a traumatic event, which can have an effect on coping strategies (Zoellner et al., 1999). In our research, the participant whose parents were still married but constantly fighting, as previously mentioned, reported experiencing less support from her parents, possibly due to this conflict, and stated that she felt more comforted by her pets than her parents:

*Participant 5: Well...I feel very close to my dogs and I feel like I can tell all my secrets to them and not to anyone else...I feel like, my dogs are always there for me, and listen to me when no else in my family...you know...has the time for me.*

This is an example of how social support available to a person can affect how they cope following trauma in their life. Harvey (1996) maintains that social support from significant others, is an important element of the survivor's recovery environment. The value and importance of social support from family and friends in dealing with crime experiences, was possibly the most significant finding in our research. Most participants maintained that talking about the event to their significant others helped them comprehend and deal with their experiences. For example:

*Interviewer: What helped you cope at the time of the event?*

*Participant 9: Well talking about it to my family, my friends, and my teacher, you know, and sharing how I felt really helped me to get over it and so now I don't feel so scared anymore.*

This finding in our study is supported by Lynch et al. (2007) who argue that the ability of trauma survivors to make and sustain positive connections with other individuals assists in their recovery from the trauma.

In summation, it is evident that age, prior trauma, coping strategies, closeness and conflict within the family, and social support are all factors that had an impact on fostering resilience.

## **Event Factors**

### ***Event characteristics***

The participants in our sample experienced various types of crimes. It is argued that the degree of distress of individuals can be influenced by the physical threat from the perpetrator, and whether the trauma was experienced alone, or in the company of others. According to Harrison and Kinner (1998), survivors of armed robbery suffer from symptoms of psychological distress where symptoms of avoidance and intrusion are common, and it is possible that this distress can be attributed to the use of weapon.

In our study, it was found that coping was indeed affected by the degree of physical threat of the perpetrator, particularly if a weapon was used. It was found that those participants threatened with a weapon such as a firearm or broken bottle, described the event as “very traumatising”, while those not threatened with a weapon reported the event “to be not as traumatic”. Furthermore, those who did not come into contact with the perpetrator(s), such as a break-in while they were sleeping, also reported less distress following the event. This is supported by research suggesting that proximity to the perpetrator has an effect on how distressing the event is perceived (Kilpatrick et al., 1989).

### ***Cognitive appraisal of the event***

An important factor contributing to resiliency is the cognitive appraisal of the event, as each individual experiences a traumatic event differently. Therefore, a survivor's understanding of the experience can play an important role in whether or not he or she is resilient (Kilpatrick et al., 1985).

In our research, it was found that those participants who did not blame themselves for the event, and who rationalised the cause of the event to be out of their control, reported to have “moved forward” or “passed the event”. The use of rationalising and not blaming themselves or others often assisted in understanding their crime experiences. Appraisals such as believing that the event was “bad luck” or “a wake up call”; that they “were in the wrong place at the wrong time”; and that the event “was random and not uncommon” assisted in conceptualising the event. One participant stated that:

*Participant 6: I'm sure that it happened for a reason...possibly, to bring me and my mom closer... 'cause we weren't so close before that...and things changed, I feel I can really open up to my mom now...*

As our research revealed, rationalising assisted some of the participants in accepting and acknowledging the event, and therefore in limiting the level of distress experienced. In addition, several participants evaluated their crime experience as not being “as bad as it could have been” as no one was hurt, where only “meaningless material possessions” were stolen.

A further factor which influences cognitive appraisal is when new meaning is assigned to the trauma. In this way, the individual frames the traumatic event as having yielded a new found strength or compassion inherent within themselves (Harvey, 1996). The majority of the participants described themselves as “stronger” because of having experienced the crime. Reasons for feeling stronger included their ability to avoid physical harm during the crime, and the capacity to protect themselves; their ability to not let it affect their daily lives; and that they were able to survive the event. Linked to this, it was found that positive thinking and the use of humour also had a significant impact on how the participants conceptualised their experience.

This is significant because, according to Herman (1992), finding inner strength following a traumatic event is necessary in rebuilding a sense of control and restoring power to the trauma survivor, which can further promote adaptive coping styles. Furthermore, inner strength is also believed to characterise posttraumatic growth, when an individual is able to make a positive life change following trauma (Park & Helgeson, 2006). In our study, it was found that some participants reported to have grown since the event, where they had a desire to use their own experience to help other trauma survivors. One participant stated that she wanted “to be able to change children’s lives”, by opening up a centre where she could help children who have “gone through the same event” as herself. This positive outlook also links to Bonanno’s (2004) argument that the personality trait of ‘hardiness’ can help people deal with distress, as ‘hardy’ individuals typically learn and grow from negative life experiences.

Evidently, feelings of strength after the traumatic event can have an impact on the resiliency of an individual. This illustrates that each person cultivates resilience in a distinct and personal way, which is influenced by the manner in which they cognitively conceptualise their crime experiences (Harney, 2007).

Therefore considering all of these event factors, it is evident that the degree of physical threat by the perpetrator and the use of a weapon; the cognitive appraisal of the event; post-trauma growth and whether the participants gained a sense of strength following the event, were all event factors that have an impact on fostering resilience.

## **Environmental Factors**

### ***Community support***

Herman (1992) argues that an important element of the survivor's recovery environment is the ability to seek assistance not only from those closest to them, but also from the wider community. The response of the community has been believed to have a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of trauma (Harrison & Kinner, 1998). In our study, it was found that the participants drew on various sources of support from their communities. Firstly, five out of the 11 participants reported to have seen a professional such as a counsellor or psychologist, to help them work through their crime experiences. Several participants found the professional to be helpful and integral to their recovery. Participant 7 stated that:

*...the counsellor was very nice because she explained to me about the biological stuff, like what happens to your body when you are in shock, the whole fight or flight mode, and stuff like that, and just her saying that made me way more aware of my natural instincts, and that made me proud of how I responded by running away, you know, my natural instincts, so she was really helpful and confirmed to me that I was going to be fine.*

It is apparent therefore that trauma counselling and therapy can be beneficial in giving the survivor useful tools to manage their distress and integrate the trauma into their sense of understanding (Herman, 1992). Additionally, other members of the community were a source of emotional support, such as teachers, and neighbours. Furthermore, several participants reported that their faith gave meaning to their traumatic experiences. One participant stated:

*Participant 4: My church, my pastors, my youth group, my friends, my family...ya all of them helped me. But it was very comforting for my youth leader to remind me that God is watching over me and that's why nothing bad happened. Now, whenever I*

*start thinking about the mugging...and get kinda scared it might happen to me again, I just remember that God is watching over me.*

From this it can be deduced that several participants drew on religion in order to construct a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives following the traumatic ideal (Peres et al., 2007).

It is evident, therefore, that emotional, psychological and religious support from community members is considered a valuable source of support to help survivors come to terms with their crime experience.

### ***Sense of safety & security***

Traumatic events can destroy a person's fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world, and the positive view of themselves (Herman, 1992). Harvey (1996) further maintains that the degree of safety and control available to a survivor after trauma is particularly significant. In our sample, it was found that when asked what helped them cope after the event, those participants who experienced a crime in their home, reported that improving security measures, such as beams, locks, and alarm systems helped them to cope:

*Interviewer: What helped you cope after the event?*

*Participant 8: Well we now got special security beams around our garden, which would set off the alarm if anyone came into our garden...you know that I told my dad that we needed burglar bars and more security...so ya, now I feel like a lot more safe at home...like no one can get in*

Therefore, it was found that these practical measures helped the participants feel safer by improving the security and therefore enabled them to rationalise that the crime would not happen again. In addition, two participants stated that, what helped them "feel safer" was the fact that the perpetrator was prosecuted and jailed. Therefore, retribution for their crime experience and faith in the judicial system helped them feel safer and secure.

### ***Attributing the event to wider contextual problems***

Environmental factors, which influence coping include the context, in which the traumatic event was experienced (Harvey, 1996). Specifically in South Africa, many theorists have argued that our social context is dominated by a 'culture of violence', where violence and crime are typically used to counter the negative conditions of poverty (Williams et al., 2007). In our sample, many of the participants attributed the cause of their crime experiences to the poor state of the country, such as "extreme poverty" and/or "lack of education". The participants stated that because of poverty in South Africa, many people are unemployed with

limited income, and as a consequence, often resort to crime. Additionally, one participant stated that the reason for her attempted mugging was possibly because of the perpetrator's need for money for narcotics. These findings are reflected in the following extract:

*Interviewer: How do you understand your crime experience?*

*Participant 10: I think it's a lack of education... 'cause if they had a proper education then there wouldn't be poverty or crime...I think people with a better education act differently...like my friends in Gugulethu act differently from me..you know, if you grow up in violent environment you think that violence is okay and its okay to commit a crime...*

Therefore, attributing the cause of her event to a lack of education and poverty helped her to understand that the event was outside of her control. Furthermore, several participants described their crimes as the result of living in a “bad neighbourhood” or being in a “dangerous area” at the time of the event. These findings highlight that individuals' coping styles can be influenced by their surrounding contexts. Thereby, attributing the cause of the event to societal issues can help individuals come to terms with their experiences.

Thus, it is evident that environmental factors, such as community support, safety and security measures, and the wider social context can influence the way in which an individual deals with trauma.

In summation, in this study there were multiple factors that had an impact on resilience, which were categorised according to individual, event, and environmental factors. For one participant, a combination of social support, positive thinking, and a lack of self-blame, were all found to interact and foster a sense of resilience. Our findings encompass a multidimensional approach of resilience and coping, which is comparable to Harvey's (1996) ecological model. It was seen that resilient functioning is influenced by an interaction between these multiple factors.

## **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In qualitative research, the limited number of participants is often believed to be a threat to the generalisability of the findings. However, when using a qualitative approach, the aim is not to generate findings that can be generalised to a general population, but rather to gain rich understandings and meanings of the phenomena under investigation (Parker, 2005).

Therefore, one possible limitation of our study was the fact we only examined the experiences of 11 female adolescents and did not investigate male adolescents, or other age

cohorts. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the range of trauma responses, it would be necessary to investigate coping and resilience in a larger, representative sample of the population (Williams et al., 2007).

Not all of the factors that contribute to resilience were able to be addressed in this study, such as SES, intelligence, personality, early attachment, and prior psychological functioning (Kilpatrick et al., 1985). Therefore, future research would need to explore the impact of these factors to enhance an understanding of the multiplicity of factors that contribute to resilience.

Given the high rates of crime and trauma in South Africa, it is necessary to improve crime and trauma prevention and intervention strategies, as well as provide appropriate services and resources to trauma survivors within their communities. Although there are many challenges to overcoming trauma experiences in a South African context, dedicated community members, governmental or non-governmental programmes, and trauma education can help mobilise these communities to improving mental health care, and promoting resilient coping (Lester , 2006).

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

This paper highlights the importance of an ecological approach to understanding trauma as this model hypothesises that each individual's reaction to traumatic events can be influenced by a combination of characteristics from the communities in which they belong (Harvey, 1996). In utilising this approach, we were able to investigate the factors that promote a sense of resilience, and this enabled us to examine the multifaceted interactions that shaped the relationship between individuals and their social contexts. In our study, the multiple factors that had an impact on resilience were classified as individual factors, event factors, and environmental factors, which encompassed the themes of our research. Individual factors, which influenced resilience, included the personal characteristics of the individual, the familial factors, and the social support available. The event factors included the characteristics and cognitive appraisal of the event. Additionally, the environmental factors comprised of the role of the community, the degree of safety and security, and the wider social context, which were all found to influence the way in which an individual deals with trauma.

These findings correlate with existing theories of trauma and resilience in the literature. Harvey's (1996) ecological view of psychological trauma advocates that the

psychological attributes of individuals are best described in the ecological context of human community. In a similar vein, Herman (1992) also acknowledges the significant role of the community, and the social support available to trauma survivors, which is believed to have significant impact on recovery. This is significant in South Africa, which has been found to have one of the highest crime rates in the world, where traumatic experiences are seen to afflict psychological distress on communities (Williams et al., 2007). It is noted, however, that the psychological distress of adolescents, particularly female, is often not addressed.

Therefore, studying this group highlights the need for further research on female adolescents' experiences of coping and resilience following non-sexual crime-related trauma. Furthermore, such research should draw attention to those characteristics, which predispose adolescents to cope with trauma in a maladaptive way. In turn, this information could assist in improving and developing programmes to target those most vulnerable groups, and could highlight the areas for future research.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, we would like to thank our 11 participants for volunteering to participate in our study, and for sharing their experiences with us. Secondly, we would like to thank Adelene Africa, our supervisor, for her guidance and support throughout the year with our research. In addition, we would also like to thank the principal and the teachers at the chosen high school, who granted us permission to interview the pupils and who were extremely helpful in this process. In particular, we would like to thank the teacher Jessica Morgan who was of great assistance to us in recruiting pupils, collecting consent forms, and making us feel welcome at the school.

## APPENDIX A

### DSM-IV-TR (2000) Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD

- A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:
- (1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others
  - (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.  
Note: In children, this may be expressed instead by disorganised or agitated behaviour
- B. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in one (or more) of the following ways:
- (1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. Note: In young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed.
  - (2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event. Note: In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognisable content.
  - (3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated).  
Note: In young children, trauma-specific reenactment may occur.
  - (4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
  - (5) physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following:
- (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma
  - (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
  - (3) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
  - (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities
  - (5) feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
  - (6) restricted range of affect (e.g. unable to have loving feelings)
  - (7) sense of a foreshortened future (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)
- D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following:
- (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep
  - (2) irritability or outbursts of anger
  - (3) difficulty concentrating
  - (4) hypervigilance
  - (5) exaggerated startle response

- E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D) is more than 1 month.
- F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

*Specify if:*

Acute: if duration of symptoms is less than 3 months

Chronic: if duration of symptoms is 3 months or more

*Specify if:*

With Delayed Onset: if onset of symptoms is at least 6 months after the stressor

**APPENDIX B****Ethical approval from the Department of Psychology****UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

Department of Psychology  
Research Ethic Committee  
Rondebosch, 7701  
Tel: 27 21 6504608 Fax: 27 21 6504104  
E-mail: Kevin.thomas@uct.ac.za

June 8, 2009-10-29

**REFERENCE NUMBER: 2009005**

Ms. Shevaune Pickett/ Ms. Kim Tapscott  
Department of Psychology  
University of Cape Town

Dear Ms. Pickett and Ms. Tapscott

**PROJECT TITLE: The Factors Affecting Resilience and Recovery Following Traumatic Experience**

Thank you for your submission to the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the Committee has **granted approval** for you to conduct the study, on the condition that you are made aware of the following:

1. In your proposal, you might have emphasised a bit more that parental consent will be obtained as well, and that this will be active consent.

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator and/or research supervisor.

**Please quote your REFERENCE NUMBER in all future correspondence with the committee.**

Yours sincerely,

Johann Louw, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Chairman, Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

**APPENDIX C****Approval from the Western Cape Education Department**

Navrae  
Enquiries **Dr RS Cornelissen**  
*IMibuzo*  
Telefoon  
Telephone  
*IFoni* **(021) 467-2286**  
Faks  
Fax  
*IFeksi* **(021) 425-7445**  
Verwysing  
Reference  
*ISalathiso* **20090710-0080**




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**Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement**

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**Western Cape Education Department**

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**ISEbe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni**

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**Dear Ms S. Pickett & K. Tapscott**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE FACTORS AFFECTING RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY  
FOLLOWING TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE.**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **20<sup>th</sup> July 2009 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
 

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen  
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**  
**DATE: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

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MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /  
NCEDA UBHALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000  
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

**WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>**

**INBELSENTRUM /CALL CENTRE**

**INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22**

**VEILIGE SKOLE/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47**

## APPENDIX D

### Covering Letter and Consent Form for School Principal



---

#### Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch, 7701  
Telephone: (021) 650 3435  
Fax: (021) 650 4104

To Whom It May Concern

We, Shevaune Pickett and Kim Tapscott, are currently completing our Honours degrees in Psychology at the University of Cape Town. As part of our Honours programme, we are required to conduct a thesis and we have chosen to investigate resilience in post-trauma adolescent survivors.

This research aims to uncover the characteristics and factors that foster resilience and recovery in adolescent crime-survivors. In particular, an examination of the trauma literature reveals that female adolescents, who are often survivors of non-sexual assault, have not been investigated at length or in detail in previous research studies. Therefore, we intend to explore the distinct meanings of trauma to female adolescents, as well as the individual, event and environmental factors that encourage resiliency.

Traumatic events have become prevalent in people's lives, especially in a country like South Africa so much in fact, that statistics reveal that 75% of South Africans experiences at least one traumatic event during their lifetimes. It is therefore our hope that our research may be beneficial to the young females that participate in our study, allowing them greater insight into their own traumatic experiences, and their behaviours and actions that have helped them cope.

In order to achieve these objectives, we require access to adolescent females, who would constitute the sample in our study. We therefore request permission to speak to some of your pupils. We would like to conduct 10-15 individual interviews at your school with pupils from grades 8 to 11. These interviews will run for a maximum of 40 minutes and we will be asking the female pupils to share their past experiences at their own discretion, and to highlight the possible factors that they utilised in coping in these stressful situations.

We intend to conduct these interviews at the beginning of the third term. We understand that the school term is busy; the interviews will therefore be conducted at a time that is convenient for you the principal, the teachers and the pupils concerned.

Given the nature of the topic, the school's identity, the identity of the female pupils and that, which is discussed in the interviews, will be kept confidential. Pupils' participation in the study will be voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time without reason. We will be available to answer any questions about the study and what will be expected of the pupils.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely

---

Shevaune Pickett

---

Kim Tapscott

---

Adelene Africa  
Clinical Psychologist  
Supervisor

*If you have any concerns or queries about this study, please contact either Shevaune Pickett on 082 463 1139 or Kim Tapscott on 083 645 6424. Our supervisor at the University of Cape Town, Adelene Africa, can be contacted on 021 650 3425 and will also be on standby to offer counselling should any problems arise throughout the course of our research.*

**PERMISSION FORM FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

**Title of the study:** The Factors Affecting Resilience and Recovery Following Traumatic Experience  
**Researchers:** Shevaune Pickett & Kim Tapscott  
**Supervisor:** Adelene Africa (Clinical Psychologist)  
**Institution:** University of Cape Town

Name of the school: \_\_\_\_\_

Your position: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing my name below I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) grant permission to Shevaune Pickett and Kim Tapscott to carry out the above-mentioned research during the third term (July - August 2009).

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Authorisation Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Place

**APPENDIX E****Covering Letter, Information Letter and Consent Form for Parents and Pupils**

---

**Department of Psychology**

University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch, 7701  
Telephone: (021) 650 3435  
Fax: (021) 650 4104

To Whom It May Concern

We, Shevaune Pickett and Kim Tapscott, are female students currently completing our Honours degrees in Psychology at the University of Cape Town. As part of our Honours programme, we are required to conduct a thesis, and we have chosen to investigate female adolescents' experiences of crime-related trauma. Therefore, if you have experienced a traumatic event in the past five years, we would like to invite you for an individual interview.

Enclosed with this letter is additional information about our study as well as necessary documents that need to be filled out if you would like to participate in our study. Please read everything carefully.

We hope that our study will be of interest to you and that you are willing to participate.

Yours Sincerely

---

Shevaune Pickett

---

Kim Tapscott

---

Adelene Africa  
Clinical Psychologist  
Supervisor

## **INFORMATION LETTER**

<b>Title of the study:</b>	The Factors Affecting Resilience and Recovery Following Traumatic Experience
<b>Researchers:</b>	Shevaune Pickett & Kim Tapscott
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Adelene Africa (Clinical Psychologist)
<b>Institution:</b>	University of Cape Town

### **Why have you received this letter?**

You have received this letter because we would like you to participate in our research study and would like to invite you for an interview.

### **What is this research study about?**

We are currently studying a Honours Psychology degree (4<sup>th</sup> year) at the University of Cape Town. As part of our Honours programme, we are required to complete a research project. We are interested in finding out about the experiences of young females who have experienced a crime.

One objective of our study is to allow young females to share their past experiences and to identify what has helped them to cope with these experiences.

### **What are we looking for?**

We are interested in interviewing adolescent females, between the ages of 14 and 18, in grades 8 to 11, who have experienced a traumatic event in the past five years. If you have experienced a crime-related traumatic event such as a hijacking, mugging, burglary, robbery, or physical assault etc, we would like to interview you. Due to the confines of our study, trauma including sexual assault and rape will not be addressed. You would also have needed to experience the crime directly, and not as a witness.

### **What will the interview be like?**

Each interview will last 40 minutes or less. The interview will be conducted by both of us, the researchers, and with you. The interview will take place at your school, at a time that is convenient for you, your teachers, and us, the researchers. Interviews will be recorded, which will be at your discretion, otherwise notes will be taken.

### **Will other people have access to the interviews?**

All information that you provide during the interview will be recorded or written down, with your permission. The information you share with us and the names of all the participants in the study will be kept strictly confidential and will only be viewed by us, and our supervisor, Adelene Africa.

### **How do you take part in this study?**

If you are willing to participate, you would need to return the consent form signed by one of your parents and yourself. Please make sure that a witness also signs the consent form.

### **What happens next?**

After we have received your consent forms, we will arrange with you a date, time and place where we can conduct the interview. Please state your contact number so that we can get hold of you.

You also will receive a telephone call from one of us a few days before your interview, where we will ask you if you would still like to participate in our study. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time, without giving any reasons for doing so.

**Do you have any questions?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the study and what you are expected to do, you can contact Shevaune (082 463 1139), or Kim (083 645 6424) or you could email us at pckshe001@uct.ac.za or tpskim001@uct.ac.za.

Alternatively, you can contact our supervisor Adelene Africa on (021) 650 3425. Adelene Africa, who is a Clinical Psychologist, will be on standby during the course of our study, to offer counselling if needed.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours Sincerely

**Shevaune Pickett & Kim Tapscott**  
The Researchers



**APPENDIX F****Interview Schedule**

# **Trauma Recovery and Resiliency Interview for Adolescents\***

**Harvey, M.R., Westen, D.,  
Lebowitz, L., Saunders, E.,  
Avi-Yonah, O. & Harney,  
P. (1994)**

**\* Adapted version by S. Pickett  
& K. Tapscott for use on  
adolescents (2009)**

# Trauma Recovery and Resiliency Interview For Adolescents

## *Introductory Remarks:*

*Thank you so much for giving us your time today. The purpose of this interview is to help us learn more about the impact of traumatic experiences on the lives of individual survivors and, more importantly, to learn something about how adolescents survive, cope with and recover from these experiences.*

*The interview will take approximately 40 minutes and will cover topics such as your history; your memory of events; difficulties you may have had and ways in which you cope with them; your relationships with others; your feelings about yourself ;and how you make sense of your experiences and your life.*

*We may move you along from one topic to another in the interest of time; if this ever makes you feel uncomfortable, please let us know. Also, please know that you are free to decline to answer any question I may ask you. Again, thanks so much. Are you ready to begin?*

*\* Font in blue indicates potential prompts for the interviewer during the interview process*

# Trauma Recovery and Resiliency Interview For Adolescents

1. *I'd like to begin by asking you some questions about your childhood. Could you begin by telling me about what has it been like growing up? Do you live with both parents? Do you have any brothers or sisters?*
2. *Now, can you tell me about the important people in your life; and any other events that have been particularly significant to you, either good or bad.*

*Prompts for Interviewer: Probe the following domains as appropriate, letting the personal narrative determine order of inquiry:*

- *Family History and Relationships*
- *Social Life and Friendships*
- *Relationships Generally*

3. *Now I'd like you to tell me, if you can, about the crime experience you have had.*
4. *After the traumatic event, who were the people that were there for you and gave you the most support? And how did you deal with it? For example, did you see a counsellor?*
5. *Have there been any changes in your family or friendship relationships since your traumatic event?*
6. *Do memories of this event ever jump into your mind and stop you from thinking about or doing day-to-day things? (If yes, probe how often and how recently.)*

# Trauma Recovery and Resiliency Interview For Adolescents

7. *Are there ways you think the event you experienced affects your day-to-day life?*
8. *What helped you cope after the traumatic event?*
9. *How do you cope now when you get stressed in general? For example, do you go for a run or walk around the block?*
10. *Have you changed in the way you manage your stress or the way you cope with your problems since the event?*
11. *If you had a few words to describe how you usually feel on any day, like your mood, what would you say?*
12. *After the event, has the way you deal with difficult emotions changed? For example, do you find yourself getting angry more easily or do you feel more optimistic?*
13. *Has the way you see yourself changed in any way since the event? For example, do you see yourself as stronger now or do you see yourself as more vulnerable?*
14. *What makes life meaningful to you? Does it ever feel meaningless?*
15. *How do you understand your crime experience? Who do you hold responsible for this event?*
16. *Do you feel that you have moved forward or passed this experience?*

# Trauma Recovery and Resiliency Interview For Adolescents

17. *How do you feel about your future? What are your goals, dreams or aspirations?*

## **Concluding Remarks:**

*Closing Question: We really appreciate the time you've taken to answer these questions. How has this interview been for you? Are there any other areas of difficulty or sources of strength that we haven't talk about? Is there anything you'd like to add or omit, or anything you'd like to ask?*

*Close the interview by thanking the participant, inviting future questions, and assuring her of the value and contribution she has made to us, to the field, and to other survivors.*

*Assess emotional state of the participant , offer support and, as needed, provide appropriate referrals and follow-up.*

## APPENDIX G

### Transcribed Interview of Participant 1

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for giving us your time today. The purpose of this interview is to help us learn more about the impact of traumatic experience on the lives of individual trauma survivors, and more importantly how adolescents cope and recover from these experiences. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes and will cover topics such as your history, your memory of events, the difficulties you may have, and ways in which you cope, your relationships with others, your feelings about yourself, and how you make sense of your experience and your life. We may move along from one topic to another in the interests of time. If this ever makes you feel uncomfortable please let us know. Also please know that you are free to decline to answer any question I may ask you. Again thank you so much, are you ready to begin?

**Participant 1:** Yes

**Interviewer:** Ok, I'd like to begin by asking you some questions about your childhood. Could you begin by telling me what it has been like growing up. Did you live with both parents, do you have any brothers or sisters?

**Participant 1:** Um, yes, I live with both my parents. And I have an older sister. I had a fairly nice childhood (giggles)

**Interviewer:** And have you always stayed in one house?

**Participant 1:** Um, for the most part, we moved here when I was 3 so it was mostly settled...like it was a settled, um, upbringing.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now can you tell me about the important people in your life, and any other events that have been particularly significant to you, either good or bad. Like starting with the closest people, the important people in your life.

**Participant 1:** Well, that would be my immediate family, and the people I have already spoke of, and then, um, I think the next closest people to me would be my friends, the friends I have from high school, and 1 or 2 I have from junior school. And um, the family that we have, we are, um, they are important but I don't have very significant bonds

**Interviewer:** You mean the extended family?

**Participant 1:** Yes, so it's not such a strong one but obviously there is a relationship

**Interviewer:** And then the second half of that question was, are there any events that are particularly significant to you? Either good or bad.

**Participant 1:** As far as my family goes?

**Interviewer:** Um, as far as the beginning of your life or childhood is concerned

**Participant 1:** Well I think moving here was very significant

**Interviewer:** From where?

**Participant 1:** From Namibia, because we changed the environment that we were growing up in and our lifestyle changed

**Interviewer:** And what age was that, that you moved?

**Participant 1:** I think I was like 3 and a half, I mean I wasn't completely aware, but you know it is a...change. And other than that...(pause)... I'm not... quite sure

**Interviewer:** Ok, and now I would like you to tell me if you can about a crime-related experience that you have had.

**Participant 1:** Um, it was in 2005 when I was 14, and we were on a family holiday and we were travelling through Kwa-Zulu-Natal because it was a quicker route, and we stopped at a bridge because there was an accident. And we say we stopped because there was an accident but we stopped because we couldn't have actually driven past...the bridge was blocked, and it was a cash-in-transit van but I didn't actually know what that was at the time, um, it just looked like van. Um, then once we stopped, these armed gun men came out and we were just like...ah ok...out your car...out your car...

**Interviewer:** So they put it up to the window?...the gun

**Participant 1:** Yes well there were like 6 of them and they surrounded the car with their little AK 47's, and their revolvers, and then my dad said get out the car and they tried to figure out if we had an anti-theft device and he said no, it's a rental car, no anti theft. And the guy said ok, are you sure? Because obviously they wanted to disable it. Then they kicked out my dad's filofax because it was in the way, and my dad was like...oh and I hadn't noticed that the filofax was there until they were gone, but I had noticed it all along, anyway, then they hopped in the car and they...(pause)...then they first told us to stand away so we were like all standing on the other side of the road. And, um, apparently there were some taxis on the top of the hill that were like watching this, you know they didn't want to get involved so they were like watching this whole drama, then they all got into the car and did a very fast U-turn and drove back the other way. Then the taxis drove past. So they must have actually been able to get through, so they drove past and we tried to stop them and they weren't interested so...but in the filofax...obviously we had no cellphones, and we had no stuff...

**Interviewer:** So did they take your cellphones?

**Participant 1:** Yes, despite my sister's best efforts to hide hers (smiles). And then we were waiting in the side of the road and my dad had this filofax and somebody who was near us in a town, and he also had credit cards so, we waited and then 2 painters or something drove past and they were working at the police station and they were like ok we will take you there. And then they dropped us off there, and then we had to tell them the whole thing but like we just had to get out the car so my sister didn't have shoes on and we had no jerseys or anything. I think my mom managed to keep her handbag but I don't think there was any money in it

**Interviewer:** So they had asked for the valuables?

**Participant 1:** I don't know, I don't know what happened to that, because I don't remember her being the one that had money, but I kind of remember her having her bag. And apparently they sent helicopters to look for the car but I'm not entirely sure if that's what they were doing, I mean we did kind of see a helicopter but.... And then they said they would go look for the car and they took all our details. And then after a couple hours we were driven to the next town, and my dad's friend who was there took us to the airport and we booked a flight and went home. They did find the car, a few days later but it had been stripped of everything, like in a bush or something and none of the stuff was there obviously.

**Interviewer:** Geez, ok, so then after the event, who were the people that where there for you and gave you the most support?

**Participant 1:** Well I think because it was a family trauma, it wasn't a personal thing, like are you ok, let's take you to see a counselor. Because it happened to everyone, we all went to go see a counselor. I think my mom was the one who was affected most by it, and for some reason I wasn't... so badly. Because I think at the time my mom thought they were going to kill us, and I didn't, because I was young and naive and I didn't think that people would actually take your car. Like...the idea of hijacking was not something that was so common in 2005, and it just didn't occur to me. And later when I heard that my mom did think that they were going to shoot my dad and leave us there. So she had more trouble dealing with that. But, people that were most significant, I think we just spoke about it as a family a lot, and then we had to tell everyone about it and that was like...the more you speak about it the more it becomes something you just tell as a story and you become desensitized to it, if you always talking about it

**Interviewer:** So you said you did all go to a counselor?

**Participant 1:** Yes

**Interviewer:** And did that help you at all?

**Participant 1:** Um, not really, it was just like...so how do you feel? I wasn't very...ya...

**Interviewer:** So it was mainly the family that helped you cope with it?

**Participant 1:** Ya

**Interviewer:** Ok, and have there been any changes in your family or friendship relationships since the traumatic event?

**Participant 1:** Well I think afterwards, like immediately afterwards, we were all much closer, and we had a more...um...because when you have everything taken away from you and you realize that when you standing on the side of the road, you just have your family, that that is just all you have. And for a while we were all really close, but then after time passed, it went back to... not that we weren't close... but we went back to being just how we were...you forget about the experience and those sorts of things and then you start arguing again

**Interviewer:** And how was it with your friends? Did they understand?

**Participant 1:** Well they asked about it, they didn't like...everyday...how you doing today? It wasn't like...we were young...they asked about it at the time and then people forget...

**Interviewer:** So it was mainly your family that was there

**Participant 1:** Ya

**Interviewer:** Ok, so you have told me about a traumatic experience of being hijacked. Do memories of this or any other painful event ever jump into your mind and stop you from thinking about or doing day to day things?

**Participant 1:** Ya, I think it does if I think about other people being hijacked, or other people who have experienced crime, and that is like my experience of crime so that is what I think about. Or like... our neighbour was hijacked outside and I heard this commotion, so I went to go and see what was happening outside the window and I didn't see anything, I just heard shouting and I could just see a car driving away. So for me that was just kind of...(pause)...so then I ran downstairs and I said to my parents go see outside, something bad just happened. And then they went and found out that he had just been hijacked. I think I was quite upset by that, because that was just another hijacking and another person that had been affected by it.

**Interviewer:** And closer to your home

**Participant 1:** And that felt more traumatic to me than the hijacking did just because ya, it was right there, and it was really horrible. His wife didn't let him in the house because she was worried the men were going to come in and the children were there. So he was like banging on the door trying to get in and she said like no, or I don't know

**Interviewer:** Wow, geez

**Participant 1:** So I think that was more traumatic, I felt. And also because I was older so I knew what happens when people get hijacked outside their houses

**Interviewer:** So at that point you found the memories coming back?

**Participant 1:** Ya, ya

**Interviewer:** Ok, and have you experienced any changes in what you remember about your past?

**Participant 1:** Um...I don't think so. Do you mean do I think about my childhood differently? Or...

**Interviewer:** Yes

**Participant 1:** Well... I don't know

**Interviewer:** Well sometimes people think I must have been in a bubble to not know this was going on in my own neighbourhood or something like that. Or they start to think that, their whole childhood, they start questioning their memories about it.

**Participant 1:** No I don't think. Because it was an isolated thing, it wasn't a personal crime. It made me think more about the state of the country and how those people did that because they need to and cant do anything else, but it didn't make me reevaluate how I saw myself because it was an isolated thing

**Interviewer:** Are there ways you think the event you experienced affects your day-to-day life? Is there any way it still effects you?

**Participant 1:** Ya, I think I'm more hesitant... when walking in the street and when coming home just like seeing who is around. I am much more aware of what's going on because...I just ...I wasn't so tuned into the crime before hand so only when it happens to you do you actually care. Because before that you just like well it hasn't happened to me yet. Like so I'm cautious when walking in the street, I don't really walk far distances. I'm much more aware who is around me, I don't look like I'm in my own world, I like pay attention wherever I am

**Interviewer:** Ok, and what helped you cope at the time of the event besides your family, like something personal that helped you cope

**Participant 1:** I think knowing that it wasn't something that they were doing because they targeted us, it was just a random...we were in the wrong place at the wrong time. So you not feeling like you have been selected so why me...it was just random, it could have happened to anyone, it happened to be us, so I think that helped. But there wasn't anything significant...but it did make me realize that all the things we lost, like they were just possessions. And when you loose alot of things that are really important to you, there comes a point where you can't loose anymore possessions that is gonna make you be upset. Like now if something is taken from me, like I loose my phone, it will be like ah damn I lost my phone but it won't be like the end of the world because you realize the significance of a possession, when you have lost everything

**Interviewer:** Yes

**Participant 1:** So when you standing there without...completely you have nothing. But what was the question?

**Interviewer:** Like what kind of things helped you cope? So was it just your own strength that it was just material things?

**Participant 1:** Yes

**Interviewer:** Ok, so is there anything now that you do to cope or manage when you start to get stressed daily? Not necessarily about the event but...

**Participant 1:** Ya, um, well I just um I think one of the other things about that incident that transcended was that I was the calmest and in that stressful situation other people were freaking out completely and I was the calm one, and that kind of like transcends of how I am like now. In other stressful situations, I am calm and if I'm stressed I try not to freak out, but you know and like just try to breath and um, you know, listen to music or just try get on top of things, but I don't, I'm not the person that cries and shouts, and throws a trauma-, um, temper-tantrum when they, something is going wrong. And I'm not sure if I would have been like that anyway, but, could say it was as a result.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and have you changed the way you manage your stress? Or the way you cope with your problems? So has anything changed from then til now?

**Participant 1:** I don't think so, I don't think I really had stress, so I don't think I can compare the way it has changed.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now I'd like to ask you some questions about your feelings and how you handle them. What is your normal mood that is how do you usually feel?

**Participant 1:** I think I am usually cheerful (giggles), usually um, happy person and I dunno, try to make other people laugh, ya like generally I am quite light hearted ya (giggles)

**Interviewer:** Ok, and has there been any change in what you feel or your ability to deal with difficult feelings after the event?

**Participant 1:** Um, well I think in a way um, because I was the calm one and because I wasn't expressive of how I felt because I felt there were people around me who were, who were more affected and they were more dealing with it, that I most likely suppressed whatever I was feeling. So I think in a way now if I am feeling something, I won't necessarily be the one who's like "Oh my word, listen to my problem this"...

**Interviewer:** Ok

**Participant 1:** ...like I'll discuss problems but I'm not like "I'm feeling so terrible today, won't you just listen to me and make me feel better". I'm more, like, I deal with things myself. And sometimes I might speak to people, but its not, I am more within myself and the way that I feel if I'm dealing with something.

**Interviewer:** Ok. And has the way see yourself changed, or the ways you treat yourself, changed in any way since the event?

**Participant 1:** Mmmm...

**Interviewer:** The way you see yourself, maybe, as a survivor? or as a, as someone who has come through it stronger?

**Participant 1:** Well, obviously you do feel happy that you came through it. I think you do come through it stronger, because you, have had to deal with something, and you, you were opened up to a something that you won't have been exposed to otherwise, like you know, opened up to feelings or whatever, and the fact that you overcame, you not still walking around like a quivering, you know, victim, the fact that you can get over it and move on, and I think I am, do see myself as stronger.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and what makes life meaningful to you, now and does it ever feel meaningless?

**Participant 1:** Well, I think, there has been a lot of emphasis placed on the wrong things, and I think most people don't realise, most people are obsessed with the wrong things. And I think I see the world a bit differently to other people because they, like, there is so little, such a little part of life is acknowledged as being the important part. Like people do say "oh well friends and love" and all of that, but how much of their time do they actually spend worry about that, or do they spend time worrying about their job or money or those things, so I think what's most important to me is people and the relationships that you have with them, because that is, like, the most, at the end of the day that is the most important thing...to me, is people, and not possessions, and not, because you can lose those things. But, you're not as upset when you lose your car as you are when loose your best friend...

**Interviewer:** ya, that's true

**Participant 1:** ...and you can get over losing a car because you can replace it, but the way I see it you can't replace people, so, well most people see it that way, so...

**Interviewer:** And, does it ever feel meaningless?

**Participant 1:** I think people who have spiritual, um, connections with higher beings find it easy to find meaning in life. I don't see it as having a specific meaning, but...and if I did think that it was meaningless, it wouldn't mean that it was pointless...

**Interviewer:** ya,

**Participant 1:** ...because I don't think that things happen for a reason or that, you know, everything will turn out alright in the end. So I think its like, you do the best that you can and you live and I don't think there is necessarily a meaning to life, but it doesn't mean that everything you do, has no point

**Interviewer:** Ok, and how understand the traumatic experience of your life? And who do you hold responsible for the event? How do you understand it?

**Participant 1:** I just understand it as something that was random that happened, and that um, because of the situation that our country is in and that the world is in, that is, a reality that I am not alone in this experience, you know how many people have experienced crime...

**Interviewer:** mmmm

**Participant 1:** ...and they have experienced it much more severely, people have died, people have been raped. So I think that I am lucky in that if we were going to have that experience, we got off quite well...

**Interviewer:** ya

**Participant 1:** and what was the second part?

**Interviewer:** And who do you hold responsible for the event?

**Participant 1:** Well, I do, obviously the people that did that are unaccounted for what they did, but I dunno in a way like my parents could have known where we were going, and they could have...

**Interviewer:** Was it a dangerous area?

**Participant 1:** Apparently. Apparently it had like 46, no not 46, but many hijackings in that area in the past couple of years...

**Interviewer:** Oh

**Participant 1:** ...so they could have not taken us there. But then its, you know, I'm sure many families travel through there very successfully every year, so you never know. Or we could have, you know, traveled through a different part and had the same experience. So I don't think, you can try and blame people and you can hold people accountable, but it just makes yourself feel better, it doesn't really mean that is true.

**Interviewer:** Do you understand it as more that it could have happened anywhere? Like a random event?

**Participant 1:** Ya, to anyone. It happened to someone outside our house...

**Interviewer:** Yes

**Participant 1:** ...it could happen to us outside our house...

**Interviewer:** Ya

**Participant 1:** ..or you know, you could be mugged in the street, you know, or you could be mugged at school, you know, in like in a closed area, like it could happen any where, and its not somebody's fault, its just you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**Interviewer:** Ya ok, and do you think you have recovered from your experience?

**Participant 1:** I don't think you can recover completely, um from whatever trauma, even if it is just a silly little mugging, because it changes you, and I don't think you, recovering is such a, I don't think it is the right word to use, because you recover from an illness, and you were sick, but now you're not, but because of this incident changes you, you might move away from it so that it is not something that affects you, but you don't forget about it and you don't stop reacting in a similar way, like, if you were in your car, and someone drove up very quickly behind you and then got out, you would be like "Oh my gosh"...

**Interviewer:** Ya

**Participant 1:** ...and you are always going to be that way, in a way, because you are always going to relate that to your experience, and so I don't think I have recovered from it, but I think I've gotten to a place where it is not my only concern, because for a, when at the time, I always thought about it and I had always wished that it had not happened. But you like get to a place where you can stop thinking about it and you don't think about it everyday, and...

**Interviewer:** mmmm

**Participant 1:** ...so I think I have gotten over it, but you don't, haven't recovered, if you know what I mean?

**Interviewer:** Ya, it still affects your life

**Participant 1:** Ya

**Interviewer:** Ok, and how do you feel about the future?

**Participant 1:** Um, well I think I would like to feel more secure in living and going out and all that, but I think I would like to, ya, this crime situation in this country isn't exactly comforting...

**Interviewer:** Ya

**Participant 1:** ...and you, you never know when it could happen, so you always have to be aware about it. But I don't think that, you can't stop going out and you can't stop, you know, so as far as living goes, I will still do everything I would have done, but I'm much more aware than my friends are...

**Interviewer:** Ya

**Participant 1:** ...and then they go "I walked from, um, Observatory to Constania" which one of my friends did...

**Interviewer:** Geez!

**Participant 1:** ...and I was like "What! How can you do that?" It was like eight o'clock in the evening and none of these guys have been mugged and they haven't experienced crime, so for them it wasn't like a big deal, with me I was like "Oh my word, how could you do that?" So I think that's just how I approach it

**Interviewer:** That you are more cautious about crime?

**Participant 1:** Ya

**Interviewer:** And in the future, would you want to stay in this country?

**Participant 1:** Yes, I don't really see myself as living anywhere else.

**Interviewer:** Ok, alright, so this is just the end of the questions. I really appreciate your time that you have taken to answer these questions. How has the interview been for you?

**Participant 1:** Fine, it was well conducted.

**Interviewer:** Are there any areas of difficulty or sources of strength that we haven't talked about, something that you want to like to add, that we haven't touched on about your experience?

**Participant 1:** Not that I can think of

**Interviewer:** Ok, is there anything you would like to ask?

**Participant 1:** How are you going to be analysing the results you get?

**Interviewer:** Well, we are going to do, um, about 8 to 10 interviews, the same as this one, and then we are going to analyse the common themes between them. Say, for example, that every single person draws strength from their friends and family we can say that that is a common theme and we can draw conclusions from that.

**Participant 1:** And then you found out about childhoods, are you thinking that people had difficult childhoods or what?

**Interviewer:** Or by possibly draw connections to people who maybe haven't recovered from the events, maybe draw kind of lines between that and how their childhoods were...

**Participant 1:** Oh

**Interviewer:** ...to see how that has affected their coping, or if it's the friends and family that weren't there for them or things that have helped them get past the experience.

**Participant 1:** And as far as like people see themselves, are you trying to see if people feel...

**Interviewer:** How they feel now about themselves after the event

**Participant 1:** ...ya, do you think people would feel, have like low self-esteem? or do you think they, is that what you are trying...

**Interviewer:** Ya

**Participant 1:** ...trying to see if people will say those sorts of things?

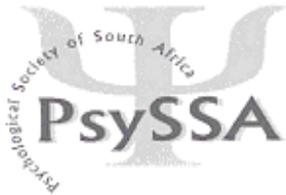
**Interviewer:** Ya

**Participant 1:** ok

**Interviewer:** Ok, that's it. Thank-you once again for participating in our study.

## APPENDIX H

### Author's Guidelines for South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP)



## South African Journal of Psychology

### Instructions to authors

#### Submitting a manuscript

SAJP is a peer-reviewed journal publishing empirical, theoretical and review articles on all aspects of psychology. Articles may focus on South African, African or international issues. Manuscripts to be considered for publication should be e-mailed to [sajp@up.ac.za](mailto:sajp@up.ac.za). Include a covering letter with your postal address, email address, and phone number. The covering letter should indicate that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration for publication in another journal. An acknowledgement of receipt will be e-mailed to the author within a few days and the manuscript will be sent for review by three independent reviewers. Incorrectly structured or formatted, or manuscripts not edited for language, will not be accepted into the review process.

Only one article per author will be published per calendar year. Exceptions to this rule will be at the sole discretion of the editor (with his associate editors) in the case of an exceptional article that needs to be published, a special issue where the specific article will make a significant contribution, in writing or responding to a riposte, etc..

#### Manuscript structure

- The manuscript should be no longer than 20 pages (5 000 words).
- **First page:** The full title of the manuscript, the name(s) of the author(s) together with their affiliations, and the name, address, and e-mail address of the author to whom correspondence should be sent.
- **Second page:** The abstract, formatted as a single paragraph, and no longer than 300 words. A list of at least six key words should be provided below the abstract, with semi-colons between words.
- **Subsequent pages:** The text of the article should be started on a new page. The introduction to the article does not require a heading.
- **Concluding pages:** A reference list, followed by tables and figures (if any). Each table or figure should be on a separate page. Tables and figures should be numbered consecutively and their appropriate positions in the text indicated. Each table or figure should be provided with a title (e.g. Figure 1: Frequency distribution of critical incidents). The title should be placed at the top for tables and at the bottom for figures. The appropriate positions in the text should be indicated.
- Authors are requested to pay attention to the proportions of illustrations, tables, and figures so that they can be accommodated in single (82mm) or double (179mm) columns after reduction, with out wasting space.

#### Manuscript format

- The manuscript should be an MS Word document in 12-point Times Roman font with 1.5 line spacing. There should be no font changes, margin changes, hanging indents, or other unnecessarily complex formatting codes.
- The SAJP referencing style should be adhered to. The referencing style of the SAJP is similar to those used by the British Psychological Society and the American Psychological Association. The American Psychological Association (APA, ver. 5) style guidelines and referencing format should be adhered to.
- Headings should start at the left margin, and should not be numbered. All headings should be in **bold**. Main headings should be in **CAPITAL LETTERS**.
- Indicate the beginning of a new paragraph by indenting its first line using the tab key on your keyboard, except when the paragraph follows a main or secondary heading.

- Use indents only for block quotes.
- In the reference list, the first line of each reference starts at the margin; subsequent lines for each reference are indented.

**Language**

Manuscripts should be written in English. **As the SAJP does not employ a full-time or dedicated language editor, it is compulsory that manuscripts should be accompanied by a declaration that the language has been properly edited together with a letter by a certified language specialist, stating the name and address of the person who undertook the language editing. Failure to do so will result in the manuscript being returned to the author.**

**Ethics**

Authors should take great care to spell out the steps taken to facilitate ethical clearance, id est, how they went about to comply with all the ethical issues alluded to in their study (-ies), either directly or indirectly, including informed consent and permission to report the findings. If e.g. permission was not obtained from all respondents/ participants, the authors should carefully explain why this was not done.