

**THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE IN THE RESILIENCE OF  
YOUTHS FROM FAMILIES AFFECTED BY DROUGHT**

by

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# Ethical Clearance Certificate



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M.Ed

The role of spirituality and culture in the resilience of youths from families affected by drought

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Master Educationis in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. All resources and citations from literature have been acknowledged in-text and referenced in full.

.....

Anel Schoeman

31 October 2018

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who have stood by my side, year after year. Everything that I have achieved I owe to the sacrifices that you have made to provide me with endless opportunities. You brought me up in a home where Jesus remained at the centre, where I was encouraged to dream, and live a life that included far more people than just myself. May the love you instilled in my heart be my greatest contribution to the world.

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To have achieved this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people:

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- Last, but not least, I owe my deepest gratitude to my parents for their love, prayers, encouragement, and sacrifice in preparing me for my future. You have been my greatest supports and believed in me when it felt like the world stood against me. I hope to make you proud in the decisions I continue to make, the dreams I work towards, and the life that I choose to live.

## **Abstract**

Drought exposure has put many families under immense pressure and stress, prompting them to use their own resources to cope. Existing research on resilience focuses predominantly on Western cultures, leaving gaps in our understanding of how communities in South Africa with inadequate resources are affected. Resilience research has shown that spirituality and antecedence are factors that promote well-being in individuals exposed to adversity. This research aims to understand the influence of spirituality and culture on the youth and how these beliefs influence their ability to be okay in light of adverse circumstances. It was informed by an interpretivistic paradigm and made use of case study techniques within a qualitative methodological design. The sample was selected by means of purposive sampling and included 43 youth (males and females), residing in the Govan Mbeki Municipality in Mpumalanga. Data collection included focus group interviews and arts-based activities, and were interpreted by means of thematic analysis to identify emerging themes. The results indicated the following themes are significant in explaining how spirituality and culture affect the resilience of participants and their families: a sense of religiosity, spirituality and culture, and a sense of community unity and support.

**Keywords:** case study, culture, drought, families, focus group, interpretivism, Mpumalanga, purposive sampling, spirituality, qualitative methodological design, resilience, youth.

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The Role of Spirituality and Culture on the Resilience of Youth From  
Families Affected by Drought

by Anel Schoeman

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Moira Richards  
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# **1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

As drought worsens in Southern Africa, its slow onset and impact will continue to have an effect on different communities and the day-to-day lives of people (Chigeza, van Niekerk, & Roos, 2010). With severe droughts expected to occur more frequently in the years to come (Polain, Berry, & Hoskin, 2011), the effects of such a sub-acute disaster on communities' mental health remain understudied (Berry, Bowen, & Kjellstrom, 2010; Chand & Murthy, 2008). This study will focus on the role of spirituality and culture in the resilience of youths affected by drought.

Drought exposure has put people under immense pressure and stress (Caldwell & Boyd, 2009), prompting them to use their own capacities to achieve an equilibratory state of coping (Lin, Lo, Lui, & Wong, 2016). Direct impacts of drought on families include the loss of shelter, livestock, and property (Chigeza et al., 2010), which can result in families experiencing a lack of hope, control, daily routine, a loss of roles in the community, and a loss of defined work (Freedy, Shaw, Jarrell, & Masters, 1992). A family's ability to cope with drought largely depends on the perceptions held by the family concerning a stressful event and their perceived capacity to cope with that event (Caldwell & Boyd, 2009).

Growing up in a farming family has exposed me to a range of natural phenomena and the stressors associated therewith. Times of low rainfall and increasing temperatures have had physical impacts on the environment and have also impacted our family. The stressors that affect people are diverse, and affect families and their members in different ways. While some are able to respond with resilience when facing the adverse effects of a drought, other families struggle to adapt and cope. During these uncertain times, my family relied on strong relational bonds and cultural beliefs to help us to cope with the hardships and uncertainties brought by the changing environment. This allowed us to respond to drought with resilience because we used available resources to be okay. Other families, especially those from rural households who rely on the environment for subsistence farming, are greatly affected by drought; however, how they respond to the changing environment remains an area that is lacking in knowledge and understanding.

In a study on the role of culture in rural health, Vetter (2009) noted that the ecological or economic impact of past droughts was not always proportional to the severity of the actual event—suggesting that some social and ecological systems displayed greater resilience than others did. The question is raised: “What factors within these systems contribute towards their increased resilience, and how do these systems use these factors to build their resilience?” South Africa is considered to be a rainbow nation with a variety of cultures, each with its own unique set of beliefs. The ways in which different cultural groups respond to a stressor are as unique as the cultures themselves, and remains an area that is important for local intervention and support. One model does not fit all, and when approaching disaster relief or intervention, the local environment and culture of an affected community need to be considered in order to implement intervention that is relevant.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research is to investigate and understand the influence of culture and religion on the resilience of youth living in a drought-affected community. This research is part of a project that was conducted in the drought-challenged Govan Mbeki Municipality in Mpumalanga. Most research findings on the ethnic and socioeconomic disparities of family health have been documented in the United States, and gaps remain in our understanding of how the well-being of communities with inadequate resources is affected (Abdou et al., 2010).

## **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

South African is a country boasting 11 official languages and numerous cultures. As droughts increase and affect communities, the members of these communities are prompted to make use of various resources to survive as they face the challenges brought by drought. Governed by African religion and culture, these communities are able to use religious and cultural practices and beliefs to grow in strength and to foster their resilience despite the adversity they face. In light of the variety of cultures adopted by people in South Africa, families and communities will engage in the beliefs and practices outlined by their culture and the community in which they live.

## 1.4 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

South Africa is considered to be one of the most water-scarce countries in the world (Maree, 2017). A lack of water can be a major cause of famine with drought being the most common cause of food shortages in developing countries (Statistics SA, 2016a). With the 2015/16 drought identified as one of the most severe droughts ever recorded in South African history, and with increasingly low and below-normal rainfall, more provinces have been applying to be declared drought-stricken areas (South African Weather Service, 2016).

In November in 2015, Mpumalanga became the fifth province to be declared a disaster zone due to the hard-hitting drought (Evans, 2015). According to the South African Government (2015), rural communities are considered to be the most affected because they face water shortages in addition to the exacerbated economy. Within this province, lies Govan Mbeki Municipality, one of the 14 municipalities that have been affected by the drought in Mpumalanga. This municipality has a total population of 294,538 people, where 96.4% of the population live in an urban settlement and 3.6% on a farm settlement. Of the people living in this municipality, 95.4% make use of regional and local water scheme services as their source of water, and 56.5% have piped water inside their dwelling. Youth (aged 14–24 years) make up 18.68% of the population (Statistics SA, 2016b). Within this district, youth unemployment has been considerably and consistently higher than that of the rest of the province, with the youth unemployment rate being double that of the adult unemployment rate from 2008 until 2015 (Provincial Treasury of Mpumalanga Province, 2015).

Secunda, which is situated in Govan Mbeki Municipality, was therefore chosen as the site for the research due to its drought status and its high level of unemployment. I anticipated that the participants were likely to come from homes that are poverty challenged and negatively impacted by social, economic, and environmental systems.

This study adopts a social-ecological approach, with a particular interest in how cultural factors enable the resilience of young people challenged by drought. The research into the cultural enablers of resilience forms part of a bigger multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral research project that aims to understand the



complex relationships of drought, social-ecological systems, and young people’s resilience. This team includes United Kingdom, Canadian, and South African university researchers, alongside South African and UK community partners (Khulisa Social Solutions and Boingboing).

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Table 1.1 provides a summary of the methodological approach, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

**Table 1.1:** Methodological overview of the research

<b>Research questions</b>	<p><b>Primary question:</b> What is the role of spirituality and culture on the resilience of youth from families affected by drought?</p> <p><b>Secondary questions:</b> How does spirituality contribute to the resilience of youth?  Which cultural practices support the resilience of youth from families affected by drought?</p>
<b>Personal assumptions</b>	<p>Drought has an adverse effect on youth and they need support to help them to be resilient.</p> <p>Youth affected by drought respond differently to the adverse conditions, where some youth may show patterns of resilience while others not.</p> <p>Spirituality and culture can play a role in youth’s ability to become resilient, and this can be manifest through some characteristics of a person’s culture, which enables them to be resilient.</p> <p>Youth’s understanding of drought and how to respond to this phenomenon is influenced by their cultural and spiritual practices.</p>
<b>Epistemology</b>	<p>An interpretivist paradigm will be used because it values the interactive process of how people are related to, and shaped by, the world they live in by emphasising the meaning-making process (Lehman, 2011).</p>
<b>Methodological approach</b>	<p>Qualitative research will underpin this research study because it aims to understand the meanings that people ascribe to their lives by taking a holistic and context-based approach (Flick, 2009; Leedy &amp; Ormrod, 2013).</p>
<b>Research design</b>	<p>By using an instrumental case study design, greater insight into individual and social phenomena can be gained (Yin, 2003) through the understanding of socially constructed meaning to produce rich and detailed data (Ravitch &amp; Carl, 2016; Stark &amp;</p>

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	Torrance, 2006).
<b>Selection of participants</b>	Purposive criterion sampling allows for the selection of information-rich cases for an in-depth study according to specific criteria that need to be included in the sample.
<b>Data collection</b>	Focus groups interviews create opportunities for rich data to emerge in situations where little may be known about a topic, and also maximise group participation (Seabi, 2012).
<b>Data analysis</b>	Content analysis allows the researchers to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning within the data that were collected, and formulate themes as categories for analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

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## 1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

### 1.6.1 Culture

Culture refers to a structure that shapes an individual or society by informing what is or is not valued (Farmer et al., 2012). These structures are usually formed by a community and are defined by a set of norms, values, beliefs, and perceptions (Abdou et al., 2010). Multiple cultures exist and can differentiate themselves by means of differing norms and values, but also by means of ethnicity, race, age, and gender (Farmer et al., 2012). Through socialisation processes, a culture more commonly provides a platform for shared meaning making, based on shared experiences between its members (Fischer, C. T., 2009; Hofstede, 2003). For the purpose of this study, *culture* will be defined as a structure defined by a set of beliefs and values where people make meaning of their environment or circumstances.

### 1.6.2 Drought

Drought can be seen as an ongoing chronic disaster or environmental adversity (Stain et al., 2011). According to the South African Weather Service (2016), drought describes the degree of dryness of an area compared to the normal or average amount of rainfall alongside the duration of the dry period. Droughts are considered to have an immediate impact on communities by affecting resources related to agriculture, livestock, forestry, and hydropower generation (Ibarrarán, Malone, & Brenkert, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the term *drought* will refer to a chronic disaster with a high degree of dryness compared to average rainfall, and that has a negative effect on the immediate environment.

### 1.6.3 Families

Families have most often been defined along the axis of a nuclear family model of a married heterosexual couple and their children (DiFonzo & Stern, 2013). Families are often seen as a system where each member has an interactive effect on all the other members (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Families can be seen as a microculture that has an evolved set of rules, assigns and ascribes roles, has organised power structures, has intricate overt and covert forms of communication, and numerous ways of negotiating and problem solving (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the term *family* will refer to a system where each member negotiates and fulfils a role that is beneficial to the whole group.

### 1.6.4 Spirituality

Spirituality is seen as reflecting a belief in something greater than one's self (Castaldelli-Maia & Bhugra, 2014). Spirituality is also described as being nontraditional because it concerns itself with the human quest for meaning and an inner belief system used for strength and comfort (Greef & Joubert, 2007; Houskamp, Fisher, & Stuber, 2004). Spirituality is often expressed through religion and is based on beliefs, social organisations, and cumulative tradition (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999). For the purpose of this study, the term *spirituality* will refer to the larger values that govern a person, and is described in terms of a person's faith, practices, congregation, and nature. It also includes their aspirations, creativity, social action, learning, and positive growth.

### 1.6.5 Resilience

Resilience is a term used to define a person's ability to adapt to, recover from, or remain strong when faced with adversity or adverse circumstances (Camfield, 2012). Masten (2014, p. 6) defined resilience as "the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development." It can be seen as a response that can occur in multiple ways as a response to a disturbance that helps a person or family to absorb or adapt to its circumstances (Berkes, 2007). In this study, the term *resilience* will refer to a person's or family's ability to thrive under adverse circumstances by either absorbing or adapting to the adversity. It will be used to describe families or individuals who

consider themselves to be doing well individually or as a unit despite their difficult circumstances.

#### 1.6.6 Youth

According to the United Nations (2015), youth can be categorised as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, and are individuals who are seen as powerful agents of change—and who, in many countries, represent the majority of the population. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa defined youths as persons in the 15 to 29-year-old age group (Fakir, Bhengu, & Larsen, 2010), while South Africa's National Youth Commission Act of 1996 defined youths as persons between the ages of 14 and 35 years. For the purpose of this study, the term *youth* will refer to persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.

### **1.7 QUALITY CRITERIA: TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Trustworthiness is a term used in qualitative research that embraces multiple standards of quality (Morrow, 2007). Trustworthiness encompasses the concepts of generalisability, internal validity, reliability, and objectivity that are typically applied to quantitative research, and reconsiders them within a qualitative framework (Given & Saumure, 2008). Validity in qualitative research (also known as trustworthiness) is a term that aims to describe the process that affirms that the findings are faithful and true to the participants' experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A range of criteria have been suggested to provide trustworthiness in qualitative research (Morrow, 2007), namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

#### 1.7.1 Credibility

Credibility concerns itself with how well the data address the intended focus by measuring what is actually intended (Elo et al., 2014). According to Given and Saumure (2008 p. 2), "a credible study is one where the researchers have accurately and richly described the phenomenon in question." To achieve credibility, researchers can engage with activities such as prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation, peer debriefing, participant checks, and validation (Morrow, 2007).

### 1.7.2 Transferability

The transferability of research findings concerns itself with demonstrating that the findings can be applied to a larger population (Shenton, 2004). To ensure that transferability is probable, thick descriptions of the contexts of both the transferring and receiving contexts are needed—emphasising a degree of similarity between the two (Guba, 1981).

### 1.7.3 Dependability

“Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions” (Elo et al., 2014, p. 4). To ensure the dependability of the data, researchers can provide an audit trail of the processes whereby data were collected and analysed, triangulate data by collecting data from a variety of perspectives, and by practising reflexivity by constantly revealing their underlying assumptions (Guba, 1981).

### 1.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved when the interpretations and findings match the data that were gathered during the research process (Given & Saumure, 2008). It concerns itself with ensuring that the findings are as far as possible the experiences and ideas of the informants whilst acknowledging the difficulty of ensuring real objectivity (Shenton, 2004). Accomplishing the goal of confirmability would include an audit trail and the management of subjectivity throughout the research process (Morrow, 2007).

## **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Ethical considerations are paramount in all research, from the design to the conclusions (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002) where most ethical issues can be addressed in one of these four categories: protection from harm, voluntary and informed participation, right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013), which will be discussed below.

### 1.8.1 Protection From Harm

Researchers need to safeguard the welfare and rights of the participants involved in their research by ensuring that they are free from harm (Elias & Theron, 2012). Researchers need to adequately explain the risks, and how probable or severe they

may be, by warning the participants of these risks prior to conducting the research and by ensuring that these risks are minimised (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

### 1.8.2 Informed Consent

Another important ethical issue concerns itself with voluntary and informed consent. Informed consent refers to participants' ability to exercise their rights to voluntarily accept or refuse participation in the study (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). The participants of the study must be provided with a clear description of the nature of the study, and they must grant written permission indicating a willingness to participate (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). When participants are not competent to agree to participate in the study, obtaining consent by proxy (assent) is essential (Silverman, 1999). Ravitch and Carl (2016) described assent as "the process of giving minors the opportunity to agree or disagree to participate in research even if they cannot legally consent" (p. 362), and which must be granted by a parent or guardian with a legal voice when the participant is younger than 18 years, and when the participant has a mental disability.

### 1.8.3 Right to Privacy

The right to privacy entails research confidentiality that keeps the nature and quality of an individual participant's performance strictly confidential (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Information that is disclosed needs to be done in such a way that it protects the identity of the participants by keeping them anonymous or by giving them pseudonyms, while ensuring that any information that might identify them is changed or omitted (Masson, 2004).

### 1.8.4 Honesty and Transparency

Another ethical consideration includes honest and transparent research that is clear and honest about the goals, expectations, and processes set out by the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It includes reporting findings in a way that is not intentionally misleading, and fully acknowledging other people's work to avoid plagiarism and document theft (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

## **1.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

### **1.9.1 Chapter 2: Critical Evaluation of Literature**

This chapter will provide a theoretical overview of existing literature with regard to resilience, culture, spirituality, and drought. It will conclude with the conceptual frameworks based on Walsh's family resilience framework and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

### **1.9.2 Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter outlines the research methodology that this study will follow. It will make use of the interpretivist paradigm to best inform the experiences of the youth. A qualitative research methodology will be used where focus group interviews will make up the research data with a sample of 43 youth from Govan Mbeki Municipality, aged 15–25 years. The data will be analysed using an inductive thematic analysis.

### **1.9.3 Chapter 4: Research Results**

This chapter will explore the findings of the study. The findings are described according to the themes that emerged during the thematic analysis described in Chapter 3.

### **1.9.4 Chapter 5: Findings**

The final chapter will explore the various findings of this study in relation to the research questions previously stated.

## **2. CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL EVALUATION OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a theoretical overview on existing literature with regard to resilience, youth, families, culture, spirituality, and drought. The reviewed literature was selected based on the focus of the study, the research questions, and the rationale as formulated in Chapter 1.

I begin the chapter with a progressive understanding of the process of resilience, followed by literature exploring the role of the family in fostering resilience. Next, I consider the roles culture and spirituality play in fostering resilience. A brief exploration of African culture and spirituality is given because the study took place in Govan Mbeki Municipality of Mpumalanga province in South Africa. This is followed by positioning drought in a South African context, and looking at how families adapt when faced with adversity like drought. I conclude the chapter by presenting my conceptual framework based on Walsh's family resilience framework and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which frame the contexts of this study.

### **2.2 A PROGRESSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS OF RESILIENCE**

Attempts at defining resilience have led to many descriptions that underpin a multitude of notions. In earlier works, resilience was seen as a set of generalised traits individuals possess, which allow them to adapt in response to their ever changing world (Block & Kremen, 1996). These traits were considered to be innate to invulnerable children, allowing them to thrive in the face of adversity (Anthony, 1987). These personal traits have been identified in previous research as a child's intellectual ability, temperament and attachment style, autonomy and high self-esteem, educational performance, and level of social engagement that allows her or him to be successful despite the circumstances (Dreyer, 2015; Masten & Garnezy, 1985; Prince-Embury, 2014; Ungar, 2011; Waller, 2001). In describing resilient children Masten and Coatsworth (1998, p. 212) said that "resilient children do not appear to possess mysterious or unique qualities; rather they have retained or secured important resources representing basic protective systems in human development." This led to the identification of a group of protective factors that are



not only found within a child, but also within her or his family and social environment. Included in this group of family and social resources are nurturing relationships with primary caregivers, stable family environments, positive peer networks, relationships with prosocial adults and peers, and bonding to organisations with prosocial values (Masten, 2007; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Prince-Embury, 2014; Wyman et al., 1992). These resources represented the interplay between the risk factors individuals experienced and the protective processes that were used within families (O'Dougherty Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013).

Further resilience research set out to move beyond simply defining resilience, and aimed to understand how specific processes could lead to resilience. Resiliency was no longer seen as merely an innate characteristic that some people possess and others do not, but rather, as a process within a system that is able to adapt successfully when it is being threatened (Masten, 2014). The study of resilience had to be studied longitudinally to allow research to explore the processes behind family interactions as potential protective stress regulators and their influence on the development of factors such as attachment between an individual and other family members (Masten, 2007). These advances in research led to the development of new descriptions of resilience, describing it as protective factors, assets, and resources (Prince-Embury, 2014).

Resilience as a process leads to the positive adaptation of a person in light of processes of adjustment and adaptation (Aburn, Gott & Hoare, 2016; Cicchetti, 2010). The concept of resilience does not only focus on the process of overcoming risk, but also considers the protective factors that fortify existing resources within families to help them to become more resilient when they are met with risk (Werner, 1993). Protective factors buffer individuals, allowing them to avoid, regulate, or cope with adverse conditions and, thus, modify the impact of the stressor or stressors experienced (Maholmes, 2014; McWhirter, 2013). This accounts for the multiple ways in which a response may occur, as well as a person's or system's ability to either absorb the disturbance, to learn from or adapt to it, and to reorganise following the impact and, thus, enabling resilience (Berkes, 2007).

### **2.3 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN FOSTERING RESILIENCE**

Most research has focused on individual factors that enable people to overcome difficulties when faced with adversity. Research shifted to include and acknowledge the processes within systems and relationships with other people as factors that influence resilience—these include culture and spirituality. Walsh (2003, p. 401) noted that there is an increased focus in emerging studies on the influence of significant relationships with kin, intimate partners, and mentors (who support individuals' efforts, believe in their potential, and encourage them to make the most of their lives) as a driving force behind becoming resilient. This may be because children spend a lot of time in various major systems that have an influence on their resilience (Masten & Obradovic, 2008).

Resilient children are likely to come from home environments characterised by warmth, affection, emotional support, and with clear-cut and reasonable structure and limits (Werner, 1993). When parents are unable to provide this type of environment, other social environments, community groups, and agencies can provide such support in their place (Brooks, 1994; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993). This highlights the important influence of family and community in fostering the resilience of children and youth—supporting evidence that resilience is less an individual trait and more a quality of the child's social and physical ecology (Ungar, 2011). Ungar (2011) also noted that the focus of literature has shifted to community resilience as being contextually relevant to child resilience when natural or human-made disasters occur. A child's resilience is therefore very much dependent upon other people and systems of influence and can therefore be seen as taking place within contexts of interaction at various levels including family, school, neighbourhoods, community, and culture (Masten & Obradovic, 2008; O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013).

### **2.4 THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY IN FOSTERING RESILIENCE**

Recent resilience studies have focused on the role of laws, customs, and cultural practices (Ungar, 2011). Within cultural practices, lie a wealth of protective factors embedded in cultural traditions, religious rituals and ceremonies, and community support services (O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013). People cannot provide contexts

for well-being by themselves and are, therefore, dependant on other people's care and civic virtues tying them to positive social institutions (Nafstad et al., 2013). These social contexts shape human behaviour where factors that have been identified as fostering resilience on an individual level may, in turn, interact with cultural demands and expectations and, therefore, be culturally influenced (Georgas, 2003; O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013).

Spiritual or religious beliefs and practice are an important component of almost all cultures (Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello, & Koenig, 2007). *Religion* and *spirituality* are often used interchangeably; however, there is a difference: "Religion as an organised and institutional group-oriented entity has a long history of exclusion, violence, and atrocity. Spirituality is mostly regarded as a personal source of meaning and purpose in life, a connection with ultimate concerns" (Dreyer, 2015, p. 655). Spirituality is seen as reflecting a belief in something greater than oneself—compared to religion, which is characterised by rituals and taboos (Castaldelli-Maia & Bhugra, 2014). Spirituality is also often described as nontraditional, concerning itself with the human quest for meaning, and an inner belief system used for strength and comfort (Greef & Joubert, 2007; Houskamp et al., 2004). Spirituality can, however, be expressed through religion and be based on beliefs, social organisations, and cumulative tradition (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999). Within the key processes on family resilience proposed by Walsh (2012), transcendence and spirituality refer to the larger values that govern a person, and are described in terms of a person's faith, practices, congregation, and nature. It also includes their aspirations, creativity, social action, learning, and positive growth. Spirituality is therefore a key dimension in enabling the adaptation of the individual when faced with difficulty (Walsh, 2003).

Spirituality is expressed through cultures in unique and distinct ways, and needs to be understood within culture (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999). Research and literature have accounted for the role that culture plays in developing our understanding of resilience, but this is most often evaluated from the perspective of Western scientific discourse (Ungar, 2008). This highlights the need for studies that investigate the particular items and factors that make up resilience, and that are culturally and contextually bound to certain groups of people (Dageid & Grønlie, 2015), especially in non-Western contexts.

The role of a person's culture as a system of influence acts as a carrier of information and ideology that endows meaning and motivation to various people, and determines how they interact with others in different types of settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Given that culture plays an important role in fostering a person's resilience, it is important to consider how certain factors or aspects of culture are embedded in, and disseminated through, families and their members; more so, how these cultural practices or views influence personal practices or views. Cultural factors shape household structures, which, in turn, shape individual and group identities (Donovan, Williams, Stajduhar, Brazil, & Marshall, 2011). Family patterns, intergenerational expectations, and gender roles are all factors that need to be considered in relation to cultural practices (Bueno, Ghafoor, Greenberg, Mukerji, & Yeboah, 2013) because belief systems and parenting practices are passed from one generation to the next (Sung, 2010). In an article that explores various psychological phenomena, cross-culturally, Georgas (2003) described the changes experienced by families of different cultures. He found that culture influences a family's definition of kin, family rules as to where couples reside after marriage, specific rules of descent, the nature of relationships with paternal and maternal kin, who one is and is not permitted to marry, as well as customs around divorce. This highlights the extent to which culture influences not only personal practices, but the beliefs that govern these practices.

However, to isolate and analyse the determinants that shape families in each culture is also a difficult task, more so to generalise them across cultures (Georgas, 2003). It is therefore important to listen closely to people talking about their own beliefs and experiences when developing an understanding of culture, because they are experts in their own lives (Jack & Gill, 2013). People exist within nested structures that have a bidirectional influence across various contexts (Boon, Cottrell, King, Stevenson, & Millar, 2012). According to Masten (2018),

from a systems perspective, resilience of a system at one level will depend on the resilience of connected systems. Thus, individual resilience will depend on other systems interacting with the individual, particularly on systems that directly support that individual's resilience, such as a parent or extended family. (p. 16)

Culture cannot be viewed as a separate system that influences from a distance; instead, it is a system that operates within everyday action and as part of

communities of practice (Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, & García Coll, 2017).

## **2.5 AFRICAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY**

The practice of African culture and spirituality encompasses a range of different cultures that vary in terms of ethnic nationality, language, mode of dress, eating, dancing, and even greeting habits. However, at the centre of these cultures lies a set of dominant traits embedded in common belief systems and values (Idang, 2015). The term *African culture* (or *African spirituality*) cannot be one-size-fits-all but, rather, speaks of underlying facets and values within these cultures that are similar by nature (Theron, Theron, & Malindi, 2013). It is built upon values that honour communal unity, where there are no dividing lines between religion and society (Thomas, 2005). According to a paper written by Idang (2015), at the core of African religion and culture lies a common belief in the concept of a supreme being: the belief that good and bad spirits exist and allow communication with the supreme being. It holds a moral sense of justice and truth and it permeates every facet of life—a belief that anything can be imbued with spiritual significance, that sorcerers and diviners mediate wishes between God and man, and that religious values should be held in high esteem. This core of beliefs plays an important role in understanding societies governed by African culture because the traditional African society remains a culture guided by religious norms with strong bonds between religion and social life (Thomas, 2005).

Despite the African continent being vast and culturally diverse, common views on beliefs such as that of a supreme deity do exist (Thomas, 2005). However, unlike Christianity, which is embedded in stringent dogma and sacred scriptures, traditional religions do not have written documents or a body of doctrines (Thomas, 2005). These traditional religions are, instead, constructed around oral traditions through interacting practices, worldview, and beliefs (Brittian, Lewin, & Norris, 2013). In a multiple case study investigating why some black South Africans resiled despite the challenges of poverty, Theron and Theron (2013) reported that, in some instances, the participants said that both the Christian god and their traditional ancestors supported them when they were faced with life's challenges. Theron and Theron (2013) also found that the expectation of twofold support strengthened participants

and supported mastery, highlighting the influence of both traditional and Christian views.

Based on the discussion above, one can begin to wonder whether African people draw resources from both traditional African belief systems and from so-called Western Christianity during challenging times. Mokhoathi (2017) wrote that the contextualisation of Christianity in Africa allowed for the amalgamation of Christianity and African traditional religion. Although the idea of African Christians may seem foreign to some, early African theological literature faced difficulties when early Western missionaries presented the gospel to Africans from a predominantly Western perspective (Magezi & Magezi, 2017). African converts may have accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries but could also not deny their cultural identity (Mugambi, 2002). In an attempt to make the gospel more relatable, African theologians attempted to translate the gospel into various traditional African categories and concepts familiar to African Christians (Oborji, 2008). According to African theologian Maluleke (2010), the role of Christ in African context and beliefs takes on that of brother, elder, mediator, healer, the crucified one, master of initiation, and that of the black messiah. This description of Christ highlights the intricate nature and beliefs of African Christians and the entanglement of Christianity and traditional African beliefs. According to Manganyi and Buitendag (2013, p. 2), “the faith in ancestors continued to be practiced by many African Christians.” Because Christianity is considered to be a “non-culture entity,” it has the ability to be expressed within and through various cultures (Mugambi, 2002, p. 516). Some research studies indicated that the practice of Christianity by African people is dichotomous, combining both beliefs from Christianity and African traditional religion (Mokhoathi, 2017; Ntombana, 2015). Mokhoathi made an important point when discussing the nature of the African culture and religious heritage when saying that:

It is something that cannot be sensibly differentiated. This is because the elements of culture are closely aligned to those of the religious heritage. In that sense, it is difficult to separate the cultural from the religious heritage. They are both intertwined. This entails that when an African convert becomes a Christian, they carry both their cultural and religious heritage with them, and these are often incorporated to their new Christian way of life. (2017, p. 6)

## 2.6 DROUGHT IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In recent decades, climate change has become a more pressing matter, driving underlying warming and drying of various regions around the world (Chigeza et al., 2010). Although climate variation is normal, when it becomes extreme, prolonged, or unpredicted, the normal strategies that people use as part of their risk management come under pressure (King, 2009). In light of climate variation, South Africa is prone to drought, which has led to serious impacts on the livelihood conditions of the country (Baudoin, Vogel, Nortje, & Naik, 2017). Drought is a global phenomenon that occurs in all landscapes, and results in significant environment, economic, and social costs and losses (Wilhte, 2016).

The current drought in South Africa was described by the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (2016) as the worst drought in the last 23 years; it continually affects the national economy and local communities (Baudoin et al., 2017). All but two of South Africa's provinces (Gauteng and Western Cape) have officially been declared disaster areas as a result of a severe El Niño-induced drought (Agri SA, 2016). The National Disaster Management Centre subsequently classified the drought conditions of South Africa as states of disaster for all provinces except Gauteng in their annual report (2016). One of these disaster zones is the province of Mphumalanga, in which this study is based.

Drought is not just a crisis for the agriculture sector; nationally, all South Africans are affected, with the poor and vulnerable being the most affected (Agri SA, 2016). The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2013) expressed that drought is of major concern in South Africa when considering the total economic losses and the number of people affected. Individuals and groups remain ill prepared for the psychological and psycho-social-spiritual difficulties and distress generated by climate disruption (Doppelt, 2016). In contrast to other natural hazards as a result of climate change, drought occurs over an extensive period of time with effects that linger for years after the end of the event—also, making it difficult to determine its onset and end (Wilhte, 2016).

Wilhte (2016) identified various factors associated with drought such as financial, environmental, social, and political risks. Focusing on social risks, a person's physical and mental health, education and personal development, suicide, crime

and antisocial behaviour are commonly impacted as a result of drought. The mental strain and financial devastation of drought can lead people to experience intense feelings of anxiety, grief, helplessness, and hopelessness, which appear more chronic compared to acute distress disorders associated with fast moving extreme weather disasters (Doppelt, 2016).

## **2.7 THE EXPERIENCE OF DROUGHT BY PEOPLE AT RISK**

Natural disasters like drought can have different adverse effects on different communities. Various studies on poverty and vulnerable communities describe *stress* as “a predictable adverse event” and a “shock” (Thomas, Muradian, de Groot, & de Ruijter, 2010, p. 30). Drought is classified as an adverse event or a shock that is unpredictable, increasing vulnerability under a changing climate (Shackleton, 2018).

A literature review based on climate variations and drought in West Africa aimed to investigate the multiple threats faced by local communities to understand how droughts affect economic, societal, and environmental contexts. Gautier, Denis, and Locatelli (2016, p. 669) highlighted that “the harm to a population caused by a climatic event will vary depending on other types of exposure.” Within this review, the authors highlight a few key issues for future research, namely to investigate the social, cultural, and institutional structures and processes that can either reduce or amplify the impact of drought as well as the role of social capital and networks in response to droughts (Gautier et al., 2016).

Across the continent during the years of 2003 and 2011, Iran experienced its most prolonged and severe drought in more than 30 years, affecting many farming and rural families (Keshavarz, Karma, & Vanclay, 2013). In this study, the authors explored family experiences of drought. It was found that although the community had expected the economic effect of the drought, they also suffered major social effects that they were less prepared for. These effects included the expected reduced household income, food insecurity and conflict over water access, reduced quality of life, as well as the less expected psychological and emotional impacts like depression, frustration, and alienation, changes in family plans, disharmony, and family and community disintegration (Keshavarz et al., 2013).



In light of the challenges faced by communities as mentioned above, some families and communities are able to successfully adapt despite the risks and stressors they face. In the southern part of Australia, five farming families affected by drought were interviewed to provide insight into their psychological perspective and experiences to identify the coping resources they used. In their study, Caldwell and Boyd (2009) identified the importance of external resources such as friends and extended family as a form of collective coping, suggesting that community values, social cohesion, and collective coping mechanisms are pivotal when dealing with stress. In a similar qualitative study of 16 participants based in South Africa, Dass-Brailsford (2005) set out to identify the various categories of coping and support mobilised by socioeconomically disadvantaged black youth living in a particular township. In her study, she found that church attendance and religious practices played a large role in shaping who the people had become. The participants reported that having faith in a higher power allowed them to attach meaning to their lives and provided them with comfort when they were faced with challenging times. This spiritual connection was also a way that allowed them to commit to serving their community.

Literature is full of evidence of individual, interpersonal, and social resources that mitigate against risk. It is important to consider that positive development varies within relational, familial, social, and cultural contexts through bidirectional processes of influence (Boon et al., 2012). As an individual influences her or his society or expression of culture, so too, does culture influence society and the individual. O'Dougherty Wright et al. (2013, p. 26) reiterated that "there may well be culturally specific traditions, beliefs, or support systems that function to protect individuals, families, and community functioning in the context of adversity within those cultures." This stresses the importance that researchers cannot assume that religious and spiritual development is the same for those in developed countries compared to those in developing countries (Imam, Nurullah, Makol-Abdul, Rahman, & Noon, 2009), hence, the call for research that is context specific. In search of understanding risk and resilience, investigators have taken research into very challenging environments (Masten, 2014). To gain a deep and thorough understanding of these environments, studies need to include the lived experiences and narratives of the very people affected by climate change and other stressors (Shackleton, 2018). More so, the meaning that youth attribute to religion outside of

Western contexts remains understudied despite growing resilience research into religion and culture (Brittian et al., 2013).

Ethnic and socioeconomic disparities exist between different groups of people (Abdou et al., 2010), which questions the viability of applying our understanding of child and family health that is founded on research conducted in the United States and in Europe to people from rural settings (Abdou et al., 2010; Boyden & Mann, 2005; Camfield, 2012). Another important consideration is the nature of service design and development that is produced in metropolitan settings by professionals and policy makers, in a process that fails to include those involved in child welfare or even the children themselves (Carnie, Berry, Blinkhorn, & Hart, 2011). Our knowledge of how rural communities conceptualise climate change (and resilience) is limited (Buys, Miller, & van Meegen, 2012), calling for research that not only integrates local adaptation strategies within policies to increase resilience but also calls for research that provides adaptation options that are tailored to specific contexts (Stringer et al., 2009).

## **2.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH IN RESEARCH**

On the path to adulthood, youth face multiple risk factors (Brooks, 2006). The extent of the risk that youth face include substance use, violent behaviour, poor academic achievement, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, mental health disorders, and emotional distress (Brooks, 2006; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Resnick, 2000). Although resilience research has explored the many at-risk children who “make it” by becoming competent adults, little remains known about the processes that account for such patterns of resilience over time, and how good outcomes were achieved (Masten et al., 2004; O’Dougherty Wright et al., 2013). Youth represent the transition to adulthood (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). Most resilience research privileges the voices of minority-world youth, leaving out the voices of the marginalised. The majority-world youth remains misunderstood because they are viewed from a cultural and contextual lens that is not their own (Theron, 2016). Early resilience research did not address context, nor did it consider the cultural variations in the measure of resilience and culturally based protective factors (Masten, 2014).

In a youth-based international research project on coping in a time of adversity, Ungar (2008) found that the participants shared a common set of characteristics that

were associated with resilience, and were culturally relevant. In a different mixed-method, case-based analysis of children living in Ethiopia, Laura Camfield (2012) found that, although some children were affected by poverty and lived in materially poor communities, they reported high levels of well-being as a result of extensive community networks—suggesting that sociocultural contexts play an important role in youths’ lives and can aid in fostering resilience during stressful circumstances (Vetter, 2009).

## **2.9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE STUDY**

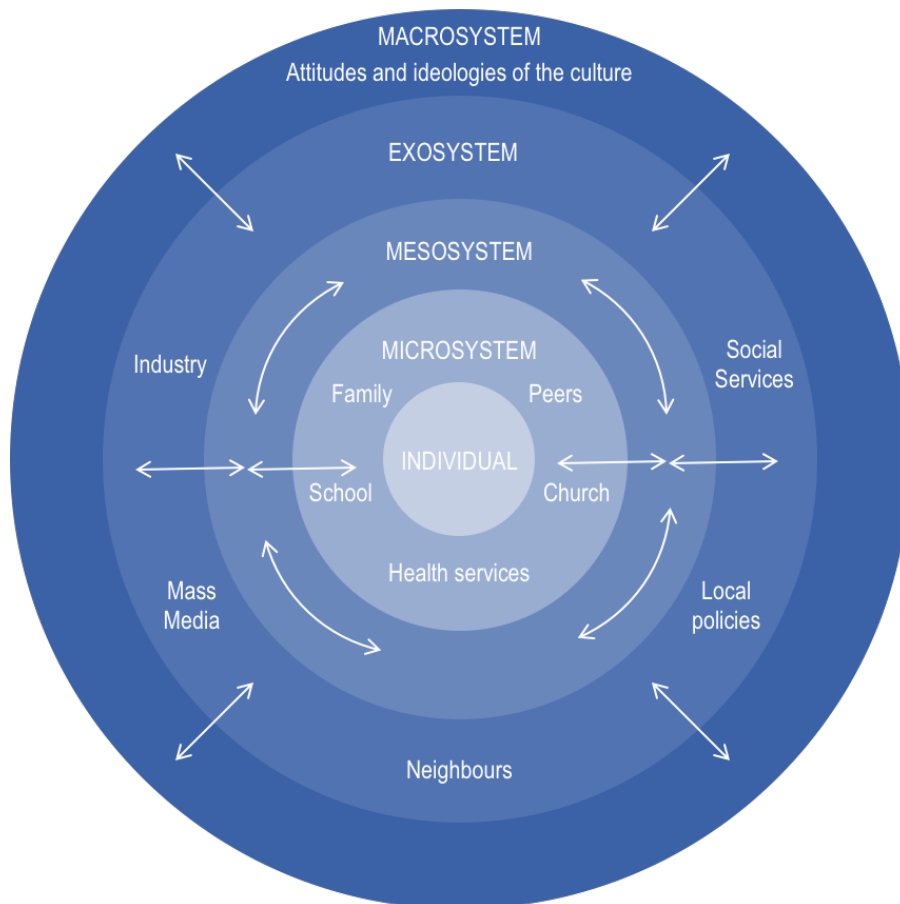
### **2.9.1 Ecological Systems Theory**

Beginning in the mid 1970s, research began to pay increased focus on human development changes relating to the environment and the relationship between person and external change (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Human development can be seen as the relationship between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environment in which it lives whilst being affected by its immediate settings and the larger social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

According to Masten (2014), the construct of resilience has grown more dynamic over the decades, including ideas from developmental systems theory, ecological systems theory, family systems theory, biological systems, and developmental psychopathology that have been integrated over time. The influence of these theories have led to a new understanding of a social-ecological resilience framework that acknowledges the coupling of human and natural systems in a time depicted by global social and environmental challenges (Carlisle, 2014).

The focus of literature has also shifted to community resilience as being contextually relevant to child resilience when natural or human-made disasters occur (Ungar, 2011). If we look at Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development, we can see that every person is part of a system, namely, the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, or macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The *microsystem* can be described as encompassing the complex set of relations between a person and the immediate environment within which she or he exists. The *mesosystem* comprises of the interactions between a person and her or his family, school, and peer group. It can also be seen as the process of interaction between various microsystems,

making it a system of microsystems. The *exosystem* includes specific social structures that do not contain the person but encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found and is influenced by. This includes structures like the world of work, neighbourhood, mass media, various local and national government agencies, and social networks. The *macrosystem* refers to the overarching institutional patterns of culture or subculture. This system acts as a carrier of information and ideology that endow meaning and motivation to various people and determines how they interact with others in different types of settings. Figure 2.1 below provides a visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.



**Figure 2.1:** Conceptual scheme of Bronfenbrenner's systems and their interactions (I adapted the diagram, based on my readings)

When considering the influences of community, subculture, and culture on psychological and interpersonal processes, an ecological understanding allows for the investigation of positive adaptation within relational, familial, social, and cultural contexts (Boon et al., 2012). A recent paper, published by Vélez-Agosto, Soto-

Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppeneimer, Vega-Molina, and García Coll (2017), reconceptualised and revised Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory to increase focus on the role that culture plays on defining and organising microsystems. This process identifies culture as an integral part of human development and it is composed of the daily practices of social communities. The authors proposed that cultural microsystems should exist within various networks like the family, peers, school, neighbourhoods, and so on, which are shaped and structured by relationships that operate within certain cultural definitions. In addition, Vélez-Agosto and colleagues (2017) suggested:

Cultural microsystems not only organize the relationships between what Bronfenbrenner considered mesosystems, but the larger institutions outside the immediate settings or Bronfenbrenner's exosystem. Therefore, there is no need to differentiate mesosystems and macrosystems from cultural microsystems or the exosystem, because cultural practices already contain those relationships. These systems flow from one another and interact with one another, not bounded and distinctly, but fluidly. (p. 906)

See Figure 2.2 for a visual representation of the cultural microsystem model.



**Figure 2.2:** The cultural microsystem model (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017, p. 907)

Bronfenbrenner's model has guided research because it bridges social policy and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The revision of his model highlights the need

to consider the role of culture in public policy as a major informant of processes, contexts, persons, and time (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Masten and Cicchetti (2016, p. 15) highlighted this by saying:

Many interacting systems at multiple levels shape the function and development of living systems. The capacity for adaptation of a system and its development are dynamic (always changing). Because of interconnections and interactions inherent to living systems, change can spread across domains and levels of function. Systems are interdependent.

Understanding the systems in which people find themselves is important because individual and family-centred concepts of resilience are rooted in systems theory (Masten, 2018).

### 2.9.2 Walsh’s Family Resilience Framework

Families form an integral part of society, linking it inextricably to community (Landau, 2010). While some families struggle to cope well in difficult circumstances, other families are able to live well together and respond positively to the challenges (Black & Lobo, 2008). According to Walsh (2003), the capacity of a family system to withstand and recover from adversity through resourcefulness and strength can be termed *family resilience*. Families are viewed as one of the most important units of change, and communities, as units of prevention and care in the face of adversity (Walsh, 2003). Beyond recovering and withstanding adversity, lies the family’s ability to recover and grow positively (Walsh, 2012). This led to the development of key processes in family resilience that are mutually interactive (Walsh, 2016), and which are presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1:** Processes in family resilience (Walsh, 2016, p. 620)

<b>Key Processes in Family Resilience</b>	
<b>Shared Belief Systems</b>	
1.	<b>Making Meaning of Adversity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational view of resilience</li> <li>• Normalise, contextualise distress</li> <li>• Gain sense of coherence</li> <li>• Facilitative appraisal, active agency</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Positive Outlook</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hope, optimistic bias, confidence</li> <li>• Encouragement, affirm strengths, potential</li> <li>• Active initiative, perseverance (can-do spirit)</li> <li>• Master the possible, accept what cannot be changed</li> </ul>

- 
3. Transcendence and Spirituality
    - Larger values, purpose
    - Spirituality: Faith, practices, congregation, nature
    - Inspiration: Aspirations, creativity, social action
    - Transformation: Learning, change, positive growth

#### **Organisational Processes**

4. Flexibility
  - Rebound, adaptive change to meet challenges
  - Reorganise, restabilise: Dependable, predictable
  - Authoritative leadership: Nurture, guide, protect
  - Cooperative parenting/caregiving teams
5. Connectedness
  - Mutual support, teamwork, commitment
  - Respect individual needs, differences
  - Seek reconnection and repair grievances
6. Mobilise Social and Economic Resources
  - Extended kin, social, community supports
  - Financial security, navigate work/family stresses
  - Larger systems: Institutional, structural supports

#### **Communication/Problem-solving Processes**

7. Clarity
    - Clear, consistent information
    - Clarify ambiguous situation, truth seeking
  8. Open Emotional Sharing
    - Painful: Sorrow, suffering, anger, fear
    - Positive: Appreciation, humour, joy, respite
  9. Collaborative Problem Solving
    - Creative brainstorming, resourcefulness
    - Shared decision making
    - Steps toward goals, learn from setbacks
    - Proactive mode: Preparedness, prevention
- 

The three key domains of family functioning identified by Walsh (2012) include family belief systems, organisational patterns, and communication processes. According to Delle Fave, Brdar, Vella-Brodrick, and Wissing (2013), a belief system comprises of specific and institutionalised values, norms, and rituals. By this definition, Walsh's first domain, family belief system, falls within descriptions of culture. Landau (2010) also placed the processes of meaning making, knowledge systems, language and symbols, identity, and rituals and practices under cultural

systems. Ungar (2011, p. 9) described culture as “the everyday practices through which individuals and groups manifest a set of shared values, beliefs, language and customs.” The family belief system helps its members to make meaning out of adversity, to develop a positive outlook where transcendent belief and practices provided the family with meaning and purpose beyond the family’s immediate circumstance and difficulty (Walsh, 2012). A family creates meaning by successfully discovering solutions to problems, which create a foundation of beliefs that they are able to generalise to other situations (Patterson, 2002). When families are faced with adversity, they often look for a sense of meaning and purpose in their life, and often turn to spiritual or religious beliefs and practices to understand and cope with such adversity (Peres et al., 2007).

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on families’ shared belief systems. The importance of cultural and spiritual traditions is that it allows families to draw strength, comfort, and guidance from its resources during troubled times (Walsh, 2012). Cultural beliefs and practices provide a sense of connectedness, hope, and positive identity and meaning in life (Masten, 2014). When families experience crisis situations or prolonged challenges, the adversity generates a disruption of integration causing the family to increase effective functioning through making meaning of the adverse situation (Walsh, 2012). Current research aims to develop rich descriptions of the nature and meaning that families attribute to events, situations, and experiences from their subjective experiences and backgrounds (Walsh, 2016).

A positive outlook allows families to develop confidence and optimism through a repertoire of approaches (Black & Lobo, 2008). Hope is an essential part of having a positive outlook, and Walsh (2007, p. 213) described it as follows: “Hope fuels energies and investment to rebuild lives, revise dreams, renew attachments, and create positive legacies to pass on to future generations.” People’s ability to cope with challenges is rooted in positive values that are value driven as directed by culturally appropriate ways (Theron et al., 2013). A belief in a better future, created through optimism and hope, remains an important part of life satisfaction disseminated by society and culture (Dageid & Grønlie, 2015).



Spirituality provides a family with a shared-interval value system that gives meaning to the stressors that they face, and gives purpose beyond a family's immediate plight (Black & Lobo, 2008; Walsh, 2012). Prayer, meditative practices, and faith communities can provide strength and support to people who believe that many challenging circumstances are out of their human control and remain a test of faith (Walsh, 2007). Spirituality and transcendence facilitate new rituals and practices that focus on communal grieving and revitalisation as well as conciliation through cultural legacy and mission (Landau, 2010). In this way, spirituality extends beyond that of the family and into the community.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

The family resilience framework allows us to study specific cultural and spiritual factors that influence families who are faced with adversity. In this study, that adversity is drought and the prolonged effects that it has on a group of disadvantaged people. Although the development of this framework has its roots in American literature, researchers are yet to apply it to South African contexts. Most African cultures in South Africa are known to be more collectivistic (van Zyl, Dankaert, & Guse, 2018), emphasising the influence of the community and family on individuals but, also, that of culture as it influences the daily practices of social communities (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). We hope to gain a better understanding of how youth affected by drought are able to build and be resilient by making use of cultural and spiritual resources.

### **3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In the present study, I focus on the role of spirituality and culture on the resilience of youth affected by drought. My emphasis is on spirituality as a factor of resilience, and youth's understanding of it because South African youth live in contexts that are marked by social, political, and economic change (Brittian et al., 2013).

In this chapter, I will discuss the research methodology of the present study by including a description of the epistemology and methodological approach used, the research design utilised, and how the participants were selected. The data collection procedure and data analysis will conclude the chapter.

#### **3.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM**

An interpretivist paradigmatic stance is adopted for this study because it pivots on the core belief that reality is socially constructed (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), and seeks to understand the deeper implications revealed in data about people (Somekh & Lewin, 2006). It confronts the notion that most practices have ignored the interactive process of how people are related to, and shaped by, the world they live in and, as a result, emphasises the role of feeling and perception in the meaning-making process (Lehman, 2011).

The interpretivist paradigm was developed in critique to the positivist paradigm, which claims that empirical science is the only science (Epstein, 2012). Positivists believe that knowledge can be discovered through observation and measurement, which can be analysed to establish the truth (Somekh & Lewin, 2006). Interpretivism is criticised for abandoning scientific procedures of verification, yielding results that cannot be generalised to other situations (Phoenix et al., 2013). Because interpretivism makes no distinction between subject and object (Jansen, 2013), research and informant biases become an area of concern—questioning researchers' ability to bracket their own social or cultural backgrounds (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). In light of such concerns, interpretivists consider the researcher to be a part of what is being researched (Wahyuni, 2012) given that the researcher becomes the instrument through which the data are collected and understood (Maree, 2017). It also focuses on the details of a situation and the reality behind

these details by acknowledging that realities are multiple and can change with no motivation to be generalised or simplified (Phoenix et al., 2013; Wahyuni, 2012). As the researcher in this study, I acknowledge the biases that I could bring into the findings, and will constantly engage in reflection to reduce this possible influence whilst acknowledging that constructs are understood through the interaction between researchers and participants (Scotland, 2012), making the researcher a coconstructor of meaning (Ponterotto, 2005).

The main construct in this study, the belief and practice of culture and spirituality, is seen as a system that exists from shared meaning (Hofstede, 2003), and is passed on through shared experiences by members of the same group (Fischer, R., 2009). Culture and spirituality is also seen as a subjective construct that varies from one group of people to the next, based on any value shaped by emotional, social, personal, or physical experiences (Farmer et al., 2012). In using the interpretive paradigm, it is important to understand that the behaviour of participants is constituted by social conventions (Jansen, 2013). In the application of this paradigm, the research process is able to seek the perceptions and experiences of the individuals instead of drawing meaning from statistical data (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). It also allows researchers to understand the perceived realities of the participants, which are time- and context-specific (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). This research takes place in the specific context of a drought-stricken community, and aims to understand the perceived realities of youth living within this community. The goal of this approach to research is to understand the lived experiences of people from their own point of view (Ponterotto, 2005), while acknowledging the current practices and how people are shaped by, and related to, the world that they live in (Lehman, 2011).

An interpretivist paradigm best informs this study because it sets out to understand the subjective experiences of youth who live in a drought-stricken community. It does not aim to generalise its findings to a greater population or community but, rather, aims to provide insight into the shared experiences of members of the same group within Govan Mbeki Municipality.

### **3.3 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM**

A qualitative research methodology was used for this study because it is of specific relevance to the study of social science (Flick, 2009). Its relevance strongly

correlates with its ability to create a deeper understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to social problems (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research therefore takes a holistic and context-based approach with the purpose of building theory through the use of inductive methods (Kelly, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

As mentioned above, qualitative research forms part of social science research but is characterised by its own distinguishable features. Qualitative research concerns itself with the meaning that people ascribe to their lives, independent of research inquiry (Yin, 2016). This meaning relates to the social and cultural contexts and processes that underlie the behavioural patterns of people (Maree, 2017). Due to the emphasis placed on meaning, this approach relies on research that takes place in natural and neutral settings (Theron et al., 2013), allowing researchers to observe the participants in the environments in which they formulate their meaning and interpretations of their experiences (Maree, 2017). The participants' representations and views are considered a priority to qualitative research, and accurate representation of their views and perspectives takes precedence over the preoccupations and meanings held by the researcher (Yin, 2016). Although this remains a major purpose of qualitative research, researcher bias cannot be avoided (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 5) given that their experiences shape and influence their interpretation, meaning, and understanding of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). Instead of trying to eliminate these biases completely, it is important for the researcher to identify and monitor them throughout the data collection and interpretation process (Merriam, 2002) to ensure that the data represent the views and perspectives of the participants. Guided by characteristics of qualitative research, the data will be collected by the researcher directly from the participants and in the community where drought is being experienced. To ensure that views of the participants are accurately represented, qualitative research makes use of multiple sources of data, which allows the researcher to inductively formulate categories and themes across all the sources of data (Creswell, 2014).

The subjective nature of human behaviour means that natural disasters like drought are understood and interpreted differently by varying groups of people. Utilising qualitative research methods allows the researcher to gain new insights into phenomena like drought (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) by keeping a focus on the

participants' meanings and interpretations (Creswell, 2014) and, ultimately, producing a rich and descriptive account of their experiences (Merriam, 2002).

Qualitative research is mainly critiqued for its lack of generalisability by the quantitative mainstream that believes that research should be grounded in reliability and validity to ensure that studies can be replicable (Wahyuni, 2012). Although qualitative research shows variability and richness in its findings, it is feared that the flexibility of the interactive approach that this research takes can allow for negligence in clarifying what is actually being investigated (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). In light of the critique of qualitative research, the process of gathering different representations of a phenomenon does allow for an increased understanding of that subject and does, therefore, not result in a failure of reliability (Malterud, 2001). Parker (2003) argued that qualitative research operates in a domain that is completely different to quantitative research, with agendas that seek to produce credible knowledge of interpretation that emphasise the uniqueness and context of the phenomenon or people being studied. Generalisability in qualitative research is identifiable and relates to specific settings and subjects rather than being generalisable universally (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). In the case of this study, the data and findings aim to characterise the views and perspectives of youth within the Govan Mbeki community who have experienced drought.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY**

Specialised types of qualitative research allow researchers to conduct research from a perspective that fits their worldview (Cohen et al., 2013; Yin, 2016). Case studies are specialised qualitative research strategies that can be used to gain greater insight into individual, group, social, and other related phenomena (Yin, 2003). They provide opportunities to observe real people in real situations by allowing readers to understand abstract theories and principles in practice (Cohen et al., 2007, 2013). This study will make use of an instrumental case study to better understand the role of spirituality and culture in the resilience of youth affected by drought. Instrumental case studies examine a particular case (youth affected by drought living in Govan Mbeki Municipality) to gain greater insight into an issue (the role spirituality and culture plays in building resilience) by making use of numerous tributaries of information (Stark & Torrance, 2006). Case studies acknowledge and investigate

the complex and dynamic nature of interactions and events, and refrains from interpreting, judging, or evaluating events or situations—instead, allowing them to speak for themselves (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 290).

Case studies are defined by a variety of key elements. Firstly case studies are selective in the system that is to be examined by limiting focus to one or two issues related to the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2013b), with the aim of describing that phenomenon in depth (Merriam, 2002). In this research, the focus is on how youth use religion and culture to build resilience. This approach allows for the generation of data that are rich, descriptive, and detailed, and gathered from a variety of sources and methods (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rutterford, 2012; Stark & Torrance, 2006). Case study design also helps the research to focus on specific events or beliefs that are observed or talked about instead of seeing them as abstract and context-free categories (Maxwell, 2013). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013) stated that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect, and is essential to understand a case in depth. The case selected for this study roots itself in Govan Mbeki Municipality in the region of Secunda. This region is characterised by drought and high level of unemployment. Case study approach delivers rich contextual information by considering the physical, social, economic, or historical surroundings related to the study (Stake, 2000). In this study, these factors remain important to consider when analysing the data to determine which spiritual and cultural factors played a role in mitigating the effects of drought.

Most criticism of case study methodology concerns itself with its inability to generalise findings from a small population to that of a larger population (Stark & Torrance, 2006). Case study methodology lacks generalisability because it aims, rather, to provide insight into the dynamics of a specific situation (Nieuwenhuis, 2013b). In this specific study, the aim is to develop a greater understanding of how this specific community uses their spirituality and culture to foster resilience. This study does not seek to generalise the findings to another community but, rather, to encourage more cultural and context-specific research in other regions. Another limitation of case study research is that it is not easily open to cross checking, and has the potential to be subjective, personal, selective, and biased (Cohen et al., 2007). To address these potential challenges, this study accepts personal involvement in the construction of meaning by embracing the interpretivist paradigm

(Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006) because it values the interactive process of how people are shaped by the world they live in while embracing the meaning-making process (Lehman, 2011).

### 3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

This research forms part of a larger research project (hosted by the Global Challenges Research Fund Resilience Foundation) that aims to understand the complex relationship between drought, social-ecological systems, and young people's resilience. The participants for the main research study (into which my study fits) were recruited by a community partner, Khulisa Social Solutions. Participants were invited by means of a flyer that was distributed as a hard copy and on social media, and those who responded were given information packs and, after clarification of the study, assent/consent forms were presented to them. In qualitative research, participants are selected to develop the understanding of the problem or research question at hand (Creswell, 2014). Although flyers and social media were used to recruit participants, these participants still needed to meet specific criteria of a population. When researchers deliberately want to identify a group of people to represent a specific population in a study, they will make use of purposive sampling (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005). In this study, purposive sampling was used because it allows for the in-depth study of information-rich cases where a great deal about the issue at the centre of the research can be understood (Patton, 1990). The following characteristics of purposive sampling (Nieuwenhuis, 2013c) were used for the selection and recruitment of participants for the main research study ( $N = 43$ ): age (15 to 25 years), place of residence (Secunda area), gender (18 males and 25 females), and proficiency in English (comfortable communicating and writing in English). Table 3.1 provides a frequency table of the participants who partook in the study. Similar to the disadvantages of instrumental case studies, purposive sampling does not allow for the generalisation of findings to a larger group (Maxwell, 2013), which can be accounted for given that this research aims, rather, to provide insight into the experiences and beliefs of the youth who live in an area that is affected by drought.

**Table 3.1:** Frequency table of the participants who partook in the study

Focus Group	Number of Participants	Gender
Group 1	6	3 male 3 female
Group 2	6	3 male 3 female
Group 3	5	2 male 3 female
Group 4	6	2 male 4 female
Group 5	4	2 male 2 female
Group 6	6	2 male 4 female
Group 7	4	1 male 3 female
Group 8	6	3 male 3 female
Total	43	18 males 25 female

### 3.6 DATA COLLECTION

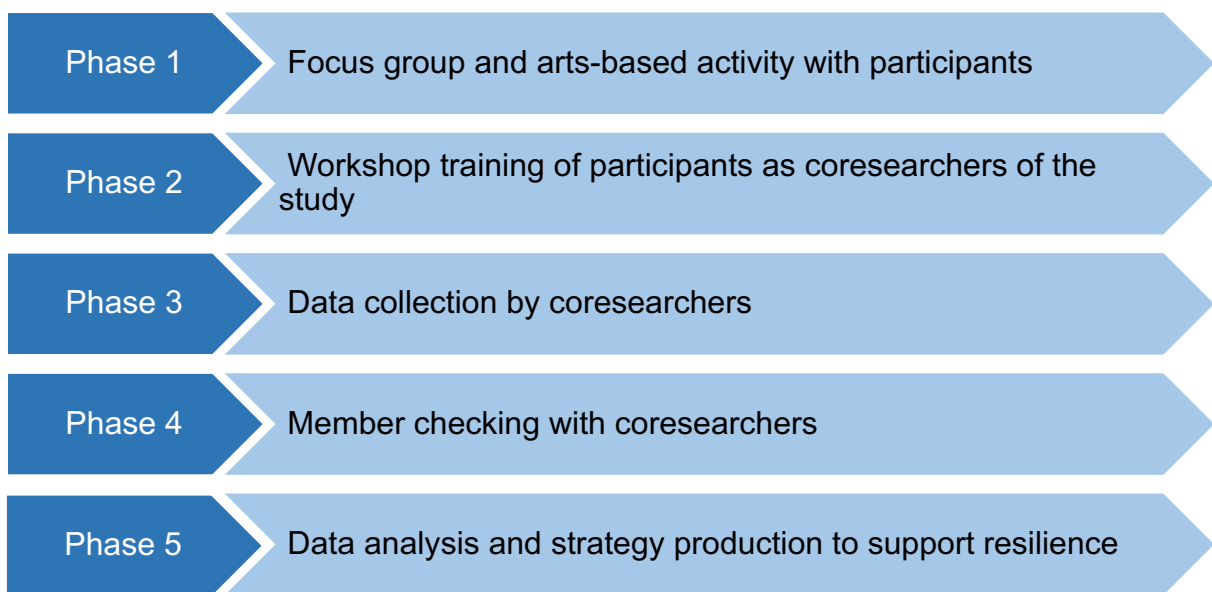
The data for this research were collected by a multidisciplinary team of researchers. This team underwent data-collection training in which the various focus group activities were discussed and the primary group questions formulated. Each researcher was given a document with the activity outlines clearly stipulated.

At the research site, each researcher worked with a group of participants resulting in eight focus groups, facilitated by a lead researcher who was a master's student in educational psychology, assisted by an honours student who was responsible for making observation notes and for recording each activity with an audio recorder. The eight focus groups comprised of five groups of six participants, one group of five participants, and two groups of four participants.

Data collection took place in five different phases, and made use of various innovative and creative methods that are described in the section below and summarised in Figure 3.1. Although five different phases of data collection are



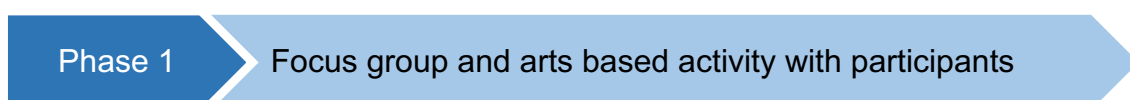
described, only the data generated during Phase 1 will be reported on in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Phases 2 to 5 of the data collection were followed to satisfy the conditions of the major international research project implemented by the Global Challenges Research Fund Resilience Foundation, which aims to investigate the patterns of resilience among young people in South Africa affected by drought. Due to my study fitting into a larger research project, I played the role of the researcher in all the phases.

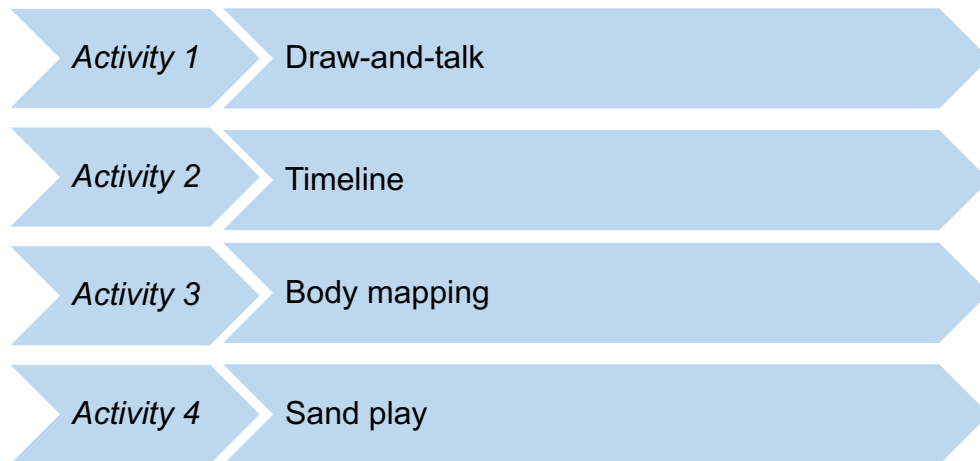


**Figure 3.1:** Data collection phases

### 3.6.1 Phase 1: Focus Group and Arts-Based Activity With Participants

All participants ( $N = 43$ ; aged 15–25 years) of the study participated in various but similar arts-based activities within their focus group. The arts-based activities are described below in Figure 3.2.





**Figure 3.2:** Activity outline for Phase 1 of data collection

### 3.6.1.1 Activity 1: Draw-and-talk

The first arts-based activity was draw-and-talk. In this activity, the participants were asked to discuss amongst themselves how did they “know when there was a drought.” After they had discussed the question, they were given a piece of A3 paper, colour crayons, a marker, a pencil, a ball of clay, sticks, beads, and a piece of cloth. They were instructed to use any of the materials to draw or illustrate as a group “how they know when there is a drought.” After the participants completed their illustrations, the researcher asked them to describe their pictures. An example can be seen in Figure 3.3 below.



**Figure 3.3:** Participants illustrating “how they know when there is a drought”

### 3.6.1.2 Activity 2: Timeline

In the second arts-based activity, the participants were instructed to draw a timeline on which they illustrated—by means of words, pictures, or symbols—the last

drought they remembered. For this activity, the participants were given a larger piece of paper and were allowed to use any of the materials given to them in the first activity. After they completed the activity, the researcher asked whether they could remember any other drought, and allowed them time to discuss and illustrate it on their timeline. Once completed, the researcher asked the participants to describe their timelines. An example is provided in Figure 3.4 below.

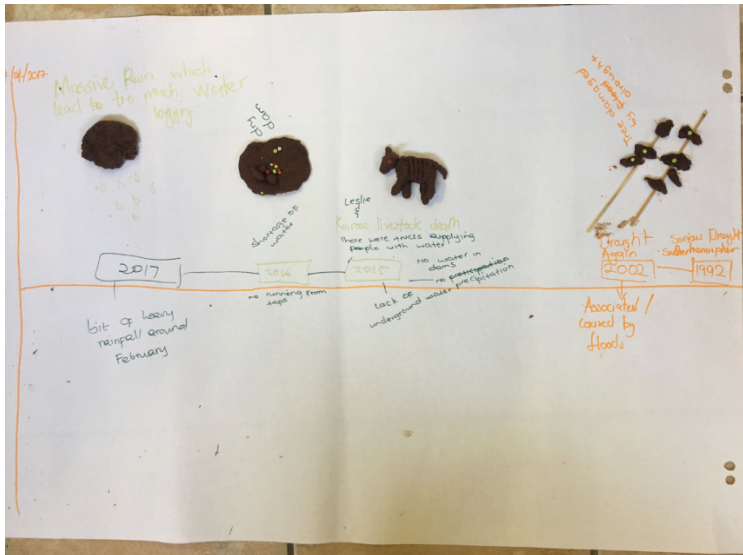
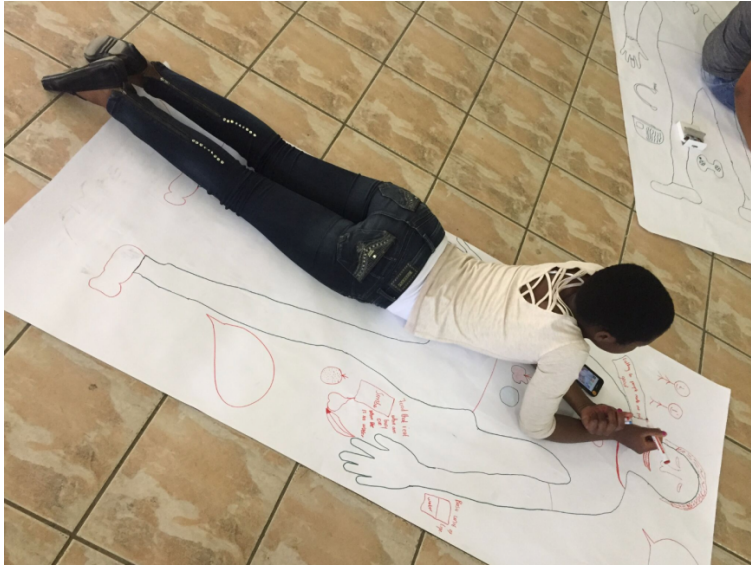


Figure 3.4: Group 2 timeline depicting the last drought they remember

### 3.6.1.3 Activity 3: Body mapping

In the third activity, the participants made body maps. For this activity, all the participants were given a piece of paper that was roughly the same length as their body. The participants were instructed to work in pairs to help each other trace their body onto the paper. To do this, one of each pair lay flat on the paper while their partner used a marker to outline their chosen position; then they switched roles. Once every participant had a piece of paper with their own outline, they were instructed to work on their own. While working on their own, the participants were instructed to illustrate through words or pictures what it meant to them to be okay in a time of drought, by drawing or writing on their outlined body shape. After all participants completed their illustrations, they were asked to discuss their illustrations. An example is provided in Figure 3.5 below.



**Figure 3.5:** Participant writing on her body map, depicting how she is okay during a drought

#### **3.6.1.4 Activity 4: Sand play**

The last arts-based activity was sand play. In this activity, the participants were asked what it means to them to be okay in a time of drought, and what makes it possible for them to be okay when there is a drought. The participants were given a bag of sand that was thrown out onto the floor, as well as a selection of random figurines. They were instructed to use the sand and figurines to construct an image or scene that would allow them to answer the questions (see Figure 3.6). The participants were allowed to attribute any meaning to the figurines to represent their ideas. After the scenes were constructed, the researcher asked the participants to describe what they had constructed.



**Figure 3.6:** Participants explaining their scenes during sand play

Throughout the various arts-based activities, the researchers used prompts within the focus group setting to gain insight and understanding into the participants' health and well-being, including the religious and cultural resources that enabled resilience in a time of drought. Each activity was recorded using an audiotape-recorder, and photographs were taken of the various activities because the participants were allowed to take their various creations and illustrations home. Phase 1 of the data collection process forms the basis of the data that are to be analysed to answer the research question. To empower the participants, it was important that for the main research project, we (researchers) train participants as coresearchers. The training of participants as coresearchers formed part of the broader research project and is discussed briefly in the section below.

### 3.6.2 Phase 2: Workshop Training of Participants as Coresearchers of the Study

As part of the broader research project, the participants (youth) took part in a workshop that equipped them with interviewing and data collection skills to become effective coresearchers. Each researcher worked with the same group of participants during the workshop that took place in the community centre. The aim of this workshop was to equip the participants with the necessary interviewing skills to become coresearchers and to gather data effectively. These skills were to be used to collect historical narratives from elders in their community, and to investigate how the community uses their cultural and religious beliefs to build their resilience in a time of drought. Each participant was given an envelope with a journal to make field notes, and a pen and a response booklet for the elder to complete during their fieldwork.

### 3.6.3 Phase 3: Data Collection by Coresearchers (Youths Doing Fieldwork)

The coresearchers used their newly acquired skills in data collection and interviewing to interact with elders in their community. During this phase, the coresearchers asked the elders the research question: "Which cultural and religious beliefs help them to build resilience during drought?" They took notes in their journals pertaining to the elders' responses. The elders were allowed to respond through drawing a picture if they wanted to, or to dictate to the coresearcher who then wrote down their response.

#### 3.6.4 Phase 4: Member Checking With Coresearchers

The focus group meeting was used for two purposes: member checking, and the reflection of coresearchers on their research activity with the elders in the community. During member checking, I presented the information booklet, which I had created during data analysis, containing the identified research themes. During this session, the coresearchers were provided the opportunity to reflect on their experiences as coresearchers.

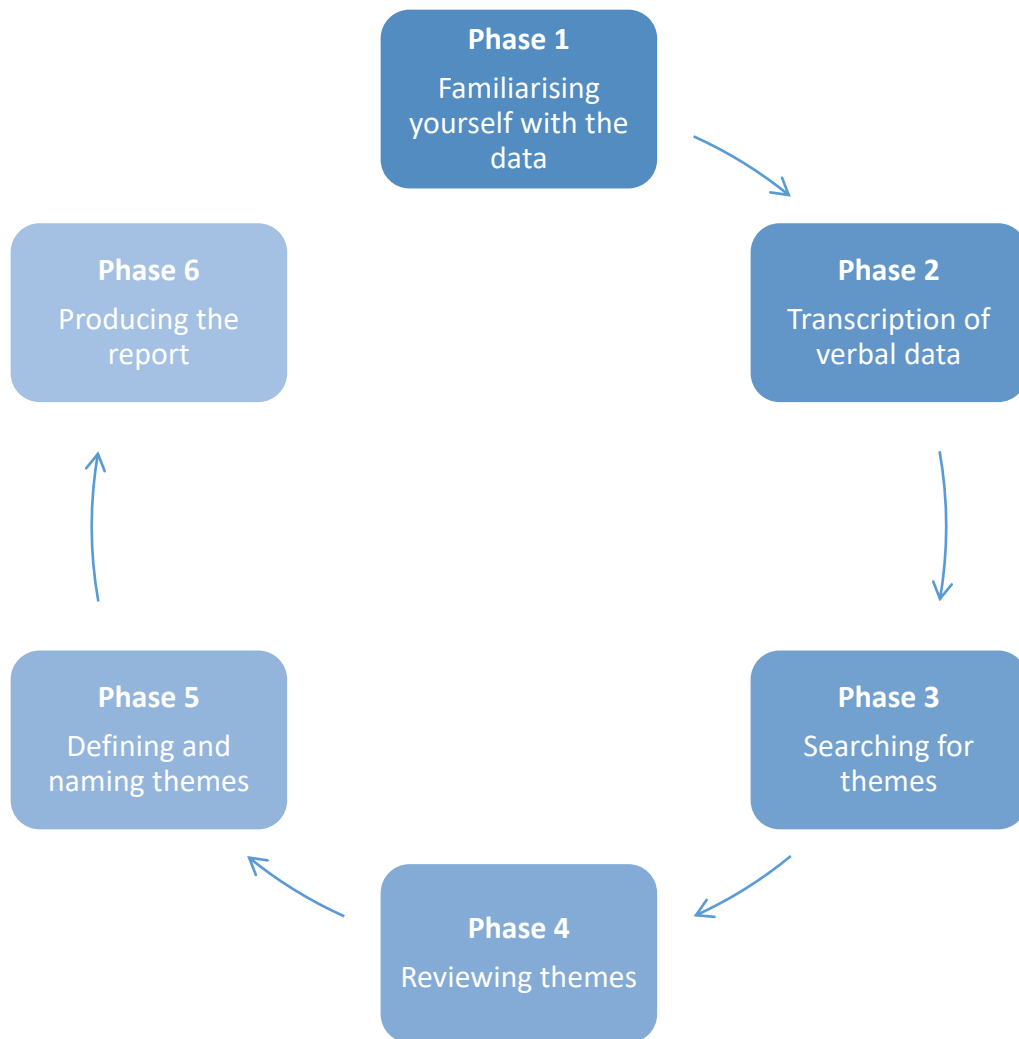
#### 3.6.5 Phase 5: Strategy Production to Support Resilience

The data gathered during the above-mentioned phases were then analysed using thematic analysis by the researcher, and refined by the coresearchers and community partners, Khulisa Social Solutions.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis is a method used in qualitative research for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within data that become categories for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). A theme is said to capture something important in relation to the research question; it also relies on the judgement of the researcher to determine if a theme is present (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By using thematic analysis, a flexible approach is provided that can be modified for the needs of many studies (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) also stated that thematic analysis is not bound to detailed theoretical and technological knowledge, which makes it a form of analysis that is accessible to novice qualitative researchers. Given that my research forms part of a larger research project, a thematic analysis allowed for the data to be modified to answer various research questions in addition to the role that spirituality and culture plays in enabling the resilience of youth.

The following 6 phases, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), were used to analyse the data. Figure 3.7 provides a visual outline of the phases followed.



**Figure 3.7:** Data analysis phases

### 3.7.1 Phase 1: Familiarising Yourself With the Data

During this phase, the data were read repeatedly and in an active way by searching for meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I made sense of the data as a whole by becoming immersed in it, and thoroughly understanding the context in which it was taking place (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

### 3.7.2 Phase 2: Transcription of Verbal Data

The verbal data collected from focus group interviews were transcribed into written form. During this phase, open coding notes and headings were written in the text while it was being read (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The segments of data were coded with symbols, descriptive words, or unique identifying names to identify any significant themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2013a). The themes that emerged were data

driven and resulted in thematic “maps” that conceptualised the data patterns and the relationships between them (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.7.3 Phase 3: Searching for Themes

After all the data had been coded and collated, the process of sorting the different codes into potential themes began. Codes were grouped together to form main themes and subthemes, based on the relationship between the different codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.7.4 Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that the data within each theme cohered in a meaningful way (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.7.5 Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each identified and meaningful theme was analysed in detail with the aid of accompanying narratives to identify the essence of what each theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.7.6 Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final write-up aimed to provide a concise, coherent, and interesting account of the story that the data tell within and across each of the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **3.8 CONCLUSION**

To gather meaningful data that could assist me in answering the questions in the present study, a qualitative methodology was chosen. This methodology assisted me to refine and review the data that were collected to answer the research question in the most comprehensive manner. Throughout the data analysis process, the focus remained on the role of spirituality and culture on the resilience of youth affected by drought.



## 4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology for this study was explained, the interpretivist epistemological paradigm was elaborated upon, and the methodological paradigm was described in detail.

This chapter will present the research results. The data were analysed by identifying recurring themes and subthemes that emerged from the data through an inductive approach to data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysed data served to formulate a representation of participants' views on cultural and spiritual factors that could possibly foster resilience during drought. All participants will be referred to by their pseudonyms, and by their focus group number to preserve the anonymity. Focus group is abbreviated as FG in the discussion.

### 4.2 RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In this section of the chapter, the various themes are explored in detail. Two main themes emerged with subthemes that are outlined in Table 4.1. Each theme is discussed individually.

**Table 4.1:** Outline of main themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
1. A sense of religiosity, spirituality, and culture	1.1. Praying as a means of seeking aid from God, and as a sign of believing in God 1.2. Church as a support system
2. A sense of community unity and support	2.1. Community support and agency 2.2. The spirit of ubuntu

#### 4.2.1 Theme 1: A Sense of Religiosity, Spirituality, and Culture

Culture refers to the idiosyncratic beliefs, practices, and experiences shared by a group of people (Tonyan, Mamikonian-Zarpas, & Chien, 2013). Religion and spirituality are often used interchangeably and, depending on context, they can either have the same or different meanings. Religion is often associated with an organised and institutional entity, and spirituality is mostly regarded as a source of meaning and purpose in life (Dreyer, 2015). In African contexts, African culture is

embedded in religion, where religion is seen as a fibre of society (Manganyi & Buitendag, 2013).

This theme highlights that, despite the related stressors caused by the drought, the participants make use of religious practices as a source of support. This theme refers to any relationship or reference to God that describes a sense of religiosity. Within this theme, the participants make specific reference to prayer, their belief in God, and going to church. Table 4.2 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 1.

**Table 4.2:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1

<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>
1.1. Praying as a means of seeking aid from God, and a sign of believing in God	Any reference made to prayer and belief in God	Any references that exclude prayer and belief in God
1.2. Church community as a support system	Any reference made or suggesting involvement in being a member of a church community as a form of support	Any reference made that excludes involvement in being a member of a church community as a form of support

#### **4.2.1.1 Subtheme 1: Praying as a means of seeking aid from God, and a sign of believing in God**

The participants mentioned a variety of religious practices and beliefs that they utilised as a form of support during the drought. One of the most prominent religious practices mentioned by the participants was the act and purpose of prayer—seven out of eight focus groups reported on the theme. Prayer was also described as both an individual and group practice. John (FG 8) described prayer as something he does to feel okay in his heart during drought by asking God to look after him. He said:

I'm also a Christian. I pray to the Lord to look after me and I also have faith each and every day. Faith is what keeps me going each and every day because I've seen miracles happen.

In a group discussion, the group members from Focus Group 7 discussed the scene they built in their sand tray to show what supported them during a drought. They expressed that prayer allows them to tell God how they are feeling. With respect to Figure 4.1, Gwanele (FG 7) described a part of the scene as follows:

Then this thing represents the church. People, when maybe they are suffering or they are hurt, they eventually go to church, praying for that thing to get through or telling God about how they are feeling or the feeling affects them.



**Figure 4.1:** The sand tray object Gwanele described as the church where people pray

The participants often referred to prayer as a group or communal practice. This can be seen in the response from Xolani (FG 2) who said:

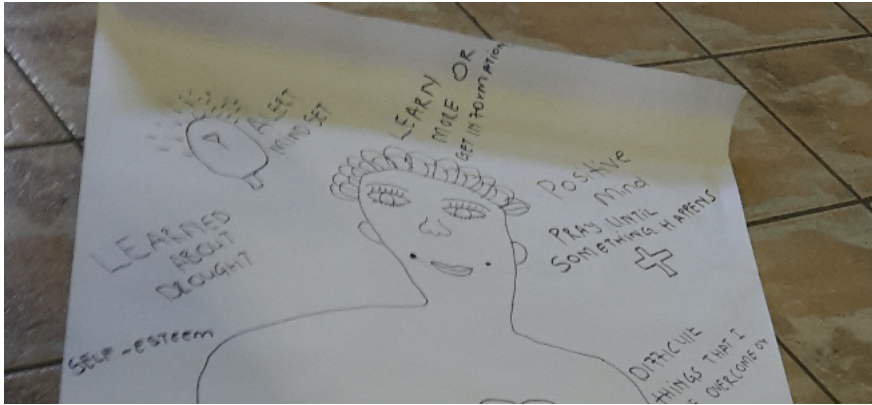
Everyone came together and they prayed for the rain . . . for example, if we would have students, we would have pastors we would have like the other youths, you would have like political parties, it would be basically everyone who has an important role in the community. It's just to join hands and become one, in one spirit and in one accord. Saying we need this and we are praying for this now.

Fission (FG 3) expressed similar communal values when describing what makes him okay in a time of drought. He said:

We pray together, we hope that things get better, because everything is possible with God.

In many cases, participants would couple the act of praying with receiving something from God. In her body map drawing, shown in Figure 4.2, Participant 3 (FG 5) expressed that she would pray to God until something happened and until she saw change. She said:

Try not to focus much on what's going on and also by praying and have faith because prayer makes everything . . . makes you believe that everything is going to be alright because without God, nothing does happened, I believe that God can change any situation so I keep praying and having faith that this shall pass because everything does pass.



**Figure 4.2:** Participant 3's body map drawing expressing prayer

This was supported by Junior (FG 6) who said:

I believe that if I pray to God and ask for something . . . he will always give me that thing. . . . Even if he doesn't give me that time I want, but eventually he will give me.

Zar (FG 2) also spoke of praying together as an act of coming together, asking for help from God, and believing that He can change their circumstances. He said:

So I believe in praying for whatever nature fails to provide us. So we are a community that prays for, about uhm everything that we feel we have less control of. So in this instance when we have drought obviously you cannot go to someone and demand water and demand everything, believe that it's best that we go to God and we ask for the rain. Or we ask for whatever He can do for us to actually solve the problem.

In response to what makes them feel okay in their mind, heart, and body in a time of drought, Khanyisile (FG 6) used the term to "talk with Jesus," which can be described as a form of prayer. He said:

If you talk with Jesus Christ . . . you're answered . . . everything is fine, everything is okay. . . . Just have hope that everything is going to be fine.

Talking to God was also mentioned by Portia (FG 4) as a means of praying. She mentioned that she talks to God to receive help so that she will be okay in her heart, mind, and body. She said:

I pray to God about the situation and ask for ways which can solve the problem. You know, it's important to talk to God about every situation that is affecting you physically and emotionally and mentally.

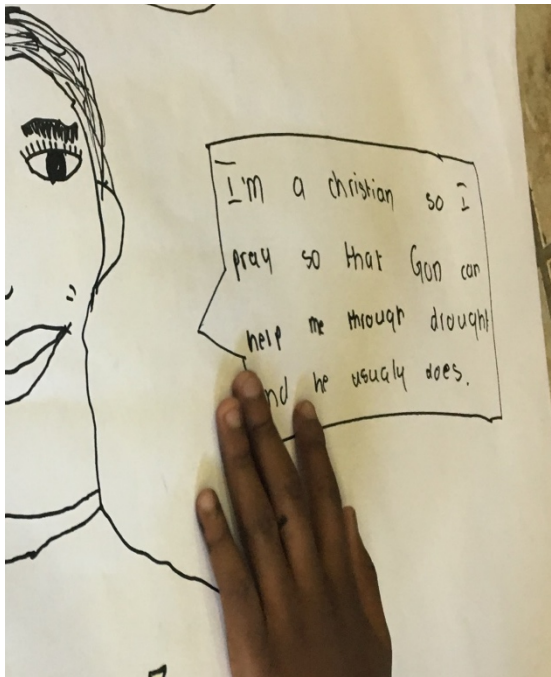
During the focus group interviews, strong beliefs about God emerged as participants shared their perspectives around their religious practices. Many of these beliefs

viewed God as powerful and in control of all. Participants' beliefs about God watching over everything allow them to believe that they can overcome their current circumstances and be okay. Charlotte (FG 3) drew a cross to represent that she is a Christian. She said:

There is a cross there, I am a Christian, I believe in God so I have even written there: even though there is drought I personally believe that God is watching everything that is happening therefore that helps me in every way or form that all is well. So whenever I think of God in whatever form, I just believe that everything is fine. Whatever is happening in our world, I believe everything is fine.

As can be seen in Figure 4.3, Junior (FG 6) wrote that as a Christian he believes that God will help him through the drought. He also expressed his belief in God and that nothing can happen to him because with God he can overcome anything. He said:

I'm a Christian so I believe that nothing can happen to me because I pray to God.



**Figure 4.3:** Junior's writing about being a Christian

Praying is strongly linked to the participants' beliefs in God, and that when they are faced with difficult situations, praying allows them to ask God for help. They believe that whatever they ask for in prayer will be provided to them at some point or another. An example is given by Solomon (FG 5), who said:

In order to overcome the drought . . . and the things that I can do in order to assist in the community is in praying to the Lord because me and my family we are Christian and we believe that everything we ask from God we get it. So by praying we also asking for the assistance from the almighty and it also helps a lot 'cause we believe that without God, nothing can happen but with God everything is possible and even the situation that we think is impossible, we can overcome.

A belief that God is powerful and in control is also linked to the participants' perception of the drought as a form of punishment from God for their bad deeds. This belief reinforces their need to pray to God to change their circumstances and to help them overcome the drought. Sithembiso (FG 2) explained this belief by saying:

I believe that God controls all the course of all the world's events. By having drought maybe, at our area, it's a punishment from God for our bad deeds, so by praying I ask God to help us and forgive us for whatever we have done. By doing that I believe that God can help us hear our problems then eventually it is going to rain.

Upon further elaboration, she said

Yes, I believe that drought is a punishment from God, because as the Bible emphasise that God always punish us for our bad deeds. God wouldn't want us to suffer with drought if we, having being doing wrong . . . we have been doing right each and every day. So when we are having drought in our area . . . we are asking for forgiveness so he can help us overcome the problem . . . and rain will come.

Having faith and hope in God is strongly linked to participants' belief that God is the one who is in control and can bring comfort and change. This belief is expressed by Gwanele (FG 7), who said:

I always tell myself that faith is the thing that helps me get through everything. Faith, confidence, hope and belief are the things that help me to get through it because with Jesus I know that where I can make it with Him, I know that I can stand.

The evidence in my study was similar to international resilience literature that noted the positive effect of faith-based practices like prayer as providing a sense of hope, gratitude, and peace (Masten, 2018; Walsh, 2009). Resilience research in South Africa aligns with the international findings where adherence to cultural practices like spirituality forms part of spiritual support through prayer and church attendance (Ebersöhn et al., 2014; Theron, Liebenberg, & Ungar, 2015). However, in a South African context, prayer is often used during moments of crisis whilst waiting on intervention from God (Mokhoathi, 2017). It is also evident in South African studies, that disasters like drought are also seen as a consequence of failing to obey God

(Rukema & Simelane, 2013). Holding God in high esteem, and belief in a higher power, allows people to attach meaning to their lives and to find comfort during challenging times (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2016).

#### 4.2.1.2 Subtheme 2: Church community as a support system

Another religious practice that was commonly reported by the participants as a source and form of support was the act of going to church and being part of the church community—five of the eight focus groups reported on this theme. The purpose of going to church can vary for different groups of people or individuals, based on their beliefs concerning the role of the church. The church is commonly seen as a place of prayer and support. An example of this was given by a participant named Angel (FG 7), who drew a house to represent the church. This house can be seen in her body map drawing in Figure 4.4 below. She said:

This represents the church so that when there is drought we can pray for the situation.

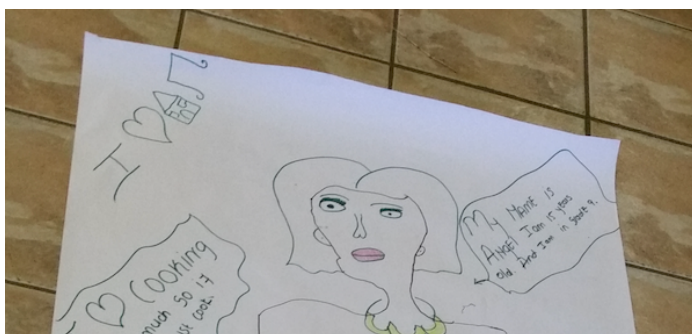


Figure 4.4: Angel's body map drawing of a church

Zar (FG 2) provided a similar idea in his body map drawing, stating:

This is the church, so it is the house of the Lord. It's a sign of going to pray.

Church is seen as both a place (building) and community of people. The church as a building structure has a symbolic element as where people can go to pray and as a place where people can go to relax. It is also seen as a community of people where one can receive support from other church members. To emphasise the experience of a church as a community of people, Kutlo (FG 3) said:

In terms of drought . . . I simply need support from family, friends, people that I know, also from church mates. Sometimes I usually go to my church to release the stress I am facing during that time.

This support can be in the form of emotional support as expressed by Kutlo, but can also include support in the form of knowledge disseminated through reading the Bible, listening to pastors and talking to other church members. An example is given by Phumzile (FG 4) who said:

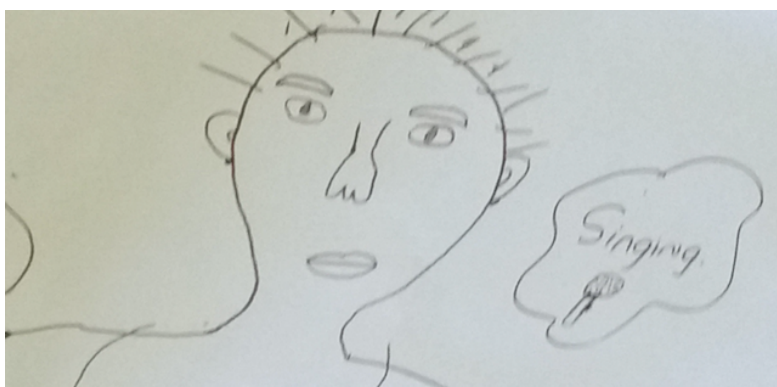
Then I go to church. It also helps me a lot to listen to the pastors, to listen to some of the other congregations giving advice and so forth.

Angel (FG 7) expressed that she receives support through reading the Bible. She said:

It gives me more knowledge about Jesus and the earth and where the earth started and so on. When I'm reading the Bible it tells me that everything will be right, you know. Even when times are hard.

When asked about her response to feeling hurt, Immaculate (FG 7) expressed that singing in church helps her to be okay. This can be seen in her drawing in Figure 4.5 of a microphone which represents singing in the church and talking to other people. She said:

I usually go to church and sing sometimes where some of us struggle with the very same challenges and then . . . then we can be able to talk about how we can be safe from this.



**Figure 4.5:** Immaculate's body map drawing to represent singing in the church

Talking to other people in church and helping others by encouraging them and stimulating positive thoughts allows participants to forget about the drought as a means of being okay. Thembi (FG 6) described it as follows:

Going to church . . . keeping my mind busy so that I can forget about drought . . . Encouraging young people usually to think positive, positive and then think what they want to do in future . . . also encouraging your old peoples to be able to think about what they want in life . . . in life and in future together.



The evidence from my study is supported by research that sees church as a place of support for people facing adversity (Theron et al., 2015). Church also plays a role in shaping who people become through the dissemination of knowledge and values (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

#### 4.2.2 Theme 2: A Sense of Community Unity and Support

This theme includes any communal support that helped the youth to overcome some of the challenges they faced during the drought. The participants reported on the community’s ability to work together and to unite in the face of adversity. In relation to their ability to come together, the participants also spoke of their and others’ ability to help those in need in their community during the drought. Table 4.3 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this theme.

**Table 4.3:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2

<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>
1.1. Community support and agency	Actions that include working/coming together, putting others’ needs above own, helping others, and collectivistic actions	Actions that exclude working/coming together, putting others’ needs above own, helping others, and collectivistic actions
1.2. The spirit of ubuntu	Any reference to social togetherness/cohesion, a sense of oneness and unity	Any reference that excludes social togetherness/cohesion, a sense of oneness and unity

##### 4.2.2.1 Subtheme 1: Community support and agency

The participants made reference to community support and agency in five of the eight focus groups as a means of being okay themselves during the drought. In many instances, the participants also reported helping members in their community who were physically disabled and unable to fetch water from the water points or taps. They also reported helping the elderly in a similar way. An example of this is provided by Tshiamo (FG 1) who, during his body map drawing, expressed how he is okay during a drought by helping other people. He said:

Work together to do something useful to overcome drought. By doing great things to them . . . the disabled people . . . they can’t go and fetch water for their homes, you can go for them and fetch water.

Bonele (FG 6) expressed similar community support. She said:

I help old people when they go and collect water in the river or some other location that is near and has water. I also encourage young people to help those who are in need, especially those people that are old . . . and unable to do anything by themselves.

Participants even made reference to their own experiences of being helped, and how this made them feel confident about overcoming and managing the challenges that they face. In Figure 4.6, Focus Group 7 discussed the meaning behind each object in the scene they built during the sand play.



**Figure 4.6:** Focus Group 7's sand play scene

Gwanele (FG 7) described her own experience and explained the meaning behind the figurines by saying:

People make me feel okay because they help me, they help around by filling the water when there is no drought. So that when there's a drought we have water and they help us to feel confident about the drought.

The recent drought affecting South Africa over the last 23 years (Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, 2016) not only affected the community's access to water but also affected their ability to grow crops as a source of food. Supporting others by providing them with meals was seen as important during the drought. An example of this is given by Xolani (FG 2) who drew a bag to represent food parcels. He said:

If there's a shortage of water we so need water to function and I have a bag here that says "food parcel." This is actually one of the ideas for helping out, by helping people have food since it's tough times and there is no food, plants are dying out. So you can do something very small and very little as buying someone a meal to help them get through the day.

Much of the community support described relates to physical support or to acts of service. It is also evident in the participants' responses that community support through being positive and through showing love and kindness is just as important. In light of his previous statement above, Xolani (FG 2) added that:

Support is not about giving people things. You can give them things but supportive is by being there with them, you know, saying we have all experienced this situation, but, it is just a session, it will get by. What we need to do now is to focus on the bigger picture and make it last, you know, impact, to say that we experienced this and got through it.

In response to the question of what makes you okay in your body, heart, and mind in a time of drought, Toni (FG 2) said:

Respect everybody, and love yourself and love your community.

From the same group, Zar (FG 2) elaborated further and said:

Giving is you being thoughtful of another person . . . giving is you, uhm, giving is a sign of you showing that we . . . we are a community. Or ja, we just like people in the same area and then we are just supposed to love each other, through difficult times such as this. So whatever help that you can provide for anyone then, you provide.

Community support is also given through shared knowledge of different community members. In Focus Group 4, when asked to explain how support in the community helps them to be okay during a drought, Lungile (FG 4) explained how the local clinic and nurses provide information at school. He said:

Even here at the clinic, the nurses go to school especially at primary schools and they tell the learners that they must tell their parents this and this and that, they just teach them everything.

Mandy (FG 4) explained that the educators at school also help them to be okay when there is a drought.

They teach us about drought . . . even about floods. What to do when there is a drought or a flood.

Sifiso (FG 4) added to the discussion and said that the elders from the community also helped them because they possess wisdom. He expressed that they have most likely already experienced a drought and can provide help through stories and knowledge. He said:

And they know what to do because maybe they have faced one or two droughts in their lives, so they know what to take and what story to tell you.

Research has shown that high levels of community networks foster resilience during stressful times (Camfield, 2012). These networks foster social support, civic responsibility, and a culture of care within youth and society (Dageid & Grønlie, 2015; Theron, 2016).

#### **4.2.2.2 Subtheme 2: The spirit of ubuntu**

Communities uniting as an expression of ubuntu was described by five out of eight focus groups. Knowing that they can rely on their community provides the participants with help, and allows them to share and join resources. An example of this is provided by Xolani (FG 6) who said:

Support is a two-way street, because in times like this people need each other more than they need anyone. So, basically, we support each other in any way possible. If you need this I'm gonna be there if I need this you gonna be there. Basically, we work together for change and by working through the situation.

This agency towards pooling together knowledge and resources is also evident in the response given by Precious (FG 1) who said:

You have to respect their decision so that we can work together. Unite so we can have better solutions.

The idea of being united in facing problems and in developing solutions allows the participants to experience a sense of hope in overcoming the drought they are facing. Lefa (FG 2) said:

Because we are facing a problem, and when we are a community we will be united together and we will be able to overcome that problem.

His fellow group member Nocebo (FG 2) responded with:

The drought situation makes us as a community . . . united, because the situation they are facing, we need to face together and that helps us to be united.

Other group members further expressed that teamwork allows them to overcome any challenge and, in being united, they are engaging in selflessness that serves other people. The notion of being united is described by Sifiso (FG 4) as:

The spirit of ubuntu.

His fellow group member, Lungile (FG 4), further explained that the spirit of ubuntu is found in the whole community; however, he also said that:

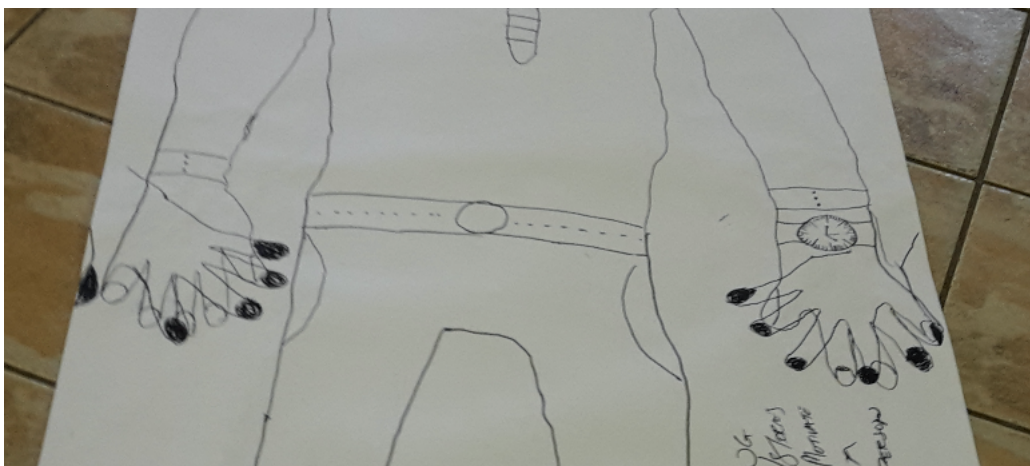
I doubt it's necessary to put it as a community and a home because a community is the homes, I think it's one thing.

Within Focus Group 4, it was emphasised that when there is a drought it is not only your family and neighbours who unite, but the larger community that includes people you don't interact with every day. Community unity allows the participants and community members to manage the difficulties that they face. Even though we see unity across the larger community, we also see unity amongst the youth. An example of this is given by Lefa (FG 2) who said:

We are very close-knit community . . . they say it takes a village to raise a child, then if ever we aren't standing up for what we know or for what we believe is right, who will do so? In terms of drought, who will tell the elder people and the disabled people, the people who are unable, who are unfit, to tell them that, guys, this is what we are facing. But there is a solution to everything—it is us, the young people.

In Figure 4.7, Willem (FG 5) drew hands overlapping as a sign of the community uniting and coming together and overcoming anything because they are all facing the same situation. He said:

These are my neighbours, my neighbours, and also the community, Keeping each other strong because during hardship, when you are united we can overcome anything because the situation we facing is all of us, ja.



**Figure 4.7:** Willem's body map drawing showing hands uniting

The evidence in my study was similar to South African and international resilience literature which identifies social environments and community group as resilience enablers (Alvarez, Kawachi, & Romani, 2017; Dageid & Grønlie, 2015; Theron et

al., 2015). Social cohesion and serving community members also contributes to being okay when faced with adversity (Caldwell & Boyd, 2009; Carnie et al., 2011; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Masten, 2018; Ungar, Liebenberg & Ikeda, 2014).

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter outlines the results of the study, which centred on two different themes that aimed at representing the role of spirituality or culture in fostering the resilience of youth affected by drought. The findings were also briefly related to South Africa and international resilience research with the aim of highlighting certain similarities and differences between the findings and the theory.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how these results link to the theoretical framework from a South African perspective, and will address the research questions. Furthermore, recommendations for practice and further research are suggested.

## **5. CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter includes a summary of Chapters 1 to 4. The underlying theoretical framework used in this study is revisited and contextualised, and the research questions are answered. A discussion of the study's limitations, followed by recommendations for practice and training and future research are presented in the conclusion.

### **5.2 OVERVIEW OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS**

#### **5.2.1 Chapter 1**

The study was introduced by providing an overview of the background of the study that took place in the drought-stricken area of Secunda in Govan Mbeki Municipality of Mpumalanga. The methodological approach was briefly outlined and the concepts underpinning the study were clarified. Furthermore, the ethical concerns of the study were discussed, and trustworthiness in qualitative research addressed.

#### **5.2.2 Chapter 2**

By exploring what other researchers have written in the field of resilience, the literature that is relevant to the study was reviewed. The role of culture and spirituality in fostering resilience was explored and special reference was made to African culture and spirituality. The ecological systems theory, proposed by Bronfenbrenner, forms part of the underlying conceptual framework that guided the study. The reconceptualisation of this theory by Vélez-Agosto and colleagues (2017) played an important role in increasing the focus of culture as an integral part of human development. Walsh's family resilience framework was also introduced because it makes reference to specific cultural and spiritual factors that influence families who are faced with adversity.

#### **5.2.3 Chapter 3**

Guided by an interpretivist paradigmatic approach, qualitative research methods were elaborated upon and used to collect data. Other methodological aspects of the study were discussed, which included the research process, from sampling to data collection, and, finally, data analysis.

## 5.2.4 Chapter 4

The results of the thematic data analysis were reported. Two main themes were identified, including subthemes linked to each main theme. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme were defined and evidence to support the identified themes was documented. The results were briefly linked to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which would be further explored in the current chapter.

### 5.3 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the results of this study, the research questions are answered in this section. The main research question is “What is the role of spirituality and culture on the resilience of youth affected by drought?” The main research question is linked to the following sub-questions: 1) “How does spirituality contribute to the resilience of youth?” and 2) “Which cultural practices support the resilience of youth from families affected by drought?” This section aims to address the research questions. Figure 5.1 below provides a visual summary of the themes identified in Chapter 4, and how they relate to the sub-questions as well as the primary research question.



**Figure 5.1:** Visual summary of themes identified in Chapter 4 as related to research questions

#### 5.3.1 Addressing Sub-Question 1: How Does Spirituality Contribute to the Resilience of Youth?

The data revealed that youth engage in religious and spiritual practices to foster their resilience during drought. Spiritual practices identified by the participants extended to practices of prayer and attending church. The act of prayer served



varied functions and is practised in more than one setting. The participants reported that prayer allowed them to communicate with God concerning the difficulties they were facing. Participants expressed their concern individually or as a group. This finding closely suggests that the youth position themselves as part of a community (praying with others) and, thus, embracing the spirit of ubuntu. Prayer has many facets when considering African traditional religion, which is defined by specific characteristics. One of these characteristics, for instance, relates to the concept of a supreme being who holds a moral sense of justice and truth (Idang, 2015). The participants made reference to this belief system by recognising that the drought they are experiencing is punishment from God because of their bad deeds. Based on this belief, prayer allows them the opportunity to reconcile with God, to be forgiven, and to receive forgiveness through the end of the drought. Prayer was never reported as a practice that allowed the participants to build a relationship with God, or to reach a level of transcendence. It was utilised as a means of communication to instil hope and reassurance that their god was aware of their circumstances and would intervene on their behalf.

The theoretical framework of Walsh (2016) included faith-based practices such as prayer as a key process in family resilience. However, Walsh (2007, 2012) did not elaborate further on the function of prayer in fostering resilience. As described by the participants, prayer is used to seek aid from God during the drought. This aligns with South African literature that found that when African Christians find themselves in moments of crisis they are encouraged to pray to God for intervention (Mokhoathi, 2017). Some literature described prayer as a ritual and practice that contributes to feelings of gratitude, hope, and peace, allowing them to be released from guilt and shame in their relationship with God (Dreyer, 2015). Considering the vast functions that prayer can encompass, it is important to consider individuals' descriptions of prayer to better understand how it fosters resilience.

In this study, prayer was closely linked to, and practised at, church. The contextualisation of prayer within a church parameter provides an additional context to the participants' belief system and practice of prayer in fostering their resilience. The church is seen as a place where worship, prayer, and teaching can take place, and it is also seen as a community of people who can offer support. These findings stand in agreement with other literature that describes the church as a place that

provides an avenue for supportive networks and enhances resiliency (Black & Lobo, 2008; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Walsh, 2007). In a Canadian study, characterised by individualistic culture, the church was seen as a community that can provide support—although it was used at a limited capacity due to cultural expectations for privacy and independence (Donovan et al., 2011).

### 5.3.2 Addressing Sub-Question 2: Which Cultural Practices Support the Resilience of Youth From Families Affected by Drought?

Culture is often viewed as an overarching influence on the resilience of most youth, families, and communities. Accordingly, literature confirms that African cultures view their community as a collective whole—as defined by their cultural practices (Theron et al., 2013). In this study, the participants reported a sense of community unity and support. Community support is often studied in terms of a resource that is utilised by family members or communities. However, in this study the youth reported community support mostly from the perspective of providing help to others. They identified the act of doing something for someone else as an action that is twofold—in helping other people, they are in turn helping themselves by feeling more confident. These acts allow them to feel a part of something by focusing on the bigger picture, being others and their community. Community support also includes shared knowledge systems where teachers and elders provided support through stories and knowledge because they possess wisdom. This may be due to Africa culture and religion being largely constructed around oral traditions that encompass interactive practice and beliefs (Brittan et al., 2013).

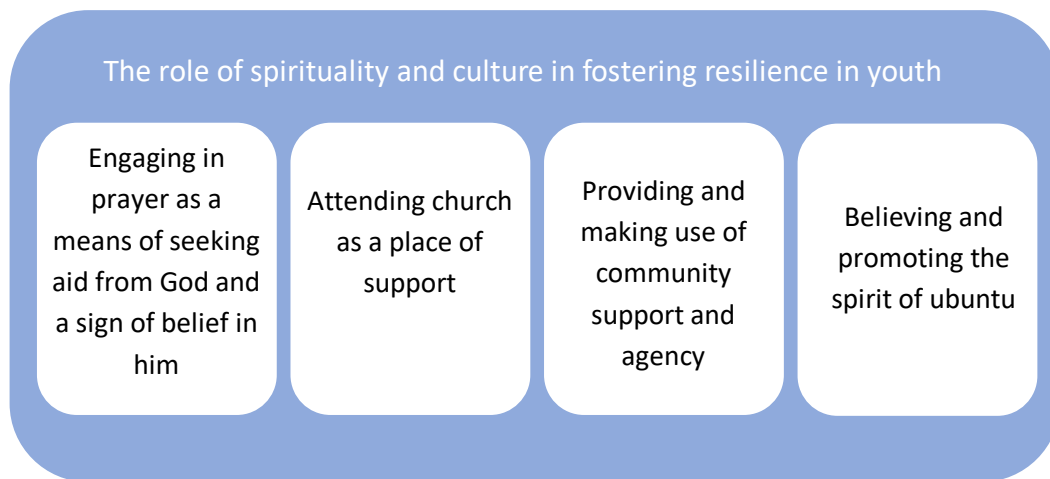
The strong sense of providing community support and uniting together can be expressed as facets of the spirit of ubuntu. Ubuntu advocates for respect and compassion and is considered an integral part of African peoples' collectivistic way of being (Theron et al., 2013). The youth in this study are strongly guided by this cultural practice, which embodies more than just a practice, but a way of life. The participants reported uniting to help and support each other, to foster a culture of respect and hope, and to stand together as a community made up of all families when facing the effects of the drought.

Most literature refers to social support as something that is provided by communities (Brittian et al., 2013; van Rensburg, Theron, Rothmann, 2018). Although the

participants in this study identified social support as helpful when faced with adversity, they also reported the importance of providing support as means of fostering their resilience. The act of providing support can very much enhance social connectedness—as expressed by Walsh (2012). This also aligns with a study by Ebersöhn, Nel, and Loots (2017) where a sense of responsibility towards others enhanced a person’s sense of belonging and served as a protective factor. This was also identified by Donovan et al. (2011) in a Canadian study where the cohesiveness of a family or community was enhanced through cultural practices and structures and strengthened over time. Cultural practices allow youth and communities to be guided by a common purpose, and enhance social cohesion. Ungar (2008) reported similar findings in a 14-site international research project study with over 1,500 youth. Communities with a common sense of purpose were characterised by social cohesions, and communities where no common purpose was evident were characterised with a low sense of social cohesion.

### 5.3.3 Addressing the Main Research Question: What Is the Role of Spirituality and Culture on the Resilience of Youth From Families Affected by Drought?

At the start of this study, I assumed that spirituality and culture were mutually exclusive; however, as literature has pointed out, in an African context they are both governed by similar values and constructs. African culture is guided by religious norms, and plays an important role in understanding African societies (Thomas, 2005). Supported by the sub-questions, the data revealed that the youth of Govan Mbeki Municipality were able to identify how aspects of their spirituality and culture supported them during the drought. Figure 5.2 provides a visual summary of the role of spirituality and culture as identified by the youth. Each construct is discussed in its own paragraph below.



**Figure 5.2:** The role of spirituality and culture in fostering resilience as identified by the youth

Firstly, the youth reported that engaging in prayer helped them to be okay during the drought. Faith-based practices like prayer allowed them to believe in miracles and to hope for things to get better because God was listening to their prayers. To the participants, practicing their faith through prayer gave meaning to their lives through their association with a higher power (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Praying in this research is seen as a communication that also represents their relationship with God, whom they engage directly through prayer. The participants do not look at their praying relationship with God as leading to personal transcendence or spiritual growth but, rather, as a relationship of dependence and reciprocity (requesting relief from drought through prayer) and expecting a positive response from God. This aligns with a South African study by Dreyer (2015) who found that faith practices like prayer contributed to feelings of hope and peace because they released the people from feelings of guilt; they found acceptance after shameful experiences in their relationship with God. The participants described the drought as a form of punishment from God because of their bad deeds, and prayer allows them to be forgiven and for the drought to come to an end. There is expectation that prayers are answered and bring relief, thus, a sense of reciprocity is enhanced. South African literature has found that when African Christians find themselves in moments of crisis they are encouraged to pray to God for intervention (Mokhoathi, 2017).

The participants also described going to church as both a place (building) and a community of people. Its purpose ranged from seeking guidance from religious leaders, connecting with other church members, and as a place where they can pray. Church has been identified by resilience researcher as supportive in fostering

resilience (Black & Lobo, 2008; Brittian et al., 2013). However, in a study conducted by Dass-Brailsford (2005) with 16 black Zulu youth, church was identified as enhancing resiliency alongside traditional ancestral worship as long as it did not conflict with their Christian faith—the participants in this study did not make any reference to ancestral worship. Whether the participants do engage in ancestral worship alongside their Christian faith, remains unknown. Interestingly enough, in a Canadian study the church community was identified as a source of help; however, cultural expectations for privacy and independence limited the extent to which this help was utilised (Donovan et al., 2011). A strong difference concerning the role of the church community and the extent to which this practice is utilised can be seen between African communities and more Westernised communities.

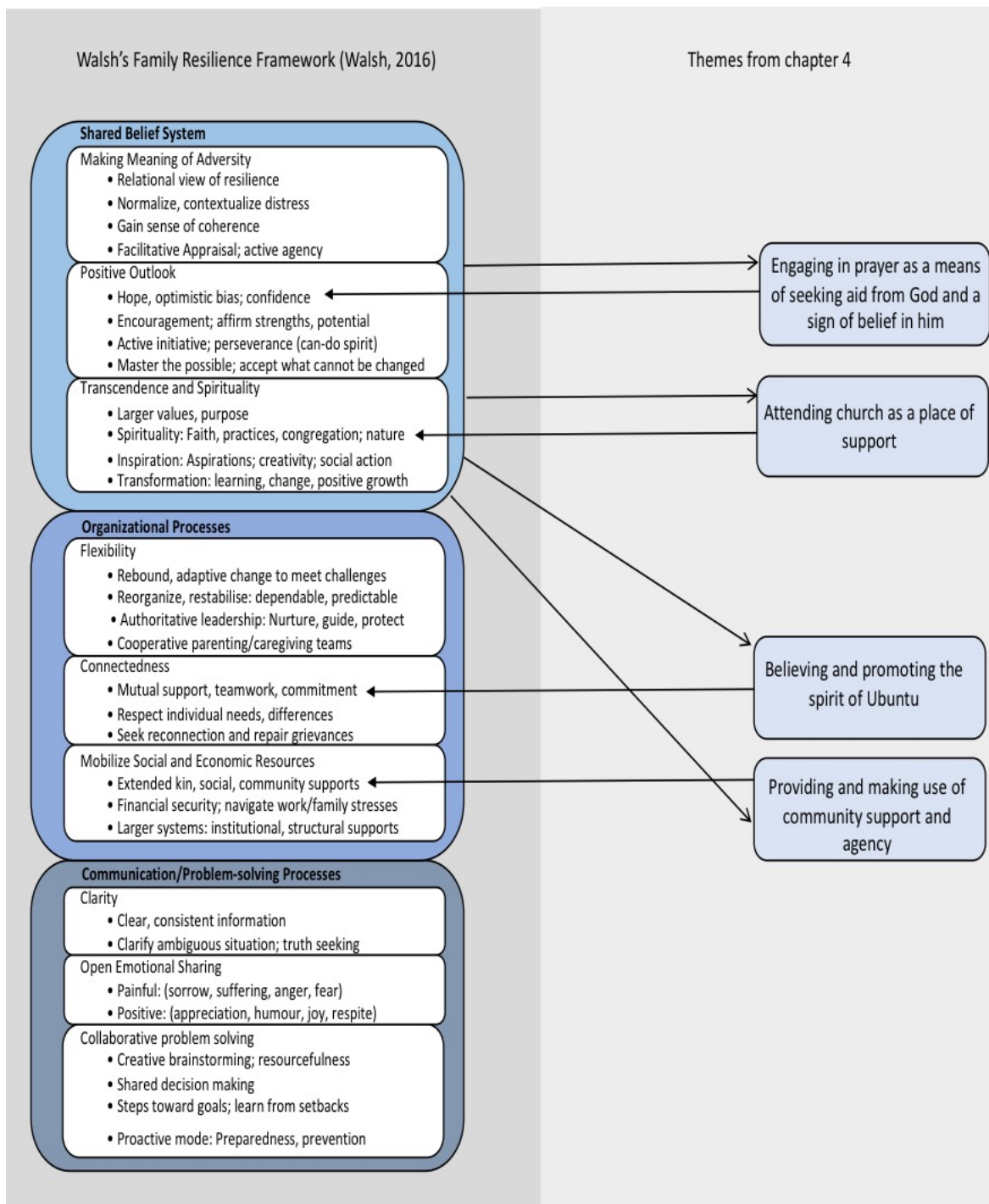
The youth identified community support and agency as an important contributor to their resilience by working together to promote change and to ease the burden of the drought. The participants reported engaging in community support by helping the elderly and the disabled with physical acts of support. They also reported providing other community members with physical resources like food. Although some participants gave accounts of being on the receiving end of community support, most provided instances of being the providers of such support, and described the act of giving as helping them to be okay during the drought. Research has shown that family, social networks, and community groups offer practical and emotional support to foster resilience (Walsh, 2012). Involvement enhances social connection through robust, meaningful backing and tangible support (Brittian et al., 2013; Theron et al., 2013; Walsh, 2007). Physical and psychological care giving fostered resilience through voluntary resources such as support groups (van Rensburg et al., 2018). Most resilience research describes resilience through social and community support through the lens of receiving the support, whereas this community reported on resilience through social and community support as the givers of such support and resources. This might be accounted for by the above-mentioned process of resilience that encompasses the spirit of ubuntu in African cultures—Walsh (2017) termed the act of providing support as compassionate outreach.

The spirit of ubuntu was well reported by the youth as promoting resilience during the drought; respect for the community of fellow human beings promotes

harmonious and hospitable coexistence (Theron et al., 2013). The participants make frequent reference to working together to promote change for all by uniting as a community. Simply knowing that others are facing the same challenges helps the youth to feel okay despite the drought because they don't feel they are facing it alone. Being united as one helps the youth to feel supported and stronger, and able to overcome the challenges and adversity. In African contexts, the practices supporting resilience are embedded in collectivist cultural practices that place value on providing community support and agency during drought and in adopting the spirit of ubuntu. Viewing their community as a collective whole is strongly defined by a community's culture (Theron et al., 2013). In South Africa, African culture and spirituality includes a range of cultures that embody their unique practices and expression of faith. My results suggest that cultural and religious practices form part of the daily practices of social communities and exist within the social networks of individuals, families, and societies (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017).

#### 5.3.4 Revisiting the Theoretical Framework

This research corresponds with Walsh's (2016) family resilience framework, which identified three key processes in family resilience that are mutually interactive, and describe elements of spiritual and cultural practices that reduce vulnerability when faced with adversity. Figure 5.3 provides a visual summary of the themes identified in Chapter 4, and how they relate to Walsh's (2016) family resilience framework.



**Figure 5.3:** Themes identified in Chapter 4 as they relate to Walsh's (2016) family resilience framework

Revisiting Walsh's (2016) framework, the findings of my study support resilience from four difference key process areas. Initially one would assume that spiritual and cultural factors would be restricted to a single process, however they appear to be embedded across them. Meaning-making and having hope, as outlined by Walsh (2016), are strongly associated with faith-based practices like prayer and going to church—as found in my research. The youth's faith-based practices foster their

ability to make sense of the drought they are experiencing and to be positive by allowing them to believe that, through prayer, everything will be okay.

Walsh identified the importance of religious congregations in providing support to individual and family well-being (2015). The youth in my research described their local church as a place of support. This support is provided by other congregational members, through teachings by the pastors, and by engaging in readings from the Bible. The church as a place (building) has a symbolic element where people can also go to pray.

The second key process in family organisation involves *connectedness*. According to Walsh (2015), families do their best when they balance closeness, mutual support, and commitment. The youth in my study referred to the spirit of ubuntu in describing their community's ability to unite and remain connected during the drought. The spirit of ubuntu allows them to understand that they are not alone in the adversity that they face and, because they stand together, they will be able to overcome the drought and associated challenges.

Walsh (2015) identified the importance of extended kin and social networks' ability to provide practical assistance, emotional support, and vital community resources in fostering well-being. The youth reported instances of providing and receiving support to and from the community. This support was in the form of food, acts of service—like fetching water—and in providing emotional support by showing love and kindness.

As discussed in Chapter 2, traditional African societies remain a culture guided by religious norms with strong bonds between religion and social life (Thomas, 2005). African culture and spirituality are guided by common sets of beliefs held at cultural and religious levels, which are permeated and evident at the community, family, and individual levels of functioning—therefore governing African people's way of life. To truly understand the individual beliefs and actions that serve as protective factors in African communities, one must draw knowledge and understanding from overarching cultural and religious beliefs and practices, increasing the complex nature of youths' resilience.



The themes identified in Chapter 4 are seen as spiritual and cultural practices and beliefs. In terms of Walsh's family resilience framework, these themes are not isolated as spiritual processes but also family organisational processes. This aligns with the work of Vélez-Agosto et al. (2017) that described culture (and, in terms of Africa, culture and spirituality) as a fluid and interactive system across all systems. When considering the key processes in family resilience as proposed by Walsh (2016) within African context, the processes that foster family resilience are interactive and influential, with traces of cultural and spiritual influence found across the framework. This research shows that an overarching understanding of culture and spirituality will help to inform how the various processes foster resilience given that they are, ultimately, culturally and spiritually bound. The role of spirituality, as proposed in Walsh's framework, should not be regarded as a bound and distinct process but, rather, it should be investigated as a process that is embedded in all other processes of the framework.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

One limitation that I experienced was that I had no control over the facilitation of focus group interviews. Because I was part of the greater project, multiple facilitators conducted focus groups and engaged with their own focus group. I had no control over the quality of the data generated in the other groups. I also had no control over how the facilitators probed for a deeper understanding, and whether they probed at all. This means that some focus groups provided richer data that were relevant to my study compared to other focus groups. Due to the greater research project and the many researchers forming part of the team, I am unsure whether every researcher bracketed their own views and research goals to be able to answer the broader research question of the project. This is evident in the data in that some focus groups yielded data that provided evidence for an individual researcher's research question, narrowing its application.

The second limitation was that I had no control of the methods that were used to collect the data. The various arts-based methods were established as part of the greater project, which led to some of the activities yielding little data relevant to my study. Of the four arts-based activities, most of the data that were relevant to my

study were generated through Activity 3, which looked at intrapersonal evidence, and Activity 4, which yielded interpersonal evidence.

Another limitation was communication between the participants and the researchers. Most of the researchers only spoke English, which was not the participants' first language. The language barrier could have prevented both the researcher and the participants from fully expressing themselves during some of the activities. The participants made use of each other as translators when they struggled to express what they were trying to say. As a researcher, I would augment my words or sentence when the participants did not understand the question in an attempt to clarify my question. At times, I would move on to the next questions when I was met with a few failed attempts of communicating a certain question—which could have led to important data being lost.

In the greater project, the focus groups were formed as the participants entered the community centre through random allocation to a group. This resulted in some focus groups comprising of youth of a similar age, and other focus groups where a significant age gap was present amongst the group members. This caused a limitation to the discussions in that they were often dominated by the older participants in the group. The result was that the voices of the younger participants were often silenced, and valuable information from these members missed.

## **5.5 REFLEXIVITY**

Reflexivity refers to the underlying beliefs and values held by the researcher that are present in the section and justification of methodical approaches (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998). The importance of reflexivity is the researchers' ability to remain transparent in their position and in their assumptions to ensure the authenticity of the findings (Reid, Brown, Smith, Cope, & Jamieson, 2018).

Through the process of conducting research, I gained valuable experience in conducting primary research, which built on my knowledge and experience from my honours year. A personal reflection is that this process allowed me to understand the importance of conducting research and collecting data that are trustworthy, ensuring generalisability, validity, reliability, and objectivity (Given & Saumure, 2008). Through my interaction with participants from a resource-constrained

community, I was able to broaden my view on their experiences of drought and the resources they use to foster resilience. Although some of the activities used to gather data as part of the greater project did not apply to my research, it did allow me to better conceptualise the participants' views on culture and spirituality by giving me better insight into their community and their way of life.

Conducting research in the Govan Mbeki community allowed me to gain more experience in working with people from resource-constrained communities. It broadened my view on the importance of building a relationship with community leaders and on the importance of maintaining those relationships. I was reminded that it is as important to walk into these communities with the aim of learning, as it is to teach or implement change. Through the learning process, you become more aware of the needs of the community and the culture that governs it.

The findings of this study became really meaningful because they allowed the voices of a marginalised (through their age and circumstances) group of individuals to be heard. The evidence I encountered added new perspectives to literature I had read on resilience. Although many of the findings reflected what other researchers have stated, they added new dimensions or further elaborations that have not been noted. The findings added a much-needed African perspective to resilience research that highlights these communities as being more religious and governed by rules and law compared to communities that are spiritual and more focused on spiritual experiences and relationships. The findings I reported on as an educational psychologist in training, gave me a sense of hope for youth in South Africa who are able to be resilient despite their circumstances. As a person who grew up in a well-resourced environment, I carry great concern for my fellow South Africans who come from communities where they face daily challenges. The findings of my research and that of the greater project have given me hope that these communities are able to pull together through their cultural and religious practices—to be okay when they are faced with adversity.

If I were to repeat my study, I would keep the methodology the same. As a research group, we had the privilege of multiple researchers who enabled us to conduct multiple focus groups by making use of individual researchers' strengths to create a well of knowledge. Part of this research group comprised of educational

psychologists with many years of training and research experience. This created a platform where learning new skills and building on existing skills could be fostered. Being part of a group of researchers, we were also able to share our experiences with each other and engage in shared reflection where I was able to confront and overcome, to the best of my ability, the language and cultural barriers between myself and the participants. The only aspect I would change would be to increase my level of involvement in the ethical clearance process. Being part of a bigger research project meant the ethical clearance from my research formed part of the bigger project, which other researchers had applied for. Given my love for community engagement and building relationships with communities, I would have wanted to be more involved in this process of engagement and relationship building, for example, by meeting the community leaders who facilitated the implementation of the research. I do realise, though, that as part of a team of multiple researchers, the logistics and details behind being more involved in this process had its own limitations—alongside language barriers between myself (being English and Afrikaans speaking) and the community who comprised of multiple African languages.

I have spent time reflecting on the working assumptions that I held at the beginning of my study. I explore the credibility of these assumptions in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1:** Comparing the credibility of my assumptions held

Initial Assumption	Reflection at the End of My Study
Drought has an adverse effect on youth and they need support to help them to be resilient.	My findings did show that drought has an adverse effect on youth, and they do need support. My assumption was that they needed external support from older community members or family. Although the findings do show that community support is important and utilised, youth also find support through individual practices like prayer, thus, leaning on religious practices.
Youth affected by drought respond differently to the adverse conditions, where some youth may show patterns of resilience while others not.	This assumption did change because all the participants in this study showed some patterns of resilience through either religion or social support, or a combination of both. However, although the participants utilised some processes of resilience, whether they were utilised or used effectively remains unknown

	because long-term well-being could not be measured.
Spirituality and culture can play a role in families' ability to become resilient, and this can be manifest through some characteristics of a person's culture, which enables them to resilient.	This assumption did not change because youth from families utilised either cultural or spiritual/religious, or a combination of both resources to become more resilient. African culture and religion can be seen as woven into the fabric of individual and family dynamics and way of life, making it an integral part of individuals and society. Cultural and religious influences run like a thread through youth and community and throughout the resilience process.
Youth's understanding of drought and how to respond to this phenomenon is influenced by their cultural and spiritual practices.	The youth's understanding of drought is highly influenced by their religious and, therefore, cultural practices. This can be seen in their agency to use prayer to seek intervention from God. It can also be seen through their beliefs that the drought is a consequence of failing to obey God and that prayer can be used as a means of intervention.

## 5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.6.1 Recommendations Relating to Future Research

The evidence in my study revealed many cultural and spiritual/religious practices that enable resilience. I would recommend follow-up studies in the following areas:

- A follow-up study could be organised, which focuses on exploring resilience in different African cultures and religions. I would recommend that religious and cultural practices that foster resilience be identified and further explored to gain greater insight into how these practices are utilised and implemented to foster resilience.
- I would recommend a similar study in a different community affected by drought. This would allow the researcher to compare whether the cultural and religious practices identified as enabling resilience are context specific or culturally specific. A similar study could also explore whether differences exist between various African cultures (Zulu, Tswana, Venda, Ndebele, etc.) or whether there is an amalgamation between them that produces an overarching cultural and religious influence or fostering towards resilience.

- A longitudinal study would allow researchers to gain greater insight into the cultural and religious values that foster resilience and whether these values remain consistent over time. Black and Lobo (2008) pointed out that resilience is a dynamic trait that cannot be captured as a single point in time, highlighting the importance of more long-term studies.

#### 5.6.2 Recommendations for Educational Psychologists

As drought worsens in South Africa, the impact will continue to affect the day-to-day lives of local communities, therefore, educational psychologists will benefit from this study (Chigeza et al., 2010). The role of the educational psychologist is to advocate for family and community systems to co-transact towards resilience by augmenting accessible, protective, community-based resources (Theron & Donald, 2013). Therefore, the findings of my study will contribute to the support programmes that educational psychologists may create, and that are not only context specific and culturally relevant, but also include cultural and religious practices as an integral part of resilience at all levels of society. An increased awareness of specific communities' understanding of terms like prayer can allow researchers and educational psychologists to better understand the dynamics and intricacies of such a practice, and to not assume that it has the same function as in Western communities. When using Walsh's (2016) family resilience framework, one can evaluate the various processes as being more fluid in their interaction and influence over each other with religious and cultural practices and beliefs embedded in shared belief systems, organisation processes, and communication and problem solving processes. To be responsive practitioners, educational psychologists need to recognise the context of an individual's beliefs and values on their response to challenging situations (Aburn et al., 2016). Thus, when working with youth from other African communities and different drought-challenged contexts it is important to not assume my findings relevant for that community.

### **5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

My study gave me deeper insight into the resilience against drought and the role that culture and religion play in its mitigation. The information from the participants generated important findings that highlight the importance of context-specific findings. To better serve communities, the generation of context and culturally

specific knowledge systems can help to inform interventions that are responsive and tailored to local contexts and value systems. Motlalepule Mampane (2014) highlighted the importance of identifying resilience factors in youths who are able to rise above the stressors that they face, as it constitutes a solid step towards their optimal development through the implementation and creation of effective preventative measures and intervention. Our role as educational psychologists is to foster environments and create moments where people are empowered to live their best life by gaining a greater understanding of themselves. Empathy allows us to be receptive and responsive to the unique differences in people and societies through the appreciation of differences. I end off with an extract from his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, by Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who survived Nazi concentration camps during World War II.

“In spite of all the enforced physical and mental primitiveness of the life in a concentration camp, it was possible for spiritual life to deepen. A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life, I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth—that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: the salvation of man is through love and in love.” (2008, p. 47)

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## **7. APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Post consensus coding posters for member checking

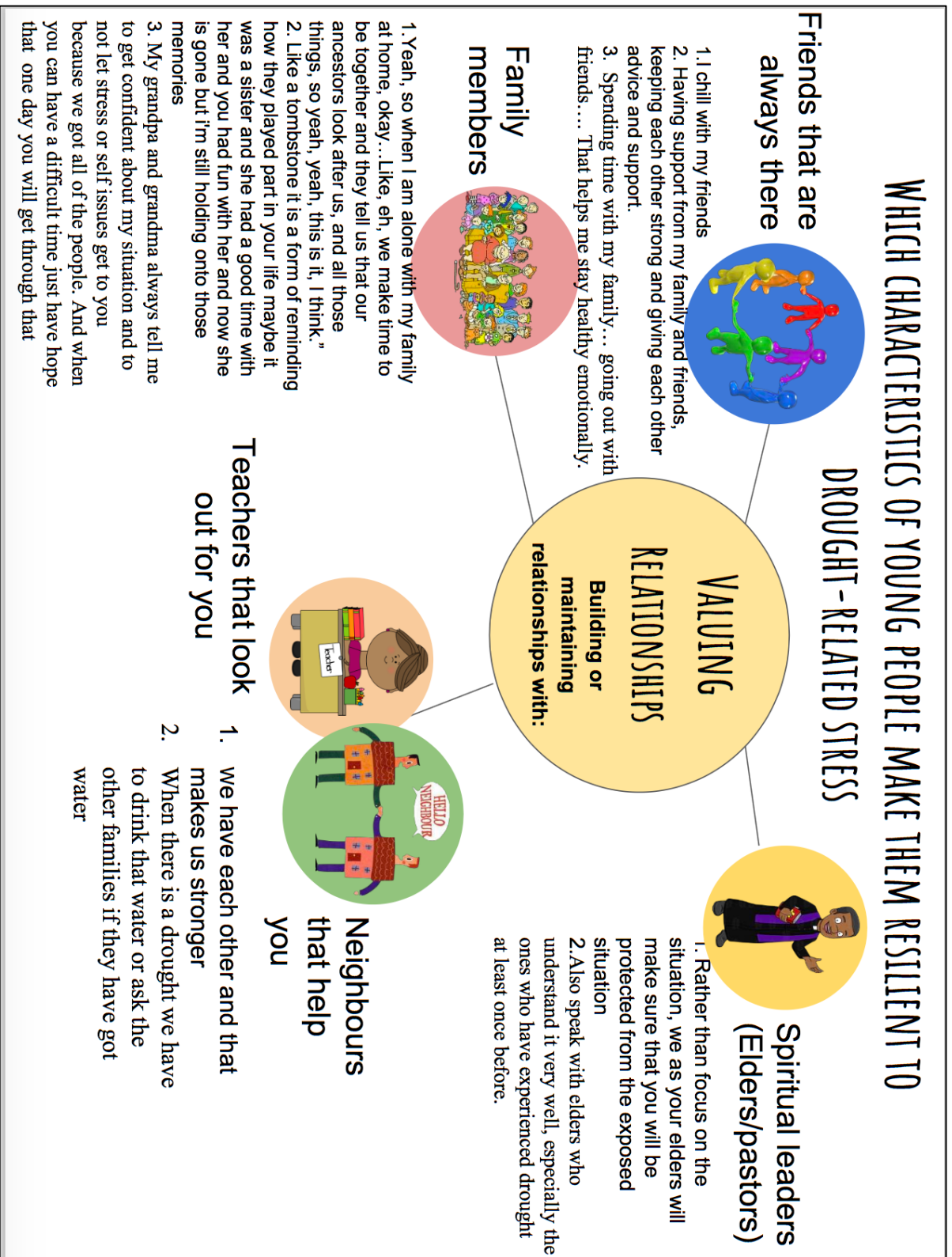
Appendix B: Informed Consent – Invitations and Consent Forms

Appendix C: Ethics clearance certificate for greater project

Appendix D: Extract of Coding Process

Appendix E: Recruitment Advert

**APPENDIX A: POST CONSENSUS CODING POSTERS FOR MEMBER CHECKING**





## WHICH CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY (COMMUNITY OF LEANDRA) MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE MORE RESILIENT TO DROUGHT-RELATED STRESS?

We do things together as a community



1. The community comes together, they stick together and talk to the municipality when there is a drought in the community, they stick together in the community you have to save water because it is everyone's responsibility.
2. In your community you have to save water because it is everyone's responsibility.
3. No matter how big the challenges but united together we are bigger than the challenge.

MANAGING DROUGHT RELATED CHALLENGES



Schools, clinics and the government help where they can

1. The municipality has tried to make pamphlets to give to people, informing them if they are misusing water.
2. In 2016 the government came up with a way of reducing the waste of water. They company, water and sanitation, hired people for about a week to go to each and every house to put bottles on the toilet. They did this so that we can use water more responsibly.
3. Even the municipality because they deliver water using those tank trucks so they are also contributing.

The community makes changes on its own



1. Many people had saved water because of the drought two years back...we used buckets...and other built dams to save water.
2. The councillor of that ward was calling people to say, there are some, people who are from, different stakeholders, that also know about water and drought. So those people were demonstrating on how to save water. How the community must go about in terms of saving water.

## WHICH CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY (COMMUNITY OF LEANDRA) MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE MORE RESILIENT TO DROUGHT-RELATED STRESS?

Our religion or culture helps us to stay ok



MAINTAINING WELLBEING

1. They do everything. Making sure we are still connected to God, our ancestors and all those things we grew up with, like in that environment, where they tell us that our ancestors will always look after us, so that somehow gives us strength and gives us hope.
2. God is always there and he knows that everything will be fine and he knows why he has put us into this situation, part of situation. Obviously we all know if God is always there, come tomorrow everything will be fine.
3. If we feel like we are somehow failed by nature or ...we just go back to God .

# WHICH CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE THEM RESILIENT TO DROUGHT - RELATED STRESS?

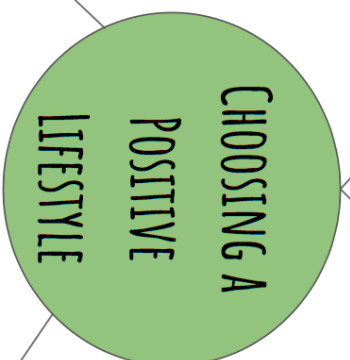
## Being positive about the future

1. Hope that everything is going to be fine.
2. I like what makes me stay healthy and I'm always thinking positively like what am I going to do like what's next, stuff like that.



## Looking at things in a positive way

1. Okay, what I think will help you to be ok when there is a drought: in your heart you have to be calm and in your mind you have to think only positive things
2. You can think of something good that should or could be happening into your life.
3. You know when you wake up there is new hope every day.



## Making good life choices

1. And also I am also a Christian. I pray to the Lord to look after me and also I have faith each and every day
1. I also pray and have faith that this shall pass because everything does pass
2. I talk to Jesus, and if you talk to Jesus you are answered and everything is fine



## Thinking bigger than just myself

1. I help old people when they go and collect water in the river or in some other location that is nearby and has water.
2. what can I do or add in order to overcome the drought and what input can I put into the community in order to assist in the community.

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT – INVITATIONS AND CONSENT FORMS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

### PARTICIPANT INVITATION AND ASSENT FORM (Adolescents)

We invite you to participate a project called: *Patterns of resilience among young people in a community affected by drought: Historical and contextual perspectives.*

#### **Who are we?**

We are researchers from the University of Pretoria (South Africa), the University of Brighton (United Kingdom), and two organisations called BoingBoing (United Kingdom) and Khulisa Social Solutions (South Africa). Our contacts are at the end of this letter if you need them.

#### **What are we doing in this project?**

We want to learn from you (and about 50 other young people from Govan Mbeki municipality) about what helps young people whose communities are badly affected by drought to be resilient. To be resilient is to keep doing OK in life even when life is hard. With your help, we also want to learn what adults in your community know about what has helped your community to keep doing OK in times of drought. Together with you, we want to come up with a plan that will help communities to help young people to be resilient.

**The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria** has said it is OK for us to do this study (number: ##). They know we will work carefully using South Africa's and international ethical rules (this is actually called the guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council). The committee will maybe want to look at the forms you sign (if you say yes to being in this study) to check that we did everything in the right way.

#### **Why are we asking you to be part of this project?**

Because you

1. Are 15-17 years old, *and*
2. Are OK talking English and can read and write in English, *and*.
3. Live in Secunda area, Mpumalanga.

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### What do you need to know?

- You can say no. If you say no, there will be no problem, you don't need to give a reason. Even if you say yes now, it is OK for you to change your mind later and stop taking part. The only time that you will not be able to change your mind, is if you choose to participate in Activity 6 and if this activity has been video-recorded.
- If you want to participate, then you must ask your parents/caregivers to agree that you can participate. If they say no, then we can unfortunately not let you participate. If they say yes, but you say no, then there will be no problem: nobody can force you to say yes. If they say yes and you say yes, then you and your parents/caregivers must complete and sign pages 6-7.
- If something (like drug use) makes it hard for you to understand clearly what this this project is about, we will not be able to let you take part.

### If you say yes, what will you be asked to do?

You will be asked to do all six activities listed below. We will ask your permission to audio-record activities 1-2 and 4-6.

Activity number	Date <sup>1</sup> & Time	Place <sup>2</sup>	Description of Activity
1.	25 March 2017, 09.00 – 16.00	Secunda	Make a drawing or a model out of clay (we will lend you everything you need to do this) that will help answer the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the most important health/wellbeing (feeling good about life) issue for young people?</li> <li>2. What does it mean to be resilient (do OK in life) when there is drought?</li> <li>3. What/who makes it possible for young people to be resilient when there is drought?</li> </ol>
2.	22 April 2017 09.00 – 16.00	Secunda	Learn how to be a researcher – we will teach you how to 'interview' (talk to) an older adult in your community about what he/she remembers about (i) how drought changed your community and (ii) how the community coped with/solved these changes. We will also teach you how to

<sup>1</sup> Tentative; to be confirmed by community partners at January meeting

<sup>2</sup> Will be added following meeting with community partners in January; likely to be the Khulisa offices

			first ask this older adult to agree in writing that it is OK for you to do the interview and we will show you how to make notes about what this older adult says (we will give you a list of questions and a little book in which to write down the answers).
<b>3.</b>	Any date between 23 April and 19 May that suits you and the adult you will interview	Secunda	You `interview` the older adult and write up the answers. Doing the interview will take about 1 hour of your time. The time you spend travelling to do the interview will depend on where you meet the older adult.
<b>4.</b>	20 May 2017 09.00 – 16.00	Secunda	Share what you learnt from the older adults with us – you can choose to read us what you wrote down or tell us the story about what you learnt. We will ask for your permission to keep the written notes you made.
<b>5.</b>	24 June 2017 09.00 – 16.00	Secunda	We will use what you taught us in Activity 1-3 to come up with a theory about what helps young people to keep doing OK in times of drought, but we need you to check this theory. You can change it or add to it. Then, together we will use this theory to think about a plan that will help communities to help young people to do OK (be resilient) in times of drought. With your help we also need to think about how best to tell your community about this plan (e.g., via an exhibition or a play or a song, etc.) We will bring people who are good at drama to help with this plan.
<b>6.</b>	29 July 09.00 – 16.00	Secunda	This last activity is about putting the plan into action. Depending on what form the plan will take, we might be able to video it and upload the video onto YouTube.

### What do you get out of this?

Because you will be working as a co-researcher in this project, we would like to offer you a R500 Checkers voucher<sup>3</sup> for each activity that you take part in. Except for Activity 3, we will give you the voucher at the end of the day's activity. We will give you the voucher for Activity 3 at the end of Activity 4.

### Can you get hurt by taking part?

We don't think that you can get hurt physically, but there are some other risks. We explain them below and what we will do to manage them.

<b><i>Probable/possible risks/discomforts</i></b>	<b><i>Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort</i></b>
You will spend your whole Saturday participating in Activities 1-2, 4-6.	Because this is a long time, we will have two tea breaks and a lunch break. During the breaks we will give you a juice and a fruit (e.g., an apple). For lunch, we will provide hot food (e.g., pap and wors).
Talking English could be tiring or difficult.	If you prefer, you can speak in your home language. We will ask members of the research team or others in your group to translate into English so that the researchers who speak English can also understand.
You will complete Activities 1-2, 4-6 in a group.	Because you will be part of a group, other young people will know that you participated and what you said. To try and minimize outsiders knowing what you said, we will agree on group rules (e.g., treating one another respectfully; not talking to others about what specific participants said/did).
If we video Activity 6 your community and many other people will know that you participated.	You do not have to take part in the video. Alternatively, if you do want to take part but you don't want other people to identify you, then we can find ways of hiding your face (e.g., by wearing a mask). You can also choose whether your name is added to the credits or list of people who are in the video.

There is one other thing that you must know: If you tell us, while we are doing the research with you that you are planning to hurt someone or that someone is abusing you, then we must tell people (including the police) who can help.

### What will happen to what you write or draw or make or say during the study?

We will ask a person/people to listen to the audio-recordings of activities 1-2 and 4-6 and type what you and the others said. This person/these people will sign a form in which they promise to keep the recording private (meaning they can't tell anyone anything about what they listen to and type up). Once

<sup>3</sup> Tentative; to be confirmed by community partners at January meeting

everything is typed up, the researchers from the University of Pretoria will delete (erase/wipe out) what was recorded.

We (the researchers from the Universities of Pretoria and Brighton and from Khulisa and BoingBoing) will study the typed-up version of what you and others said. We will also study your written notes about what you learnt from the older adult. If you make drawings/clay models during Activity 1, we will ask your permission to take photographs of your drawings/clay models and we will also study these photographs. We will probably quote what you said/wrote or show the photographs of what you made when we write about what we learnt from you or when we tell others about what we learnt from you (e.g., at a conference or when we teach students).

We will keep a copy of what you said/wrote and/or drew/made in a safe place at the University of Pretoria. We will keep the copies for 10 years. Your name will not be on any of these copies. We will allow university students who have to complete research projects about resilience or drought or communities or adolescents to use these copies for their research projects.

**Who will see the forms you sign and what happens to them?**

Only the researchers from the University of Pretoria and Khulisa Social Solutions will see the forms you sign. They will store these forms for 10 years.

**Will it cost you anything to take part in this study?**

No, it will not cost you anything. We will pay the cost of the local bus/local taxi that you use to participate in activities 1 to 6.

**Do you have questions you want to ask?**

- You can contact Mosna Khaile, the project manager, at 0767756180 or [mosnak@live.com](mailto:mosnak@live.com) if you have any further queries. You can also email Linda Theron at [Linda.theron@up.ac.za](mailto:Linda.theron@up.ac.za) or Angie Hart at [A.Hart@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:A.Hart@brighton.ac.uk)
- You can contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee, ## ( ) if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Looking forward to meeting you!

Mosna, Angie, Linda and the team



### Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ..... [full name] agree to take part in a research study named: *Patterns of resilience among young people in a community affected by drought: Historical and contextual perspectives*

I say that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent enough and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** (I can say no) and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that my parents/legal caregiver must also say yes (in writing) before I can participate
- I understand that what I contribute (what I say/write/draw/produce visually) could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity (without making my name public).
- I understand that if a video is made as part of this study, other people could recognise me and know that I participated. I give permission for this.
- I understand that I may choose to leave the study at any time and that will not be a problem. I also understand that if I will only get a Checkers voucher for the activities that I complete.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2015

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

- You may contact me again  Yes  No
- I would like a summary of the findings of this research  Yes  No

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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 Lefapha la Thuto

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email:

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Declaration by Parent/Legal Guardian

By signing below, I ..... [full name] agree to allow my child/the child I legally care for [child's full name: .....] to take part in a research study entitled: *Patterns of resilience among young people in a community affected by drought: Historical and contextual perspectives*

I declare that:

- My child asked me to read the information about this study. I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent enough and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is **voluntary** (I can say no and my child can too) and I have not been pressurised to allow him/her to take part.
- I understand that what he/she contributes will be shared with international researchers, but that his/her name and other identifying particulars will not be linked to my answers.
- I understand that if a video is made as part of this study, other people could recognise my child and know that he/she participated. I give permission for this.
- My child may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in his/her best interests.
- I understand that researchers will not be asking questions about abuse/harm, but that they have will have to report abuse/harm to child protection services if they should become aware that your child is being abused/harmed.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2015

.....  
Signature of parent/legal guardian

.....  
Signature of witness

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**Declaration by person obtaining consent**

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above.
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2015

.....  
**Signature of person obtaining consent**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**Declaration by researcher**

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2015

.....  
**Signature of researcher**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

## APPENDIX C: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FOR GREATER STUDY



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee

23 March 2017

Ms A Schoeman

Dear Ms Schoeman

**REFERENCE: UP 16/11/02 Theron 17-001**

This letter serves to confirm that your application was carefully considered by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. The final decision of the Ethics Committee is that your application has been approved and you may now start with your data collection. The decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. **Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void.** The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
  - Change of investigator,
  - Research methods
  - Participants
  - Sites.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Upon completion of your research you will need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee to apply for your Clearance Certificate:

- Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
- Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
- Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number **UP 16/11/02 Theron 17-001** in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes

**Prof Liesel Ebersöhn**  
Chair: Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Education

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Lefapha la Thuto

## APPENDIX D: EXTRACT OF CODING PROCESS

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Group 6

Real Name	'Name' used in transcript	Sex	Age range
Khanyisile	Participant 1	Female	Adolescent (17)
Junior	Participant 2	Male	Adolescent (15)
Vusi	Participant 3	Male	Adolescent (15)
Thembi	Participant 4	Female	Adolescent (15)
Thato	Participant 5	Female	Adolescent (17)
Bonele	Participant 6	Female	Adolescent (15)
Anel Schoeman	Facilitator 1	Female	Young Adult (25)
Claire Hopkins	Facilitator 2	Female	Young Adult (22)

562 **Group 6, Activity 3, Leandra, 4 April 2017**

563 P1 [0:01- 0:57]: Umm... Well... Umm... Girl... Seventeen... Christ...  
 564 Umm... Here it says be spiritual... Free to talk with Jesus Christ if, if you  
 565 talk with Jesus Christ... you answered... everything is fine, everything is  
 566 ok... Just have hope that everything is going to be fine... Believe in the  
 567 word of God... Umm... if you believe, you also have faith... Laughter,  
 568 just be who you are. Family, family is very important, we need them in  
 569 our lives... umm... think positive, when you think positive... you would  
 570 think of the right things... umm... Friends, be around good friends who  
 571 will motivate you with good things... and stay connected to the outside  
 572 world... just be free and travel the world... I don't know if something  
 573 with drought...

574 Facilitator (F1) [0:58- 1:00]: Ok, I'm going to ask you some questions,  
 575 questions about some of the things...

576 P1 [1:01]: Ok...

577 Facilitator (F1) [1:01- 1:12]: So, if we look at your family... How does your  
 578 family help you? And what? Are there specific things that they do? Like in  
 579 relationships? How does your family very specifically help you to be  
 580 okay?

581 P1 [1:14- 1:24]: They, they motivate me... They always there for me...  
 582 umm... when they by my side I'm being strong... ya... that's all...

583 Facilitator (F1) [1:25- 1:36]: Umm... Christ and God is this connected to your  
 584 own views; is this big in your community? Do a lot of people go to  
 585 church? Umm...

586 P1 [1:37- 1:39]: It's mainly my mom...

587 Facilitator (F1) [1:39- 1:40]: Is it part of your culture?

*God talk*  
*faith*  
*fam*

*fam*

*Cultura*

- 588 P1 [1:40- 1:42]: Yes, it is...
- 589 Facilitator (F1) [1:44- 1:51]: What else is there... What do you mean by
- 590 staying connected with the outside world? What's the outside world to
- 591 you?
- 592 P1 [1:52- 2:00]: Other countries, just going visit them and see... Just like what
- 593 you guys are doing...
- 594 Facilitator (F1) [2:00- 2:05]: Ok, so outside of this community where you can
- 595 experience a drought...
- 596 P1 [2:07- 2:12]: Yes, you should just go and experience other worlds and see
- 597 their culture... What in other worlds are going... Ya...
- 598 Facilitator (F2) [2:19- 2:32]: Umm... How do you keep your body healthy in
- 599 times of drought? What do you do? Try think like, when you don't have
- 600 water... what things do you do to try and keep healthy? Like fit? Like do
- 601 you exercise? Do you have a friend that exercises?
- 602 P1 [2:33- 2:34]: Yes, ya I do activities...
- 603 Facilitator (F2) [2:35- 2:36]: Okay you do activities okay...
- 604 Facilitator (F1) [2:37- 2:38]: What kind of activities do you do?
- 605 P1 [2:39- 2:43]: Exercises... different exercises... yes
- 606 Facilitator (F1) [2:45- 2:52]: Ok umm... hope; where does your hope come
- 607 from? What do you hope in? What do you hope for?
- 608 P1 [2:53- 2:56]: I'm hoping that God will do something... that's ya...
- 609 Facilitator (F1) [2:57- 2:58]: Something, do you...
- 610 P1 [2:58- 3:01]: For the, for everyone... yes...
- 611 Facilitator (F2) [3:03- 3:22]: And um... sorry back to the, your body... given
- 612 your body helps in terms of energy... in times of drought... How do you
- 613 manage with food and things like that? Is there ever a shortage of, of food
- 614 or is that all fine? Do you share with each other?
- 615 P1 [3:23]: Food...
- 616 Facilitator (F2) [3:24- 3:25]: Ya, to keep your body healthy?
- 617 P1 [3:26- 3:38]: Well, I just think, think you should just also eat healthy... fruit
- 618 and vegetables... there are some other things that you can also eat to keep
- 619 your body healthy...
- 620 Facilitator (F2) [3:39- 3:41]: Ok, that's perfect- thank you!
- 621 P2 [3:4- 4:38]: I'm a boy and I'm fifteen years old... I would like to start
- 622 here... with my belief... I'm a Christian so I pray, so I pray to God that he
- 623 helps me through drought and other things... and usually he does... cause

*Good hope comm.*

*Good pray*

364 you can know what drought is. And then socialise, socialising it helps because speaking to  
365 people, you don't have to speak to people you know but then everyone so that you can be  
366 able to come up with a solution of what to do when, how it attacks and then education.  
367 Education is also important because you can learn at school, we learn of how drought begins  
368 and how it comes, what it has. And then news, watch the news is very important because we  
369 get to know what is happening around us in the world. And then confidence, having  
370 confidence really helps 'cause you believe in yourself and then when you do something  
371 you'll know it will give good affects. And then, thinking positively it helps because,  
372 thinking negatively it will, it will break you and then positivity will help you because you  
373 will have (clearing throat) you'll have plans of what to do, of how to overcome drought, ja,  
374 yes.

375 F: And you, you think the same things that help you will also help boys?

376 P4: Yes it helps everyone because what I've put here it doesn't discriminate actually, uh uh  
377 exercise for everyone, friends, everyone alerts for everyone, everyone actually because  
378 drought affects everyone.

379 F: Ok thank you, okay next, lovely.

380 P2: My name is Soni, my surname Manachela, I'm a boy, here I've did this. I'm drawn myself  
381 I've wrote, I'm drawn myself I did what I'm wrote I did (unclear). Do great things, do great  
382 things, everything you do you have to take care of it do everything. Everything that you do  
383 you have to be positive with it. And stay ca..., stay care and respect everybody and love  
384 yourself and love your community. And exercise every time, exercise every morning  
385 exercise, go and jog and run and all that stuff. And respect everyone, you need to respect  
386 everyone because you don't know maybe one day that person will help you, help you with  
387 something that is difficult and you can't stand for it uhm. Love everybody, love everybody  
388 that you are staying with, your family, your friends and everybody in your community. Be  
389 positive to everybody, every situation that you are facing you have to stand for it and love  
390 everybody that all.

391 F: What great things do you do to stay positive, when there's a drought?

392 P2: you have to eat healthy...exercise eventually and...do great things like respecting everybody  
393 who you know who is a he or she who is a great person who will help you even in difficult  
394 situations.

395 F: Do you help difficult uhm, people in difficult situations?

396 P2: Sometime uh like find somebody who is suffering of getting water, who's disabled don't  
397 have legs and go and fetch for him water with a bucket, when there's a drought and cook for  
398 him or her sometimes ja.

399 F: Okay that's very nice thank you, thank you ok next...

400 P3: My name is Tshiamo...My name is Tshiamo. I'm the boy staying positive will help you, help  
401 your brain and you body, don't allow drought to take advantage, because it's a drought. Be  
402 useful, be useful in your community you see when you have a plan or solution to help  
403 eh...overcome a drought tell everyone so that eh eh they can use it and work together. Work  
404 together to find solution or work together to get something useful to.. to overcome drought.

respect.

COM

Value  
Comm.

respect.

COM

Uhm...

COM

COM

1252 community. The better community that we are, the better we are, the more  
 1253 safer our country will be and the more advanced our country will be.  
 1254 F: Is there anything else?  
 1255 P3: Ah, no I think that is it  
 1256 F: Thank you so much Lefa, cool you can also just wrap up yours and ...if  
 1257 you don't want people to see who you are (laughter).  
 1258 Uhm, are you done, can I come to you? Okay so just don't forget to  
 1259 introduce yourself, so gender and age (referring to participant 1)  
 1260 P1: Okay I am Necobo I am 15 and this is me. Ja this is me, you can see that  
 1261 crop-top you know (laughter). Uhm...okay I start with my mind, my mind  
 1262 first. Okay here I wrote "always have faith that this situation will just pass  
 1263 by, something that is not here to stay or something". Then I wrote "take  
 1264 the situation as a one-day thing". Which helps me to, not to stress a lot  
 1265 about the situation uhm ja. Okay then here, writing and singing helps me  
 1266 to clear my mind and forget about the situation. But not to forget the  
 1267 situation is not there, it is there, it helps me not to take it hard on myself ja.  
 1268 And then, obvious education comes first and you can change people's  
 1269 life... many lives, like right uhm here I always encourage myself okay, I  
 1270 tell myself that I will study and change the situation by changing the  
 1271 people's lives first. Because, since I, like I have told you that uhm me and  
 1272 my crew, my team we started this campaign, door to door ja...ja so I will  
 1273 study and I wanna have my own, like my own team ja that helps the  
 1274 community. Like this place they are many stubborn people, they are so  
 1275 stubborn so I wanna have my crew and make sure that they listen to me  
 1276 and listen to my crew. Then I can change the situation.  
 1277 And then here uhm, I wrote "listen to music touches my heart" and that is  
 1278 gospel music uhm okay then there I wrote "not pushing hard on myself or  
 1279 stressing because it's not good on my health and heart". Uhm, as you know  
 1280 that when you're stressing a lot, you can cause yourself a lot of heart  
 1281 problems or heart failure...ja heart failure.  
 1282 And then I drew, this is water uhm this is sort of like a sandwich uhm  
 1283 healthy vegetables uhm this is the orange. They always teaches that after  
 1284 having a meal to have maybe one fruit ja, that's healthy for your body.  
 1285 Then here I wrote taking a walk can help or always helps me to stay  
 1286 healthy even though we are facing water shortage it is good for my body.  
 1287 It is good, okay cause when I'm walking around I clear my mind like ja, it  
 1288 is easy for myself to ...to recover or to like to let the situation go yeah.  
 1289 Okay this is my belief, this is my belief. I believe that when we are facing  
 1290 challenges there shall be people who are strong and willing to change the  
 1291 situation and I think that's me, ja. I think I'm strong enough to face the  
 1292 drought situation, cause uhm like it is the situation, it's not an everyday  
 1293 thing. It comes and pass, it's just season that may come and pass. That's  
 1294 why I believe that I should be strong and help other people to be strong.  
 1295 Then here, this is me and this is the people that I'm trying to teach about

Comm -  
 value  
 Comm.  
 UB

faith

others first

gospel music

others who help



- 548 P5: My dad .
- 549 F: How is he positive, what is positive that he does for your life?
- 550 P5: Well actually, my dad is my role model. Actually, he helps me with a lot of stuff, tells me  
551 what's wrong, what's right. So, which that is a good thing.
- 552 F: And what kind of things does he tell you is wrong and what's right?
- 553 P5: Well how to respect other people and that people may not judge a book by its cover, ja that  
554 something I've learnt from my dad.
- 555 F: That's lovely, anyone else who supports you guys or what supports you.
- 556 P1: I think It depends hey, it depends on what relationship you are in. There is a family  
557 relationship and there's a friend relationship. It depends whether the relationship is positive or  
558 negative, but I'll like to concentrate on the positive side. When it positive, it helps it helps a  
559 lot to me cause I will be able to stay positive. Like if I have a friendship that is positive my  
560 friend will advise me "me my friend don't lose hope" even when situation is like this, life I  
561 still carrying on, is not like this thing won't pass, this thing want pass it's just that we are  
562 facing it now so I think that's how it works, thanks.
- 563 F: And are there friends in your life that motivate you like this?
- 564 P1: Yes I have one.
- 565 F: Okay and what to you is the difference between a family and a friendship?
- 566 P1: The difference is that, this is a difference between how you talk to a friend and how you talk  
567 to a family. If you will talk to your friend you will just talk everything you will feel free - not  
568 that in your family. Remember you will not feel free but you will need to have that thinking,  
569 that respect, that little respect to show that I am talking to an elder person my parents yes.
- 570 F: And what do you think about respect?
- 571 P1: What I think of respect?
- 572 F: Is It good or bad do you need it or don't you need it?
- 573 P1: Ja that obvious we need respect. We can't survive without respect, we can't live without  
574 respect because if we do not respect each other there will be more wars. Like, here if I don't  
575 respect him he won't like that way I don't respect him and he will, he will, he will want to get  
576 back to me by the way I did to him. And then there will be fights, people will die and stuff  
577 some as we are creating our own drought.
- 578 F: How do you create your own drought?
- 579 P1: (laugh) As I was saying, people fighting is destroying our lives so even fighting can also  
580 contribute on destroying your life 'cause I may be fighting with this girl over here, one  
581 mistake, I kill him. Drought when drought take place, drought kill decision so.
- 582 F: Okay, okay thanks. Njabulo, would you like to say something and then can you tell me what's  
583 the title or the name of this sand tray, that you have built, what would you like to call it, what  
584 will you call your world, if you had to explain it to me.

lol.  
FAM

RES.

RES.

RES

# Looking for volunteers

Are you:

- 15-24 years old,
- Living in the Secunda area, Mpumalanga, *and*
- OK talking, writing and reading English?

Do you want to spend one **Saturday** per month (March to July 2017) **helping researchers** learn about **what helps young people in drought-affected communities to do OK in life?**

**If you answered yes to all of the above,  
please ask the person who gave you this advert  
for more information about the research project.**