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*An exploration of how first sandtrays facilitate
a resilience diagnosis*

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree:

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

IN

(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

in the

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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PRETORIA

AUGUST 2017



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks and gratitude to:

- ❖ God, who has provided me with this opportunity and enabled me to persevere.
- ❖ Prof. Linda Theron, for your expertise, motivation and guidance. It has been such a privilege working with you.
- ❖ Prof. Liesel Ebersöhn, for your knowledge, contribution and excellence.
- ❖ Tia Gruenfelder, for your continual support and time spent together encouraging one another.
- ❖ My mother, father and family for your continual support, love and encouragement when I needed it most.
- ❖ Lloyd Pollington, for your love and support during this journey.
- ❖ To my brother, for your humor, support, encouragement and companionship.



DECLARARTION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that the mini-dissertation entitled: An exploration of how first sandtrays facilitate a resilience diagnosis, which I hereby submit for the degree Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been previously been submitted at this or any other institution.

Megan Naude

Date



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EP 07/02/04 Fly 15-003**

DEGREE AND PROJECT

MEd

An exploration of how first sandtrays facilitate a resilience diagnosis

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ABSTRACT

An exploration of how first sandtrays facilitate a resilience diagnosis

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The purpose of this mini-dissertation was to explore and describe how first sandtrays are useful in facilitating the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural SiSwati-speaking South African adolescents. The study forms part of continuing investigation at the Centre for the Study of Resilience with regards to the nature of school-based Educational Psychology services in remote South Africa. My study draws on a subset of data that was generated when a group of Educational Psychology Masters students worked with a group of Grade 9 students at a rural school in Mpumalanga. I performed a qualitative secondary data analysis of the documentation obtained from the first sandtrays completed by 50 male and female Grade 9 learners as part of the psycho-educational assessments conducted in the 2015 Flourishing Learning Youth project. A qualitative exploratory design is used, and within this broad approach, I conduct a secondary data analysis to explore how first sandtrays are useful in facilitating a resilience diagnosis. The documentation relating to the first sandtrays includes visual data (photographs), client narratives and MEd (educational psychology) student reflections. A *priori* categories, which come directly from Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience and relevant literature are used to categorise the coded data. The results showed that first sandtrays are useful in facilitating the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural SiSwati-speaking adolescents. Indicators of both individual and interpersonal risks and resources emerged during data analysis. Evidence from analysis of first sandtray documentation showed risks including adolescent life-stage, family violence, lack of safety and structural disadvantage. The most common of these was lack of safety in the community. Protective resources alluded to included personal strengths, supportive family systems, supportive teachers, community attachments and sharing of resources,

supportive community structures, cultural values of Ubuntu and spiritual support. The findings indicate that first sandtrays can be used by the educational psychologist to diagnose resilience, and may be particularly useful in a multilingual and diverse context such as South Africa to understand which resources need to be sustained and which resources are absent and need to be amplified.

Key terms:

- Adolescent
- Educational psychologist
- First sandtray
- Protective resources
- Resilience
- Risk
- Rural



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Many adolescents across the globe live in circumstances that surround them with risk, in which it is important for them to be resilient (Masten, 2014). Similarly, many children living in South Africa grow up under circumstances in which numerous risks constantly threaten their well-being (Malindi, 2014). These children, along with their families and communities, are threatened by various challenges such as escalating rates of crime and violence, economic crises, the HIV pandemic, food shortages, increasing incidences of divorce, failing educational system, acts of terrorism and natural disasters (Theron & Theron, 2010). While these risks threaten all adolescents in South Africa, it is particularly those adolescents living in the rural areas that are most affected by this reality (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012).

The rural areas of South Africa are both vast and generally characterised by chronic risk (Loots, Ebersöhn, Ferreira, & Eloff, 2010); it is therefore important to for the benefit of society to understand what enables and constrains the resilience of young people living in such areas. Resilience can be defined as a process of positive adjustment that supports young people not to develop the negative outcomes that risk conditions usually predict (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). Theron and Theron (2010) maintain that if South African youth are to be encouraged to maintain resilience, professionals from a variety of youth-focused disciplines and communities should develop understanding into, and commitment towards, promoting resilience. More specifically, professionals need to develop understanding into the antecedents of resilience which have enabled South African youth, as resilience is becoming increasingly understood as a cultural and contextual construct (Masten, 2014). For this reason, it is important for educational psychologists to have a contextually relevant understanding of resilience, as well as how to recognise and leverage resilience-enabling resources and processes.

Ungar (2015) has developed a set of diagnostic criteria for assessing childhood resilience in a way that is sensitive to the systemic factors that affect a young person's well-

being. These diagnostic criteria for assessing resilience have not yet been empirically explored, or operationalised. More specifically, Ungar's (2015) diagnostic criteria for assessing resilience have not yet been explored by educational psychologists through the use of sandtrays. Sandtray work has been established internationally as a therapeutic tool which can be used as a means for clients to express their life experiences, feelings and narratives in a non-verbal manner (Richardson, 2012; Weinrib, 2004; Zinni, 1997). South Africa has multiple languages and is culturally diverse. The reality of multilingualism can challenge easy communication between educational psychologists and clients. Sandtrays enable clients to express themselves in a non-verbal way. Boik and Goodwin (2000) highlight that the use of figurines and symbols in sandtrays acts as a common means of communication for children and adolescents, who do not always have the ability to express their experiences. Despite this reality, the practice of South African educational psychologists continues to be constrained by a reliance on assessment tools and media that are not well-suited to the majority of South Africans (i.e., Black South Africans whose mother tongue is not English) (Ebersöhn, 2010; Maree, 2010; McMahon & Patton, 2002). This carries the risk of educational psychologists not being able to serve the majority of South Africans well enough and so it is important to consider alternative approaches to understanding their risks and resilience-enabling processes.

For this reason, this research study explores the usefulness of group-based sandtray work in facilitating the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural South African adolescents. To accomplish this, this study draws on an existing data set that was generated when a group of educational psychology Masters students worked with a group of Grade 9 learners from a rural school in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. As detailed in Chapter 3, the educational psychology Masters students worked with these learners as a part of their academic learning in the Flourishing Learning Youth (FLY) project. The FLY project was established in 2006 as a long term partnership between the then Unit for Educational Research and AIDS (now Centre for the Study of Resilience) and schools in rural Mpumalanga. The partnership includes teachers and learners in two high schools and four primary schools who work with scholars (local and international) who are aligned with the project, post-graduate researchers, and MED (educational psychology) students.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Resilience approaches have been limited by a lack of conceptual clarity about how risk and resilience are defined; consequently, there are ongoing questions about how to assess, measure and facilitate resilience—particularly with regards to specific groups of youth in majority-world contexts (Panter-Brick, 2015; Wessels, 2015). More specifically, the views of indigenous young people (including black, rural South African adolescents) are under-represented in explanations of resilience, which tends to be dominated by resilience studies from Europe and North America (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Ungar, 2013). For this reason, it is important to include indigenous youth-produced understandings of what puts them at risk, as well as which resources protect them against negative outcomes that conditions of risk typically predict (Liebenberg & Theron, 2015).

Ungar (2015) presents a multidimensional assessment of resilience which outlines diagnostic criteria for risk and resilience and hypothesised that its application to clinical practice could expose the possible utility of using a systemic approach for understanding risk and resilience among child populations. To the best of my knowledge, the diagnostic criteria developed by Ungar (2015) have not yet been operationalised among at-risk South African adolescents, and specifically not yet by educational psychologists. In addition, no previous studies have considered the potential of first sandtrays to provide information that fits with Ungar’s diagnostic criteria and subsequent insights into risk and resilience. There also seems to be a scarcity of knowledge on appropriate (e.g., culturally relevant) and/or accountable psychological measures and media for the diverse population of South Africa, with black South Africans being underserved by the measures/media that were developed for North American and other typically Western populations (Ebersöhn, 2008; Maree, 2010).

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to explore how first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for risk and resilience among rural SiSwati-speaking South African adolescents.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Primary Research Question

How do first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural SiSwati-speaking South African adolescents?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- What does a first sandtray reveal about adversity?
- What does a first sandtray reveal about individual and contextual resources?
- What does a first sandtray reveal about developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant resilience processes?
- What are the implications for the utility of sandtray use with South Africa's dominant population (i.e., Black South Africans)?

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF RESILIENCE THEORY (Ungar, 2011)

Resilience which is understood as *'the capacity of a system for successful adaption to disturbances that threaten the process of resilience, has two pre-conditions: adversity and proof of positive adjustment or positive development regardless of the adversity experienced'* (Masten, 2016: 1). In other words, resilience cannot be considered when risk is absent. It can also not be considered when risk leads to negative life outcomes (Rutter, 2013; Theron & Phasha, 2015; Wessels, 2014).

This study follows a social ecological approach to resilience. From a social ecological perspective (Ungar, 2012, 2011) this means that youth actively seek out, and appropriate/use the resources needed to assist their positive adjustment, and that their social ecologies provide relevant resilience-supporting resources. Resources are relevant when they are developmentally appropriate and when they fit with the sociocultural context of the young person (Theron & Theron, 2010). A social ecological approach fits with the ecological systems perspective which respected pioneering resilience researchers such as Masten (2001, 2014, 2016) or Rutter (2007, 2013) have used.

Ungar (2011, 2012) bases the Social Ecology of Resilience Theory (an ecological interpretation of the resilience construct) on four main principles, namely: decentrality,

complexity, atypicality and cultural relativity. According to Ungar (2011), as mentioned above, the four principles and the research on which they were based informs a definition of resilience which emphasises the environmental or social ecological antecedents of positive outcomes and growth. The four principles, which form the basis of the theory, are discussed below.

The principle of decentrality is guided by Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model that stresses the impact of cumulative systemic influences on the positive adjustment of adolescence (Ungar, 2011). In other words, young people are not primarily responsible for their resilience. Ungar (2013) notes that social ecologies are significantly responsible for the positive outcomes of young people whose life circumstances predict negative outcomes. Ebersöhn (2014) and Theron (2015) concur that although young people's personal resources and personal agency must not be disregarded, the emphasis in social ecological explanations of resilience is on relational (e.g., caregiver support) and contextual mechanisms (e.g., social justice processes or meaningful service provision). In other words, the social ecology of resilience theory does not discount the contribution of the individual, but rather adds the contribution of the social ecology (which was neglected in original studies of resilience) and emphasises it. For example, in conditions of higher risk, the influence of communities and families in explaining resilience processes are more important than the resources that the young person contributes (Masten, 2001). Many scholars (e.g., Ebersöhn, 2014; Hart et al., 2016; Theron, 2015; Ungar, 2011) maintain that if resilience is to positively contribute to the psychological sciences and interventions developed accordingly, emphasis should move away from changing individuals to making social and physical ecologies facilitative of resilience-promoting mechanisms.

The principle of atypicality speaks to what supports resilience and that it is often different from what a mainstream society would predict (Ungar, 2011). There should be no judgement about whether a resilience-supporting resource or action is acceptable or not. Instead, researchers and practitioners should focus on understanding how such resources/actions support functional outcomes. For example, in various studies focusing on resilience in a Westernised context, it was found that scholastic achievement characterised resilience in children (Werner, 2006). This is different from the evidence documented by Bottrell (2007), which showed that it was better for a group of marginalised

Australian girls to drop out of school than to remain and try to achieve. Bottrell's study suggests that when social ecologies do not do enough to support and protect young people, then young people need to resort to actions that would not typically be associated with resilience but that serve a protective purpose.

The principle of complexity specifically emphasizes the need to understand that resilience processes will vary across contexts, genders, races and ethnicities, and developmental stages (Ungar, 2011). Focus is therefore placed on the need to develop contextually and temporally (i.e., time) specific models to explain resilience related outcomes. Emphasis is thus placed in considering dynamic, temporal (changing with time), age-appropriate ways of being resilient in the process of being functional despite adverse circumstances (Ebersöhn, 2014; Masten & Wright, 2009).

Ungar (2011) also defines the term cultural relativity as one of the principles underlying an ecological understanding of resilience. Norms and values that a group share, shapes the behaviour of a group and people have to adjust to culturally accepted norms and values. For example, black Africans typically report interdependent values as important to their resilience processes (Eberöhn, 2010; Mpofu, Ruhode, Mhaka-Mutepfa, January, & Mapfumo; Theron & Phasha, 2015). In contrast, individualistic values are associated with the resilience of Finnish children (Kumpulainen et al., 2016).

1.5.1 Diagnostic Criteria for Resilience

Ungar's (2015) set of diagnostic criteria are based on the principles of the Social Ecological Theory of Resilience (SERT) and are divided into three domains: adversity, resilience and multidimensional considerations. These three domains are explained below. Taken together they take the emphasis off the individual child and aim to account for the complexity (temporal and cultural dynamics) of resilience (Ungar, 2011).

1.5.1.1 Domain 1: Adversity

Masten (2011) emphasises that resilience can only be identified when young people adapt positively, despite being challenged by adversity. Explained differently, adversity and resilience co-exist, the one leads to and gives the other right of existence (Garmezy, 1991; Rutter, 2000; Werner, 2000). Adversity is usually categorised as biological risk (e.g., genetic risk), psychosocial risk (e.g., family conflict and family poverty) and structural risk

(e.g., war) (Cicchetti, 2010; Rutter, Kreppner, & O' Conner, 2001). Adversity does not refer to 'everyday stressors' but rather exposure to significantly difficult life circumstances (Theron & Theron, 2013) which threaten the well-being of an individual. In South Africa, exposure to risk is often chronic and cumulative, and includes exposure to poverty and structural disparity (as in rural areas) (Ebersöhn, 2014).

Ungar (2015) maintains that to diagnose resilience there is a necessity to evaluate five dimensions of adversity: the severity, chronicity, ecological complexity (i.e., encompassing multiple systems), attributions of causality (i.e., the cause is attributed to the individual or to the system, or both) and the cultural and contextual relevance of the factors that influence children's experience of their exposure to risk (i.e., interpreted by either the individual or the collective as threatening). Risk may be present if at least one dimension acts as a significant barrier to well-being (i.e., if the risk is harsh, or on-going, or multi-faceted, and/or experienced as a threat). These dimensions seems particularly relevant to many experiences of chronic and/or violent risk and adversity experienced by South African youth, especially those living in rural poverty-stricken contexts (Balfour, 2012; Ebersöhn, & Fereirra, 2012; Loots et al., 2010; Moletsane, 2012).

1.5.1.2 Domain 2: Resilience

Ungar (2015) states that resilience requires indication of individual and contextual/environmental promotive and protective processes that contribute to wellbeing. Promotive resources are those that promote or enable positive outcomes and positive development at all times (e.g., also when risk is low or absent) and protective resources are those which support positive outcomes when risk is high (Masten, 2014). It is important to note that Ungar (2015) placed much emphasis on identifying contextual resources that contributed towards resilience rather than only focusing on individual protective resources. Other theorists support this notion and also emphasize the role contextual resources have in promoting resilience in youth (e.g., Ebersöhn, 2014; Masten, 2014; Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013).

Individual protective resources may include individual temperament and personality and/or cognitions (for example, individual problem solving skills and positive cognitive appraisal, an internal locus of control, and a sense of self-worth) (Ebersöhn, 2007,

2008, 2010; Ebersöhn & Maree, 2006; Mampane & Bouwer, 2006; Pillay & Nesengani, 2006). Contextual dimensions may include supportive family systems, supportive schools and teachers, community support and supportive community structures, religion and cultural values of Ubuntu (Bujo, 2009; Dass-Brailford, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2008; Phasha, 2010; Theron, 2007). An example of how both individual and contextual protective factors may be evident is shown in Mampane's (2014) study. The author documented that resilient learners from a township environment reported both internal and external resources in adapting to adverse circumstances. The youth had an internal locus of control and defined themselves as confident, committed, responsible and independent (internal factors); and were dependent on accessing social support and role models, both at home and school (external factors).

1.5.1.3 Domain 3: Multidimensional considerations

Multidimensional considerations include temporal and cultural dimensions. Ungar (2015) explains the first temporal dimension as a child's physical and cognitive development which makes particular coping strategies more or less likely. In this study, which draws on data generated by adolescents, this means that the developmental appropriateness of the resources for adolescents must be assessed. The second temporal dimension is socio-historical and speaks to research which indicated that the historical time period in which a child lives effects exposure to resources and the social constructions of their behaviours as either problems or solutions (Bottrell, 2009). In this study, the socio-historical context is post-Apartheid, with all its complexities of unrealised political promises and continued hardship for the majority of black South Africans (Madhavan & Crowell, 2014). The sociocultural context affects a child's expression of resilience as the context influences the child's access to numerous types of assets (Ungar, 2015). Children often only have access to resources which their cultural communities consider appropriate. For example, rural Sesotho-speaking adolescents have reported ancestral ceremonies as supportive of their resilience and linked their valuing of these traditional practices to what their elders have valued and passed on to them (Theron, 2015). Coping strategies adopted by individuals are thus considered useful when they are relevant to the individual's age and are historically responsive/contextually appropriate (Masten, 2014; Wright et al., 2013).

1.5.2 Operationalising the Diagnostic Criteria

Using the diagnostic criteria discussed above (including adversity, resilience and multidimensional considerations) Ungar proposes a 5-phase approach to diagnose resilience (Figure 1.1). In this study, the aim is to explore how first sandtrays are useful in diagnosing resilience (and to what extent first sandtrays are beneficial in using the approach illustrated in Figure 1.1).

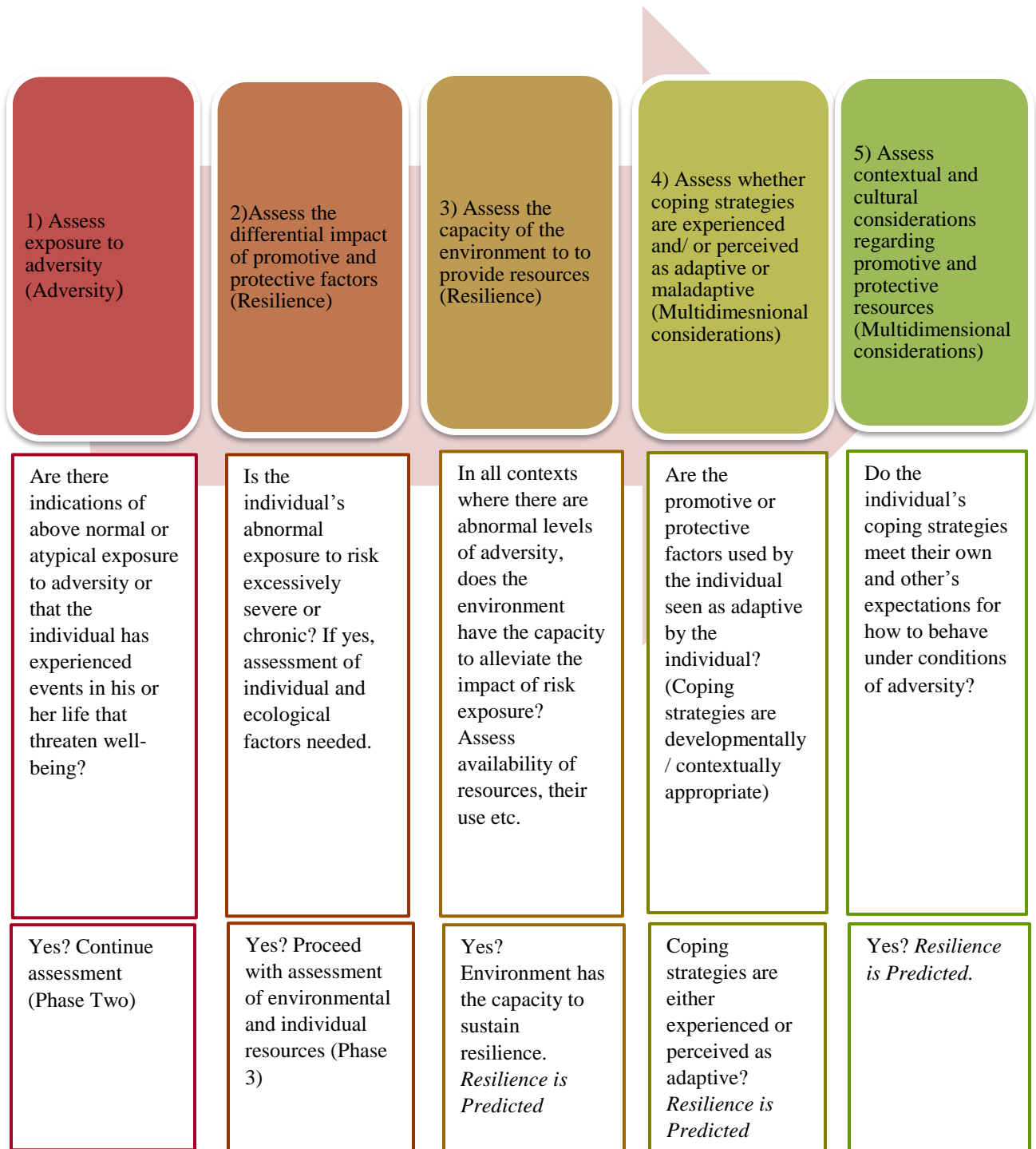


Figure 1.1: Decision tree for diagnosing resilience (based on Ungar, 2015)

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

For the purpose of this study, the concepts of sandtrays, first sandtrays, young people in a rural ecology, adversity, resilience and a resilience diagnosis are central, and are therefore explained below. Because adversity and resilience were defined and explained in Section 1.5.1.1 and Section 1.5.1.2, they are excluded from this section.

1.6.1 Sandtrays

The use of sandtrays serves as a tool for gaining non-verbal information about a client's life experiences, feelings and narratives, as well as delivering intervention services to clients (Richardson, 2012). It includes forming a miniature picture in sand, using an assortment of representative objects (miniature toys and figurines). The miniatures are chosen and placed by the clients in the sand/sandtray in his or her own expressive way—creating his or her own expression of a 'miniature world' in the safe and contained space of the sandtray box (Homeyer, 2015). In a sandtray an individual typically constructs a world that speaks to his or her personal and social reality (Dale & Lyddon, 2000).

The main differences between sandplay and sandtray is that sandplay is theoretically-based in Jungian psychology, and sandtray work is open to incorporating several different theoretical orientations (Flaherty, 2014). Both *sandplay* and *sandtray* emphasises the client's understanding of his or her world. Both use sand and miniatures to communicate a story of the world, facilitating a deeper fuller awareness not possible through just talking in therapy (Flaherty, 2014).

The *sandplay* technique originated with Margaret Lowenfeld in the 1920's when she wanted to discover a means for children to express their emotional and psychological 'inner worlds' in a developmentally suitable way. Lowenfeld was focused on learning from the child and realizing what the child was experiencing. Her approach was thought atheoretical, and is called the 'World Technique'. The technique was established mainly from children constructing their world and formed the basis of her her clinical experience.

Working with children using the *sandplay* was popularised and further developed through the work of Dora Kalff, a Swiss Jungian analyst. Kalff familiarised herself with Lowenfeld's work and adapted the method calling it '*sandplay therapy*' (Homeyer & Sweeney, 2011). Lowenfeld understood that developments to her theory may occur and

argued that clinicians from other theories, such as, Adlerian, Jungian, and Freudian would discover in any ‘World Technique’ constituents and concepts relevant to their theories (Homeyer, 2015).

Research conducted from a more traditional mode of thought (specifically using the Jungian approach) emphasises that placing objects in the tray in varying combinations and arrangements, along with the way a client or participant shapes the sand, forms a complex symbolic construction that is both visible to the client and the therapist (Turner & Unsteindotter, 2011). According to the Jungian approach, *sandplay* offers the client a means of expressing their inner worlds, conflicts, traumas, losses and so forth as well as the psychological content necessary for growth/development (Turner & Unsteindotter, 2011).

The post-modern *sandtray* technique is a client-centred approach of using sandtray in assessment and intervention (which is the approach used for understanding sandtray work in this study). The *sandtray* technique focuses on using sandtray as a tool for exploring an individual’s narratives and expression of life stories and experiences, and stands in contrast when compared to a more traditional ‘psychodynamic’ approach; as it is able to offer unique opportunities for growth and wellbeing. In gaining client-centred insights, sandtray techniques offer a novel and innovative approach that incorporate multiple elements such as: a future orientation, the articulation of identity, highlighting personal agency, highlighting strengths and successes, tapping into goals and dreams, a collaborative relationship, the notion that the client is the expert, and the client-therapist relationship as one of author-editor. Through changing the focus to these elements, the client is enabled to define the problem rather than letting the problem define him or her (Gallerani & Dybicz, 2011).

The basics needed to conduct the *sandtray* process includes a tray with sand, small toys, miniature items and perhaps some water. Homeyer (2015) communicates her fascination with the fact that such simple objects can be so influential in the hands of those who seek out to be understood and those who seek to understand. The role of the therapist using a post-modern *sandtray* approach is thus to act as a facilitator in the process of trying to understand what the individual is experiencing and not impose on him or her a specific way of understanding or theoretical construct. By exploring alternative approaches to using

sandtrays (guided by a post-modern approach) not only as a therapeutic method but also as an assessment tool in understanding the experiences of youth, the client is able to construct his or her own world, act as the expert of his or her life without particular objective constructs being imposed on him or her throughout the process.

1.6.1.1 The first sandtray

The first sandtray may provide significant and plentiful information about the client (Bainum, Schneider, & Stone, 2006). According to Vaz (2000) and Weinrib (2004) the first scene constructed in the sandtray is generally a realistic scene and is strongly linked to the conscious cognitive processes (Vaz, 2000; Weinrib, 2004). Although the first sandtray may be more conscious, the first sandtray usually offers evidence of the challenges the client faces in his or her life, as well as the resources accessible for the client's healing (Turner, 2005).

However, it is also important to consider the limitation of using only the first sandtray (Hutton, 2004). Researchers have warned against using only the first 'world' a child has made as an assessment tool (Hutton, 2004). In Lowenfeld's experience (Lowenfeld, 1993) it is common that children first need to explore the miniatures before they make the selections and need some time playing with and exploring the figurines before making decisions about how they want to represent a picture or 'miniature world' in the sandtray.

1.6.2 Young People in a Rural Ecology

In a context such as that of South Africa, the history of apartheid continues having a negative, ongoing effect on the socioeconomic status of particular population groups and disadvantaged children (van Niekerk & Mokoae, 2014). Problems related to this lasting effect, such as the collapse of community and family structures (due to apartheid policies such as the Group Areas Act and migrant labour system), the HIV/AIDS pandemic, little or no accessibility to vital services, poverty and social exclusion, high levels of unemployment and substance abuse, and high rates of violent crime all contribute to factors which place adolescents 'at risk' and may threaten their wellbeing (van Niekerk & Mokoae, 2014). Poverty influences a great number of South African children: it is estimated that

60% of the 18.5 million children in South Africa are poor. Furthermore, it is argued that high levels of poverty and inequality are significant contributors to violence and plays a significant role in placing children and adolescents ‘at risk’ to factors which may threaten their wellbeing (Matthews & Bevenuti, 2014).

In particular, all of the above risks are strongly associated with rural areas. Although rural areas are typically associated with adversity, there are different types of rural ecologies. For example, a rural ecology may include financially affluent farmers which do not experience adversity and poverty as many people in other types of rural ecologies (van Wyk, 2014). However for the purpose of this study, rural areas are delimited to adverse forms of rurality. A general definition of rural refers to geographical areas which have little access to water, public services, electricity and sanitation (Ebersöhn & Fereirra, 2012). People living in rural areas are often exposed to challenges such as poverty, high levels of unemployment and limited access to economic opportunities, poorly developed infrastructure, limited capacity to move produce to markets, limited access to social services (health, social-welfare), and HIV/AIDS related loss and grief, caretaking responsibilities and low literacy (Ebersöhn & Fereirra, 2012; Ruiters & Wildschutt, 2010). According to Theron (2015) poverty is often associated with personal and social risks that predict negative educational outcomes, poor psychosocial well-being, physiological ill-health, and low social cohesiveness in youth. Furthermore, poor people often reside in structurally disadvantaged and or/dangerous neighbourhoods with under-resourced schools, inaccessible or inadequate health care and recreation facilities, few local role models and a youth culture that promotes anti-social values (Akande, 2000; Felner & De Vries, 2013; Ngai, Cheung, To, Liu, & Song, 2013). Youth from poor families are also more likely to experience disrupted attachments, disadvantageous parenting practices, and social marginalization (Chirese, 2010).

Rural areas do also have a number of strengths. These include the opportunity to access nature—which act as buffers in protecting children against the negative influences of pollution, noise, noise pollution, while allowing space for privacy, exploration and accessing one’s emotions (Wells, & Evans, 2003). Balfour, Mitchell, and Moletsane (2008:100) suggest the need for a ‘generative theory’ of rurality which includes reflections on how rural spaces prompt agency and/or practices that sustain hope and wellbeing.

Balfour (2012) states that the theory of rurality has to take into account that people, depending on available resources, have the power to not only sustain themselves but to transform or resist their ecologies. In contrast, the literature on rurality is often concerned with identifying issues and areas of development that are lacking (Moletsane, 2012). Examples of these include: poverty, neglect, marginalisation, tribalism, racism, corruption and depopulation. However, Moletsane (2012) states the dynamic interactions found in rural communities, the value and strength of the way people engage and shape their lives in rural communities, agency of rural communities, as well as assets found in rural communities can be used to implement effective interventions to documented challenges and should be considered as strengths.

1.6.3 A Resilience Diagnosis

A resilience diagnosis requires assessment of whether there are severe and/or chronic risks, and if these risks are present, whether ecological and individual resources are available and being used in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways to mitigate the risk (Ungar, 2015). If resources are available and being used appropriately, then the chances for positive outcomes in the face of risk are good (i.e., resilience is ‘diagnosed’ or predicted). The diagnosis is made by following the five-steps in Ungar’s decision tree for diagnosing resilience (Figure 1.1).

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS

In this study, I assumed that the rural adolescent clients (represented in the documentation of the first sandtrays) will be able to use a sandtray to express risk and protective resources that will match those which I identified from the South African literature on resilience. For this study the literature review would be conducted to find examples of the risk and protective resources influencing and being influenced by adolescents at various systemic levels (individual, family, school-related, community-related and macro-systemic risks and protective resources) (e.g., Ebersöhn, 2014; Theron, 2015; Theron & Phasha, 2015; Ungar, 2011; van Breda, 2017). The focus is on South African literature and particularly focuses on risk and protective resources relevant to rural South African adolescents. This review is found in Chapter 2.

At the same time as assuming the above, I do understand what one community/context might consider a protective factor/process may not be relevant to another (Van Rensburg, Theron & Rothmann 2015). Scholars of resilience increasingly report that apparently universal mechanisms of resilience are culturally and contextually relative (Masten, 2014; Panter-Brick, 2015; Ungar, 2011, 2013, 2015b, Ungar et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2013). Consequently, as the study unfolded an open mind would be kept for espousing risks and resources that would not concur with the current literature.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

The methodology is detailed in Chapter 3. What follows below is a summary of the methodology applied for this study.

1.8.1 Epistemological Paradigm: Phenomenology

The epistemological paradigm used for this study is phenomenology. Phenomenology as a research design is used when the main focus of a research study is to explore a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon or research question (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Heidegger, 2011; Merleau-Ponty, 2013; van Manen, 2014). The reasons for choosing phenomenology as the epistemological paradigm, as well as the advantages and disadvantages for this approach is discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.1).

1.8.2 Research Design: Exploratory Qualitative Research

The basic qualitative research approach was applied (Merriam, 1998). Within this broad approach, I conducted a document analysis (Bryman, 2012). Because the documents were previously analysed, this was a secondary document analysis (Ebersöhn, Nel, & Loots, 2017). The reason for choosing this research design, as well as the advantages and disadvantages are discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.1).

1.8.3 Sampling of Documents

I applied purposive sampling procedures in selecting the documentation (i.e., case files from the FLY project) which would be used for secondary document analysis. Purposive sampling is used when samples are chosen based on a particular characteristic (van der

Stoep & Johnston, 2009). The reasons for using purposive sampling are explained in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.2).

1.8.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Secondary data analysis is used to analyse the documentation. Secondary data analysis is the analysis of data that was collected by someone else for another primary purpose (Johnston, 2014). The reasons for using secondary data analysis as well as the advantages and disadvantages are explained in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.3.1).

1.8.4.1 Coding and emerging themes

Deductive *a priori* coding is used to analyse the data. Deductive *a priori* coding involves the use of predetermined codes that the researcher applies to data in order to answer the research question. (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The reasons for choosing this approach, as well as the advantages and disadvantages are explained in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.3.1 and 3.5.3.2) and will therefore not be provided in this chapter.

1.9 QUALITY CRITERIA

Lincoln and Guba (1994) noted that to establish trustworthiness in research, a variety of quality criteria are to be adhered to. These criteria include: credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability and authenticity. In Chapter 3 (Section 3.6), these criteria are discussed in detail and are thus not provided in this chapter.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As explained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.7), the original study from which the data was taken was ethically cleared by the University of Pretoria (Clearance Number: EP 07/02/04 FLY 15-003). My main concern with regard to ethical considerations was conducting an ethical secondary data analysis.

1.11 CONCLUSION

Much research has been done regarding diagnosing of disorders, risks and vulnerabilities that lead to negative outcomes. There has also been an increase in the quantity of resilience studies being carried out, specifically with regards to ways of conceptualising and understanding resilience processes (Bowes & Jaffee, 2013; Ebersöhn, 2013; Masten, 2014; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Rutter, 2013; Ungar, 2012). However, to the best of my understanding, none of these studies focused on applying Ungar’s ‘diagnostic criteria of resilience’ in ways that are relevant and contextually appropriate to a South African population. In a country where many children are faced by adverse circumstances, as much focus should be placed on what ‘works’ for individuals and a system in a given context with a view to prevention, as there is on finding solutions for existing problems. My aim in this study is to contribute towards South African resilience literature by exploring how first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural South African adolescents.

Chapter 2 presents a discussion of the relevant South African literature relating to risk and protective resources in the individual and their social ecology which have been found to be significant among South African youth—particularly for those living in a rural context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on how first sandtrays can be used in educational psychology to identify resilience in youth at a rural school. In this literature study, the focus is on reporting South African literature only. Following Masten (2011, 2014) and Ungar (2011, 2015), my reason for this is it is my understanding that resilience is a context-specific process. In the first part of the literature review, resilience as a process is discussed. The Bronfenbrenner-like framework is then explained, as it is used as a structure to discuss the relevant literature. Thereafter, the various systems (including the individual, family, community and macro-system) and the risks and protective resources related to these systems are discussed. Finally, the literature study is concluded by a description of the relevance of this study in terms of the existing gap in literature.

2.2 RESILIENCE DEFINED

Controversy on the definition of resilience abounds, with some researchers arguing for an outcomes-focused definition (Masten, 2001), some for a process-focused definition (Bowes & Jaffee, 2013; Ebersöhn, 2013; Masten, 2014; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Rutter, 2013; Ungar, 2012) and some for both an outcomes- and process-focused definition (Van Breda, 2015). For the purpose of this study, a process-focused definition has been chosen. As an educational psychologist in-training, my understanding is that positive outcomes relate to processes that are variable. Therefore, it seems most relevant to this study to apply a process-focused definition of resilience. A process-oriented definition of resilience highlights two criteria essential to the description of a young person as resilient. Firstly, a context of adversity (including biological risk, psychosocial threats and experiences of trauma) must be present, and secondly, a young person must adjust well to this context of adversity (Goldstein & Brooks, 2006). Because adjustment is a process, how well the young person adjusts will vary relative to specific contexts and risks (Masten,

2014). From a social ecological perspective, the dynamism of the resilience process is influenced by the risks and resources present in social and ecological systems that make up the social ecology of an adolescent (Ungar, 2011).

2.3 STRUCTURE OF LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purposes of this study, a Bronfenbrenner-like framework is used to explain the various risk and protective factors in the systems influencing and being influenced by the individual, most prominent throughout South African literature and in literature focusing on rural context. In his theory of Ecological Models of Human Development, Bronfenbrenner (1994) explains development as a process that occurs within an ecological environment consisting of various systems (conceived as a nested structure, each inside the other, moving from the innermost level or system to the outside). For the purposes of this study, I adapted Bronfenbrenner's thinking to fit with a process-focused definition of resilience (Figure 2.1). Various risks and protective resources in the individual, his or her family and school, community and the macro-system (overarching belief systems, bodies of knowledge, customs, material resources, opportunity structures, and life course options) are discussed. Figure 2.1 depicts the individual adolescent (I) and the various systems surrounding the individual (i.e. the family, school, community and macro-system) as well as the various risks (R) and protective resources (P) across the various levels of the system. The arrows in the figure illustrates that the various systems do interact with one another and do not exist in isolation. The systemic levels interact continuously with one another and contribute to the individual's change, growth and development (Ebersöhn & Bouwer, 2015).

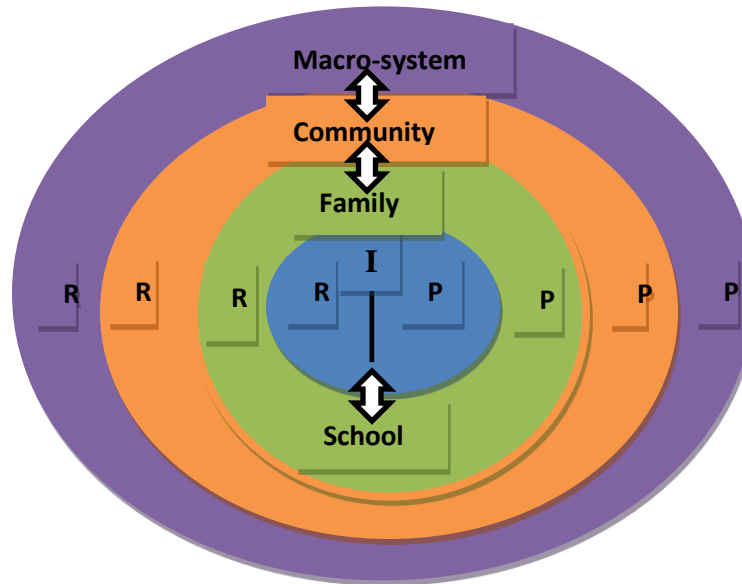


Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner-like systemic conceptualisation of intrapersonal and interpersonal risks and protective resources

2.4 THE ADOLESCENT

Adolescents constitute a large portion of society, with specific characteristics and needs (Stefan & van der Merwe, 2008). In South Africa, the number of adolescents is estimated at 9 950 100 - almost 21 % of the population (Statistics South Africa, 2013). For the purpose of this study, it is important to consider the protective and risk factors specific to South African adolescents themselves and, more specifically, those living in rural contexts.

2.4.1 Individual Risks

Adolescence is a time in which children develop identity, move towards social and financial independence and develop skills that are necessary to fulfil adult roles and relationships, it is a time for remarkable growth and potential but also for significant risk in which social influences may have great effects on the individual (Murali & Oyabode, 2004). These risks which are often related with the stage of adolescent development may include susceptibility to negative peer influence, risky sexual behaviour (which often leads to unexpected pregnancy and STD's), as well as experimentation with drugs and alcohol

(Ebersöhn, 2012; Murali & Oyabode, 2004). Adolescents living in rural contexts in South Africa are no exception to such risks (Ebersöhn, 2012; Mothiba & Maputle, 2012). For example, in the South African National Youth Risk Survey (2002), it is documented that adolescents—including those living in rural context—often experiment with alcohol and drugs (especially dagga), are at risk for depression or attempts of suicide, and practice unsafe sex at immature age (below the age of 14).

2.4.2 Individual Protective Resources

Individual resources refer to resilience-promoting qualities, traits and attitudes which exist within a person (Theron, 2013; Ungar, 2005, in, Malindi, 2014). South African literature studies report that resilience is motivated (at least partly) by individual factors. Particular personality traits such as goal or achievement orientation, empathy, optimism, autonomy, conscientiousness, extroversion, the ability to self-regulate, enthusiasm and assertiveness were related to the resilience of South African adolescents (Dass-Brailford, 2005; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Theron, 2004; Theron & Theron, 2010; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). Other individual resources such as problem-solving skills, positive cognitive appraisal and a sense of self-worth were also reported to anchor resilience (Collings, 2003; Ebersöhn, 2007, 2008; Ebersöhn & Maree, 2006; Govender & Kilian, 2001; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Mampane & Bouwer, 2006; Pillay & Nesengani, 2006; Theron, 2004).

General South African resilience literature has documented that being committed to educational achievement (considered a personal attitude) as well as progress at school or scholastic achievement as another significant factor in contributing towards resilience in children and adolescents (Dass-Brailford, 2005; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Phasha, 2010; Theron, 2007, 2015; Theron, Theron, & Malindi, 2013). De Lannoy (2011) states that the majority of poor African youth in her study had very high aspirations of themselves in terms of academic achievement. Several youth explained their desire for ‘a better life’ with stable jobs and higher income, and identified education and higher education as the main way for realising their goals (De Lannoy, Liebbrandt, & Frame, 2015). The studies that have documented resilience in rural South African contexts also report that children and adolescents adopt a goal or achievement orientation which acts as a protective resource—particularly when aiming to reach career goals or aspirations by engaging and

achieving at school (De Lannoy et al., 2015). Various other studies documenting resilience among children and adolescents living in rural contexts documented that children and youth often adopt a ‘future orientation’ and positive focus on the future, rather than painful past experiences (Ogina, 2012; Letahle & Pillay, 2013; Malindi & Machenjenze, 2012; Theron et al., 2013). Children and adolescents often related future orientation to future career opportunities and future career goals and the role school and education plays in helping achieve these goals.

Literature based on studies with rural communities in South Africa also shows that personal strengths are significant among resilient youth. For example, in a study centering on ways in which at-risk communities manage the effect of HIV/AIDS, children’s resilient coping included a sense of self-worth (related to added responsibility and education), hope and optimism as well as capacity for self-regulation (Ebersöhn & Maree, 2006). In another study, Theron and colleagues (2013) document that intrapersonal strengths including a resilient personality, and equanimity were evident among rural, resilient Basotho youth in South Africa. A resilient personality, in this study, was defined as intrapersonal traits and skills that promote positive adjustment and included traits such as flexibility, showing agency towards being solution-focused, reciprocity, determination, assertiveness, good communication skills (which included young people being both approachable and open) and a sense of self-worth (Theron et al., 2013). These personal strengths motivated young people to steer towards and mobilise resources which assisted them to positively adapt to adversity. The Cambridge English Dictionary (2008) defines the term ‘equanimity’ as, the ability to compose oneself and maintain a calm mental state, particularly in circumstances where it may be difficult to do so. For example, youth living in a rural context in a South African context make meaning of adversity in ways that reflected equanimity (e.g., by accepting suffering as a commonplace rather than adopt victim-identities or resist hardship in non-constructive ways) (Theron, 2015).

Individual beliefs have also been reported as encouraging resilience in a study including South African participants (Ungar et al., 2007). In Ungar and colleagues’ study it was found that being able to adhere to one’s local and or global cultural practices, values and beliefs (also known as ‘cultural belonging’) has been documented as a contributing towards resilience in individuals who understand themselves as resilient and are seen by

their communities as resilient. Literature focusing on resilience among people in rural contexts also echoes the above finding in that adhering to values of Ubuntu and togetherness, cultural belonging and interrelatedness enables adolescents to be resilient (Ebersöhn, 2014; Theron et al. 2013).

In drawing the section on individual protective resources to conclusion, it's important to remember the collective effect of individual risks and protective resources, does not account for the effects of systemic factors such as the quality of a child's family, school or community. Some of the challenges which function at other levels (family, school, community and macro-systemic influences) such as poverty, unemployment, poorly developed infrastructure, HIV/AIDS related challenges and lack of safety significantly influence the lives of individuals (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Henderson, 2006; Loots, 2010; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). It is therefore important to explore and discuss these relevant risks and protective resources in the section which follows.

2.5 THE FAMILY SYSTEM

South African literature shows that family systems in South Africa often endure difficult challenges such as poverty, HIV/AIDS related challenges, violence within the family and divorce/family-based conflict (Ebersöhn, & Ferreira, 2012; Henderson, 2006; Loots., 2010; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). However, families also often act as protective resources to adolescents and individuals within the family system (Dass-Brailford, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2007; Theron, 2007). These risk and protective factors (which are particularly relevant to family systems) are discussed in Section 2.5.1 and 2.5.2.

2.5.1 Family-related Risks

Research shows that the majority of children in South Africa face major threats to their survival, health and development as more than 50% of these children live in poverty stricken families and communities (Ebersöhn, Loots, & Ferreira, 2015). According to Statistics South Africa (2011), 59% of youth (between the ages 15-24) live below the upper bound poverty line (living on approximately R620 per month or less). Research shows that children born into poorer families often have more limited opportunities throughout life compared to a child born in a more affluent household (De Lannoy et al., 2015).

Youth living in rural contexts in South Africa often experience poverty through financial deprivation, although poverty may also be experienced through limited access to public goods such as clean water, health care, sanitation, sufficient housing and good quality education (De Lannoy et al., 2015). Rurality is often associated with structural disadvantages and families often experience difficulties with regard to sufficient access to basic resources such as water and electricity, shelter and transport service (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012).

Rural contexts in South Africa have also been found to endure challenges related to high incidence of HIV/AIDS, and orphanhood (Theron, 2015; Theron et al., 2013). Due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic many families have lost one or both parents, and so adolescents live in households with apparently little security and increased levels of dependence on only one adult or young adults (Richter & Desmond, 2008). Hlatshwayo (2003) confirms that the increasing mortality rate caused by AIDS has resulted in a growing number of orphans and the emergence of child headed family units. The United Nations Children's Fund (2013) statistical study shows that around 2.5 million children in South Africa have lost one or both parents due to the AIDS-pandemic. The effects of the AIDS pandemic on adolescent-headed families include increased poverty, poor emotional health, lower educational performance and premature termination of education (UN AIDS, 2004).

In general, South African youth report high levels of exposure to multiple forms of violence, and elevated levels of psychological distress and aggression within the family, which acts as a risk to the wellbeing of adolescents (Barabarin & Richter, 2001; Shields, Pratt, & Hunter, 2006). The studies that have documented resilience in rural South African contexts echo the above (Shields et al., 2006; Theron & Theron, 2013). Curran and Bonthuys (2004) highlighted that the perilous social and economic rural women are exposed to often contributes to their vulnerability to domestic violence and limit their capability to escape it. For example, women living in rural areas often lack access to the infrastructure and facilities provided in urban and semi-urban areas (including access to courts, and access to services provided by other NGOs that support victims of domestic violence) (Curran & Bonthuys, 2004).

Another issue which is pertinent in South Africa and is considered a risk to children and adolescents by many includes divorce and the disintegration of the family unit.

According to Statistics South Africa (2014), divorce rates have spiked significantly in the last 10 years. In 2014, 150 852 people wed in civil marriages and 24 689 people got divorced in the same year. The divorce rates in 2014 increased by 3.4% compared to the previous year. Of the 24 689 people who got divorced, 13 676.5 % had children younger than 18 years. This means that more than half of the population who got divorced in that year had children younger than 18 years. This is a cause of concern, as divorce may potentially negatively affect a minor's wellbeing both emotionally and otherwise.

In a South African study, Ebersöhn and Bouwer (2013) identified some of the risks relating to children whose parents divorce. They identified the following as risks relating to difficult family circumstances: inadequate management of the loss of the core family; ongoing changes as well as unsatisfactory way of dealing with changes within the family system; different parenting styles of biological parents and ongoing conflict between them; non-supportive spouses of biological parents; and stepsibling conflict ineffectively dealt with by parents. In rural areas, given the general economic stagnation and consequent difficulty of women to find paid employment, many women remain in abusive marriages for economic reasons. The fact that customary law makes no provision for spousal or child maintenance after divorce (due to the fact that the children generally remain with the fathers' family after a divorce) means that abusive husbands will also not be obliged to provide economic support to their ex-wives (Bennett, 2004; Curran & Bonthuys, 2004).

2.5.2 Family-related Resources

South African resilience studies in general have shown that supportive family systems have increasingly been identified as an important source of resilience, especially for youth and children (Barbarin, Richter, & De Wet, 2001; Dass-Brailford, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2007; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). South African studies have shown the importance of significant 'kin' relationships with extended family (Mkhize, 2006; Theron & Theron, 2013). These kin form a 'family community' (i.e., all those with blood ties, also deceased relatives, are considered family - youth therefore have multiple father, mother, and sibling Photographs creating a protective 'family community'). In addition, supportive family relations have been documented as resilience-supporting and include families engaging in activities together, experiences of belonging, being loved and being valuable within the family system, opportunities to pursue education and well as development of

clear and consistent family rules (Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). Protective mothers in particular have been identified throughout South African literature to encourage resilience (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006; Theron, 2015). For example, black township youth often reported that their mothers were pillars of strength that empowered them by providing a sense of security and by encouraging them actively towards self-actualisation (Theron, 2007).

The studies which have documented resilience in rural South African contexts echo these findings. In a recent study, in which resilience processes were studied across various South African contexts including rural ones, it was found that family relationships were a significant resilience factor among children from very poor communities (Van Breda, 2015). Families and—more specifically—extended families often function as a locus of resilience-promoting psychological processes (Theron & Theron, 2013). A cultural reality of strong women and nurturing women kin has also found to be evident as a protective resource among resilient black youth living in rural contexts (Theron, 2015).

2.6 THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Schools are often emphasised throughout South African literature as a protective resource to children and adolescents (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Govender & Kilian, 2001; Smukler, 1990; Theron & Theron, 2010; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005; Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007). Although schools function as a protective resource for many, schools, learners, teachers, and parents are often plagued with educational and social problems (Du Plessis, 2014). In Section 2.6.1 and 2.6.2 the various school-related risks and resources are discussed.

2.6.1 School-related Risks

South African literature studies in general show that low quality of education seems to be particularly challenging for children living in poverty-stricken communities and contexts (Spaull, 2015; Swartz & Soudien, 2015; Van Der Berg et al., 2015). The National School Effectiveness Study showed that by Grade 3 children in the poorest 60 % of schools are already 3 years-worth of learning behind their wealthier peers and that this gap increases as they progress through to school; and that by Grade 9 they are 5 years-worth of learning

behind their wealthier peers (Spaull, 2015). This may have negative implications for learners' learning, and development and negatively impacts on learners' educational development and progress and to fully actualise their learning potential.

These findings are echoed in studies focused on South African rural contexts. Rural schools are often situated in poverty-stricken communities, in which the quality of education is low and other challenges such as poorly developed infrastructure at schools and lack of access to basic resources are pertinent (Ebersöhn, 2010; Loots, 2010). South African rural schools are often weighed down with educational problems such as (a) isolation from specialised services (such as specialised educational support and psychological services); (b) limited accessibility to quality staff, development and university services; (c) teacher shortages and (d) decreasing enrolment—which leads to decreased funding (Du Plessis, 2014; Wallin & Reimer, 2008).

Another pertinent risk faced by many school children is that of school violence. According to Burton (2008), 15.3 % of all learners between Grade 3 and 12 have experienced some form of violence while attending school. Violence in an educational setting may take the form of physical or sexual abuse but may also manifest in a variety of other forms such as intimidation, threats, insults, harassment or bullying. According to Mampane, Ebersöhn, Cherrington and Moen (2014) rural schools are in fact more vulnerable to acts of violence. Reasons for this may be attributed to risks in terms of parent education, parental involvement, knowledge about school safety and infrastructure.

To conclude the section on school-related risks, it is important to remember that although there are various school-related risks which may threaten adolescents' wellbeing, schools have also been reported as a protective resource to its learners (Theron & Theron, 2010). The various factors and role-players within and surrounding schools are essential in contributing towards the functioning of a school as a protective resource.

2.6.2 School-related Resources

Throughout South African resilience-related literature studies have documented how schools enable and facilitate resilience (Brooks, 2006; Ebersöhn, 2008; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). Literature on how schools enable and facilitate resilience documents that schools play a significant role in the development of children and adolescents by providing opportunities for growth and development, and by serving as

centres of care and support to all learners and communities (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; Esquivel, Doll, & Oades-Sese, 2011; Knight, 2007). In various South African studies resilience-enabling teachers have been reported as supportive, fair, motivating inspiring role models, encouraging and caring.

These findings are echoed in South African literature focusing particularly on rural contexts. It has been documented that in rural South African contexts schools and teachers can function as protective resources to promote resilience by providing school-based psychosocial support to vulnerable individuals (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; Loots, 2010). In various studies, teachers have been identified as being supportive, motivating, inspiring role-models, encouraging, helpful, and caring (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Ebersöhn, 2007; Ebersöhn & Maree, 2006; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Smukler, 1990). For example, in a study documenting the supportive role of schools and teachers in helping address HIV/AIDS challenges, teachers supported school learners, parents and the community by acting as protective resources in promoting resilience (Mohangi, 2008).

Another example of how rural schools in South Africa support individuals and one another in enabling resilience processes is documented in a study with various low-resourced schools (Ebersöhn, 2010). Ebersöhn's study showed that when under threat of chronic stress in a poverty setting, teachers 'flock' (rather than engage in a fight or flight response). This collective response of coming together as a group enables resilience in that individuals experiencing shared and consistent burdens connect to access, share, mobilise and sustain resources that support positive adaption.

2.7 THE COMMUNITY SYSTEM

South African literature shows that resilience as a process, relies not only on protective resources within the individual and those found in a family and school, but also in the resources found in communities (Theron & Theron, 2010). For the purpose of this study, 'community' is defined as a group of people who share a geographical space and are separated by a set of geographical boundaries (Agarwal, 2005). Section 2.7.1 and 2.7.2 presents discussion of community-related risk and resources and findings of South African studies as well as exploration of studies focusing on rural contexts in South Africa.

2.7.1 Community-related Risks

In South Africa, communities are challenged with cumulative challenges. These challenges often take the form of environmental risk factors including poverty, the need to take care of community members incapacitated as a result of HIV/AIDS, high levels of illiteracy or limited literacy and teenage pregnancies. These risks increase the stress experienced by individuals (Ebersöhn, 2010). Being in a remote or rural area exposes people to various challenges including economic deprivation, social deprivation relating to limited opportunities and poor access to public services, poor infrastructure and social challenges (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012).

The national assessment of environmental risk for rural settlements shows that challenges are worse in rural contexts when likened to urban areas (2012). The survey showed that communities living in rural areas face challenges such as lack of access to basic sanitation, piped water and electricity, health services, and refuse removal facilities. Lack of sufficient infrastructure and violence in and around communities further challenge people living in rural areas (Du Plessis, 2008; Morojele & Muthikrishna, 2012). For example, travelling to school can also be dangerous for youth in rural areas as dangers such as wild animals, fears of ‘muthi murders’ (occasions of murder and mutilations associated with traditional cultural practices in South Africa), thieves, dongas (a dry gully, formed by the eroding action of running water) and valleys are commonly faced by youth in rural contexts (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). Furthermore, due to limited access to social services and other support, rural people living in impoverished contexts are the least able to deal with the impact of crime (Pelser, Louw, & Ntuli, 2000; Theron & Theron, 2013).

2.7.2 Community-related Resources

Community support was often cited as resilience-promoting throughout South African resilience literature, however the specifics of what this support entailed is unclear (Theron & Theron, 2010). There was some indication that community support related to communities which involved adults who could be respected and who supported youth success (Dass Brailford, 2005). In addition, resilience enabling communities provided opportunities for therapy, and bereavement counselling (Jewitt, 2001); encouraged the active support from peers and encouraged the sharing of knowledge and expertise, food, clothing, financial resources and advice (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006; Theron, 2007; Van

Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). Community mobilisation and community synergy to decrease levels of crime and violence was also protective (Theron, 2007).

2.8 MACROSYSTEMIC INFLUENCES

Thomas (2005) states that the macro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) reflects the cultural milieu of the child's (adolescents') environment. It includes dominant social and economic structures as well as values, beliefs, and practices which effect all other social systems. For the purpose of this study, it is also important then to consider which of these macro-systemic factors function outside the individual (and his/her family and community system) as risk or protective resources, in enabling or not enabling the resilience process.

2.8.1 Macro-systemic Risks

South African literature shows that in a South African context, negative cultural practices may put young people at risk. For example, Panterbrick and Eggerman (2012) cautioned that in a culture where family systems made demands that children and adolescents could not meet, resilience was obstructed. South African families do sometimes do this (Theron, 2013).

National policy may also act as a macro-systemic risk to the wellbeing of adolescents. According to the National Youth Policy (2015-2020) there is much to be done to address the injustices of the past (particularly social inequality related to post-apartheid). The Constitution and the South African Schools Act state that all South African learners should have access to the same quality of learning and teaching, similar facilities and equal educational opportunities. However, this is not the yet the case. The present education policy seems to treat all schools as the same. The problem seems to be that the same outcomes are anticipated from schools which function under very different circumstances (Gardiner, 2005).

Particularly in rural areas, social injustice and unequal distribution of resources has been found to be challenging (Henderson, 2006). Many children living in rural areas are challenged by structural disadvantages such as lack of classrooms, poor access to services such as water and electricity, no landline telephones or internet services, very few public libraries and the like (Gardiner, 2005).

2.8.2 Macro-systemic Resources

South African resilience literature has shown that the cultural context of adolescents often molded the interactive psychology of their resilience (Theron & Theron, 2013). For example, Theron and Theron's (2013) study reflects the prominence of attachment systems, with emphasis on how Africentric paradigms molded attachment bonds and ensure resilience-supporting transactions. Mkize (2006) also identifies attachment bonds as those of a 'family community' which aids the extended human and ancestral bonds which supported resilience. In another study it was noted that a culture of sharing was integral to youth's doing well despite challenging life circumstances (Theron et al., 2009).

In South African resilience literature, it is stated that protective resources embedded in culture are often linked to religion and spirituality (Theron & Theron, 2010). Religious and spiritual practices (Christian and ancestral), religious leaders, and personal faith were described as crucial to the processes and outcomes of resilience (Barbarin et al., 2001; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Edwards, Sakasa & Van Wyk, 2005; Germann, 2005; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Smukler, 1990). In various South African studies, traditional values of 'Ubuntu' have also been documented to encourage resilience among adolescents (Theron, 2015, 2007). Ubuntu values emphasise respectful and generous interdependence, as well as reverence for God and ancestral beings (Bujo, 2009; Mandela, 1995). Phasha (2010) study which focused on resilience in youth who experienced sexual abuse also showed that religious interpretations of abuse and the African philosophy of Ubuntu could contribute towards resilience processes, in that it could promote participants' forgiveness toward the perpetrator and a sense of responsibility toward the other.

In addition, throughout South African literature there is evidence that some national policies (such as the Children's Act, the Social Grant Policy, and other health policies) do support adolescents and may act as a protective resource in enabling youth (Jamieson, du Toit, & Dobson, 2015). For example, the aim with the Social Grant Policy is to assist financially deprived parents with monetary grants for children and adolescents, to assist with basic care and needs. The *National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Framework Strategy 2014 – 2019*, allows for pregnant adolescents and mothers to continue their education (which may act as a protective resource in allowing them to have their rights to education protected). The *Draft National Policy on HIV*,

Sexually Transmitted Infections and Tuberculosis also aims to reduce teenage pregnancy; increase levels of educational attainment; and decrease HIV levels amongst young people through increased education and access to preventative sexual measures (such as condoms).

2.9 CONCLUSION

Research has shown that youth-directed understanding of resilience-supporting social ecological processes and how these processes vary is incomplete (Masten, 2014; McCubbin & Moniz, 2015; Panter-Brick, 2015; Ungar 2015, 2013, 2011; Wright et al., 2013). It is evident from South African rural studies that risks, resources and resilience processes are influenced by not only the individual but also the systems and the interactions between the systems within which the individual functions. It seems that throughout the literature reviewed in this chapter there was a lack of comment or explanation relating to how educational psychologists could use understanding of risk and resilience to ‘diagnose’ and enable resilience. It is from this point of departure that I attempt to explore how first sandtrays can be used to facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s framework for diagnosing resilience in youth living in a rural context in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I describe the aim and framework of the research methodology used in this study is described. Phenomenology was applied as a meta-theoretical paradigm to frame this study. Exploratory qualitative research is applied as the research design and secondary document analysis (i.e., narratives and photographs of first sandtrays in 50 client files) as a research method to answer the following research question: *How do first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural SiSwati-speaking South African adolescents?*

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As explained in Chapter 1, the purpose of this research study is to explore how first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for risk and resilience among rural South African adolescents. The aim of the study is both exploratory and descriptive. The exploratory nature refers to the exploration of a relatively new topic in research (Gray, 2009); the study is exploratory in that it explores how well first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for resilience (a topic which has yet to be explored in literature).

An advantage of exploratory research is that it provides insight and understanding of a relatively new topic (Stebbins, 2001). One of the limitations of exploratory studies is that research findings may be found to be ‘subjective’ or biased by the researcher’s perspectives and interpretations of the data. This limitation was addressed through using previous knowledge on risk and protective resources (based on relevant South African literature) to deductively code the data. Literature was thoroughly studied until saturation was reached (no new codes emerged from the literature that related to risks and protective factors relevant to adolescents living in a rural context in South Africa). The literature was used to develop a coding table, which was used to deductively code the data. The

supervisors of this study were involved in verifying whether all themes in the relevant literature were included in the coding table.

The study draws on a descriptive approach in that relevant risk and protective resources (which arose from the analysis of the sandtray narratives) are described. Descriptive research studies do not allow for testing or verifying a phenomenon (Gravette & Forzano, 2009). However, for the purpose of this study description of phenomenon is essential to answer the research question and therefore I combine a descriptive and exploratory approach is complimentary.

3.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

A research paradigm can be referred to as an extensive theoretical orientation to which a particular study belongs (Adams, Collair, Oswald, & Perold, 2004). Phenomenology served as meta-theory in this study and followed a qualitative approach. The main characteristics, advantages and limitations of phenomenology and qualitative research in relation to the current study are discussed below.

3.3.1 Metha-theoretical Paradigm: Phenomenology

Phenomenology as a research paradigm positions researchers to find a deeper meaning of a particular phenomenon (Heiddeger, 2011; Merleau-Ponty, 2013; van Manen, 2014). The goal of the phenomenological paradigm is to explore a deeper understanding of the phenomenon or research question, embedded in its unique context (Cohen et al., 2011). One of the advantages of phenomenological guided research is that it permits the researcher to provide rich descriptions of a context specific phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Phenomenology foregrounds an individuals' perception of the meaning of an event or issue as opposed to the event/issue as it exists externally to a person (Heiddeger, 2011). This paradigm fits this research study, as I am interested in exploring a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon (i.e., how useful sandtray work is, in enabling the educational psychologist to make a resilience diagnosis).

Some of the disadvantages of conducting a phenomenologically guided study include the following: data-gathering tends to be time consuming and uses a lot of resources and the analysis of data and the interpretation of data can be complex

(Armstrong, 2010). In this study, the data collection and data collation had already been done (as secondary data is being used—Section 3.5.3.1 refers—and therefore the data collection process did not require a lot of resources or time. Furthermore, the data analysis and interpretation process was simplified in that I was not required to come up with my own structure for analysis, since the deductive secondary document analysis made use of well-established categories and codes (derived from South African resilience literature, that fitted into Ungar’s categories for resilience—Section 3.5.3.2 refers).

3.3.2 Methodological Paradigm: Qualitative research

The study was guided by a basic qualitative approach. Nieuwenhuis (2016) holds that a qualitative approach seeks to provide understanding from the participants’ perspective. The goal is to seek insights into participants’ perspectives, experiences, attitudes and behaviour. Qualitative research study is generally naturalistic in that it allows the researcher to study a phenomenon in its natural setting (Punch, 2005). Although I was not involved in generating the data, the data which is documented in the client files was primarily collected from youth at a school in a rural context. The data was therefore obtained in a naturalistic manner, and holds true to the characteristics of qualitative research.

Qualitative research is often concerned with words rather than numbers (Denscombe, 1998). This research study focused primarily on analysing documented text which is characteristic of qualitative research. The documented text includes photographs of the rural adolescents’ first sandtrays, as well as narratives explaining ‘what is happening/an explanation’ of ‘the world’ created in the first sandtray. A qualitative study was advantageous to this study in that it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding into phenomena by focusing on the meaning and interpretations people attribute to a particular phenomenon (in this case how protective and risk factors can be identified in a first sandtray and how first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural South African adolescents). Qualitative research focuses on understanding the whole, which is consistent with educational psychology’s holistic focus on understanding the individual functioning in his or her systems. Qualitative research tends to use words as the basis for analysing rather than numerical data. This is true for this study and in reporting the findings qualitative descriptors, rather than numbers, are used.

One of the limitations of qualitative studies exists in that a qualitative researcher may become too subjectively involved (Bryman, 2012). To address this challenge, I used data verification (the process in which the analysis of data is validated by a third party to increase credibility) (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). The data analysis was verified through peer review (whereby another qualitative researcher checked the coding and analyses of the data independently).

Another limitation of using a qualitative approach is that the generalizations of the study may be limited due to subjective input and because the findings were only true for a small sample (Cohen et al., 2011). Larsson (2009) affirms this statement in describing that this subjective view becomes even more complex because the researcher's perception of reality can influence the findings that are reported. In this study each participant's perception is considered. Risk and protective factors are identified from narratives of the first sandtrays and thus the participant's construction of reality is addressed. I limited the influence of my perceptions by using deductive *a priori* coding to analyse the data (a set of well-established categories and codes derived from relevant South African resilience literature, that fitted into Ungar's categories for resilience). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were also developed and formed part of the coding categories. These inclusion and exclusion criteria were verified by the supervisors of this study to increase credibility (Addendum A).

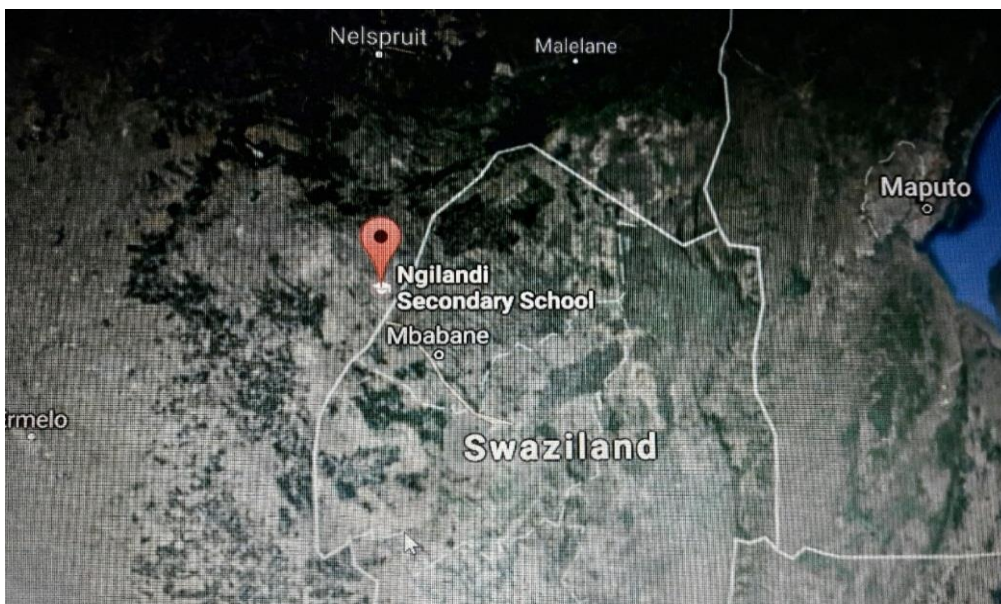
3.4 FLOURISHING LEARNING YOUTH PROJECT (FLY)

This study draws on a subset of data that was generated when a group of educational psychology Master's students worked with a group of Grade 9 learners at a rural school in Mpumalanga Province, in South Africa. The students worked with the learners as part of their community-service training, under the supervision of the FLY project. The FLY (Flourishing Learning Youth) project was established in 2006 as a long-term partnership between the then Unit for Educational Research and AIDS (now Centre for the study of Resilience) and schools in rural Mpumalanga. The full dataset thus consists of data that was collected over a period of 10 years; the data used in this study includes a subset of the data collected in one of those years (namely, 2015). The partnership includes two high schools and four primary schools that work with scholars from the University of Pretoria

(in South Africa) and international universities that are also aligned with the project. The purpose of the partnership is twofold. On the one hand, it provides a scope to generate knowledge on pathways to resilience in rural schools and in rural communities; and secondly, it provides an opportunity for academic service learning of MEd (educational psychology) students as well as the provision of educational psychology services to Grade 9 youth annually (Ebersöhn, 2013).

In 2015 the MEd (educational psychology) students of University of Pretoria offered psycho-educational support services to the Grade 9, SiSwati-speaking learners of one of the collaborating schools. This secondary school is located in a remote rural area in Mpumalanga Province, and is nearby the Swaziland border. The closest town is about 160 km away (Photographs 3.1 & 3.2).

The school seldom has electricity and running water. The school has access to limited resources and faces challenges including storage of desks and has a limited number of books in the library. Learners receive a meal during break time and for many learners, this may be the most substantial meal they receive throughout the day. Research conducted in Mpumalanga has indicated that low family income, nutritional challenges, and primary services such as transport, sanitation and electricity are common challenges faced by most families (Makiwane, Makoae, Botsis, & Vawda, 2012).



Photograph 3.1: Area map of the secondary school involved in the FLY partnership



Photograph 3.2: Photograph of school building situated in a rural landscape

One of the activities used as part of the assessment and support services offered to the Grade 9 learners of the school included the ‘construction of a sandtray’ (Photographs 3.3 & 3.4). Photographs 3.3 and 3.4 illustrates the process involved in constructing a first sandtray. Photograph 3.3 shows an empty sandtray before the client has completed his or her construction. Photograph 3.4 shows a completed sandtray with figurines and objects used by the client to construct a scene.



Photograph 3.3: Photograph of sandtray without figures/ objects



Photograph 3.4: Photograph of a completed sandtray (File Nr. 042015)

The focus of this study is on this sandtray work (Addendum B). Each of the Masters educational psychology MEd (educational psychology) students provided educational psychology services to a group of Grade 9 learners (age range: 14 to 19 years). With regard to their engagement in the educational psychology services, the learners will be referred to

as ‘clients’ (for both this section and the remainder of this mini-dissertation). The clients decided which group they wanted to be part of resulting in mixed gender groups. The groups differed in size from 5-10 clients per group. The educational psychology students were responsible for administering the sandtray technique with their specific group of clients as part of a comprehensive educational psychology battery (Addendum B). All of the clients were SiSwati speaking; however, as English is the language of learning and teaching at the school (Department of Education, 1996), the clients and English Second Language MEd (educational psychology) students communicated in English.

Although the clients worked in groups, during the sandtray activity each client was provided and worked with their own sandtray (which initially contained only sand) at a central point (the sandtray station). Each client was given the opportunity to individually construct their sandtray and share their story (narrative) about it with a MEd (educational psychology) student. A variety of figurines were provided in containers, organized by category (for example farm animals, trees, etc.), from which the client could choose items. Each client had a sandtray in which they could construct their creation. The client was also provided with a container of water (in the case that he or she decide to wet the sand or want to shape it differently).

The instruction issued by the MEd (educational psychology) students (i.e., group facilitators) to the learners to prompt them to construct their sandtray was the following: ‘Build your world in the sand’. Once the clients had finished creating their first sandtray, the facilitators would say ‘Can you tell me a bit about the world in your tray?’ Other prompts were used to prompt the client to construct a narrative, including: ‘What is the title of your world/scene?’; ‘Tell me about it?’; ‘Tell me more about what is happening?’; ‘Which miniature represents you?’; ‘Who has the most power?’; ‘If you could be anywhere in the tray, where would that be?’. The narratives given verbatim by the client were recorded and a photograph of each first sandtray was taken, and was documented by the facilitators in each client file.

3.5 METHODOLOGY

The documentation of the construction of first sandtrays by youth living in a rural context is the data which is used for the purpose of this study. The data is secondary, as the researcher was not involved in the collection or generation thereof.

3.5.1 Research Design: Exploratory Qualitative Research

The proposed study is guided by a basic qualitative research approach. This approach allows the researcher to understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives of the people involved (Meriam, 1998). Nieuwenhuis (2016) holds that an exploratory qualitative approach seeks to provide understanding from the client's perspective. The goal is to seek insights into clients' perspectives, experiences, attitudes and behaviour.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2016, the exploratory design is used when a researcher first needs to explore a topic using qualitative data. As the name suggests, the design permits a researcher to first explore a topic by identifying qualitative themes and generating theories thereof (Nieuwenhuis, 2016. This research design is applicable to this study as I aim of the researcher to explore a specific phenomenon using qualitative data. In using this design I was able to gain insight into client perspectives, experiences (in the case of this study: client perspectives relate to the risks and protective resources identified in the documentation of each client's first sandtray).

3.5.2 Sampling of Documents

Non-probability or purposive sampling procedures were used to select the client files (existing data). The term 'non-probability sampling' is characterised as a way of sampling that does not make use of randomised techniques to select a sample (Bryman, 2012). Purposive sampling suggests that the client files were selected because they had some distinguishable characteristic which made them relevant to the study (in this case client files were selected on the basis of including relevant sandtray documentation) (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). For this study, I selected all 65 client files which were generated in the 2015 FLY Project. Out of 65 client files, 50 files were purposively used for analysis; 15 of the client files could not be used due to missing sandtray documentation (i.e., missing sandtray narratives and/or missing or unusable photographs of the first trays). The inclusion criteria for selecting client files of first sandtrays included (a) whether a visually clear

photograph of the first sandtray was documented in the file, (b) whether a complete and descriptive narrative of the first sandtray was documented in the file, and (c) completed written observations of what the MEd (educational psychology) student observed in the tray and the narrative thereof. One of the limitations of purposive sampling is that sampling can be done wrongly if inadequate information exists on the current population (Daniel, 2012). As the research forms part of an existing partnership, sufficient information on the population did exist.

Table 3.1: Breakdown of the 50 client files sampled

File number	MEd (ep) Student	Age of client	Gender of client	Home language of client
1	Student A	17	Female	SiSwati
3	Student A	15	Female	SiSwati
4	Student A	14	Female	SeSotho/ SiSwati
5	Student A	16	Female	SiSwati
6	Student A	19	Male	SiSwati
7	Student B	14	Female	SiSwati
8	Student B	16	Female	SiSwati
9	Student B	15	Female	SiSwati
10	Student B	14	Female	SiSwati
11	Student B	15	Male	SiSwati
12	Student B	14	Female	SiSwati
13	Student C	16	Female	SiSwati
14	Student C	17	Female	SiSwati
15	Student C	15	Female	SiSwati
16	Student C	15	Male	SiSwati
17	Student C	17	Male	SiSwati
18	Student C	14	Male	SiSwati
19	Student D	17	Male	SiSwati



File number	MEd (ep) Student	Age of client	Gender of client	Home language of client
20	Student D	14	Male	SiSwati
21	Student D	19	Male	SiSwati
22	Student D	14	Male	SiSwati
23	Student D	15	Female	SiSwati
24	Student D	14	Female	SiSwati
25	Student E	14	Female	Siswati
26	Student E	16	Male	SiSwati
27	Student E	18	Female	SiSwati
28	Student E	16	Female	SiSwati
29	Student E	17	Female	SiSwati
30	Student E	17	Male	SiSwati
31	Student F	16	Male	SiSwati
32	Student F	16	Male	SiSwati
33	Student F	13	Male	SiSwati
34	Student F	17	Male	SiSwati
35	Student F	15	Male	SiSwati
38	Student G	15	Female	SiSwati
39	Student G	19	Male	SiSwati
44	Student H	17	Male	SiSwati
45	Student H	14	Male	SiSwati
46	Student H	14	Male	SiSwati
47	Student H	15	Male	SiSwati
48	Student H	15	Male	SiSwati
55	Student I	14	Male	SiSwati
56	Student I	14	Female	SiSwati
59	Student I	14	Female	SiSwati

File number	MEd (ep) Student	Age of client	Gender of client	Home language of client
60	Student J	20	Female	SiSwati
61	Student J	16	Male	SiSwati
62	Student J	17	Male	SiSwati
63	Student J	16	Male	SiSwati
64	Student J	17	Male	SiSwati
65	Student J	15	Male	SiSwati

Within the files, sandtray-related documentation was extracted and only this documentation was used for analysis. Although there are limitations which exist in using information relating to the first sandtray only (see 1.6.1.1), the use of first sandtrays was well aligned to the purpose of the research study. Research has shown that the first sandtray often offers evidence of challenges faced by the client and resources he or she uses to address these challenges (Turner, 2005). As already mentioned, this documentation consisted of photographs of the first sandtray, a narrative of the first sandtray (documenting the story the client told), as well as MEd (educational psychology) students' qualitative observations of the clients during the sandtray process. The photographs were not analysed in isolation and the findings reported in Chapter 4 are based on analysis of the photographs and narratives documenting the story told of the first sandtray (as well as observations). The data sources which were used, as well as the strengths and limitations of using each data source are discussed below.

3.5.2.1 Visual data

The visual data consisted of photographs of the first sandtray, which were documented in each client file. According to Harper (2004) a photograph can be defined as the record of the subject, event, context or phenomenon at a specific moment in time. Visual data in the form of photographs were selected as it supplemented the narrative and observation data sources (Cohen et al., 2011), as it provided the visual image of the sandtrays discussed in the sandtray narratives and the MEd (educational psychology) student observations.



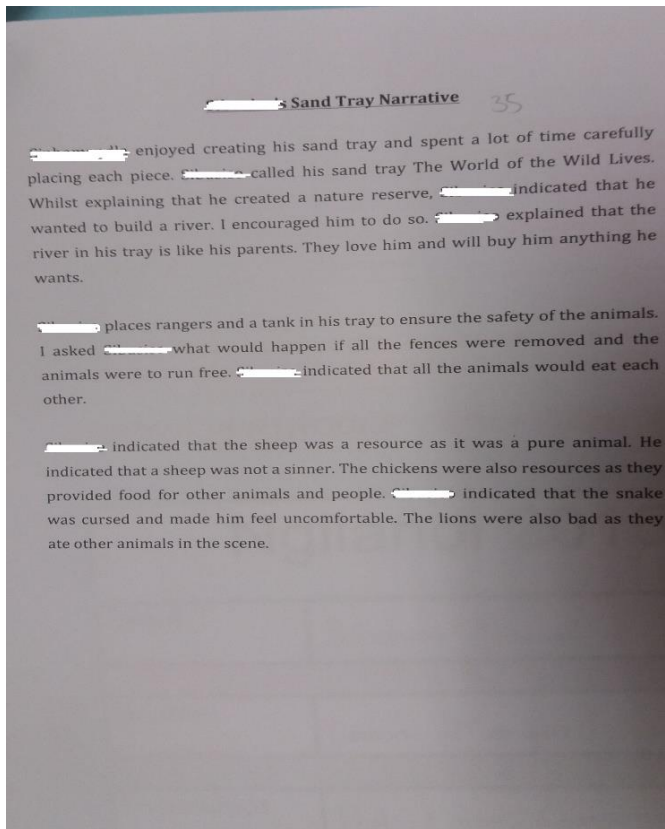
Photograph 3.5: Example of a photograph of a first sandtray contained in Client File 352015

3.5.2.2 *Narrative data*

Narrative data included documentation of the story the client told about their first sandtray. The client narratives documented the client's perception of the sandtrays they had created (Elliot, 2005). Using the narrative is advantageous, in that the narratives can then be used to understand the sandtray created and the client's perception of themselves in their own life worlds (Strydom & Delpont, 2005).

One of the limitations of using narratives as a data source is that of language barriers (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). Most of the MEd (educational psychology) students were from various cultural backgrounds and spoke different languages which differed from the SiSwati-speaking clients at the rural secondary school. This may have affected the quality of the narratives, as the clients gave a verbal explanation of their completed sandtray and the MEd (educational psychology) students then recorded these by verbatim note-taking. One limitation noted was that audio-recordings were not utilised for the verbatim note-taking. Using audio recordings for verbatim note-taking could have improved the accuracy of note-taking processes. Language barriers can lead to a breakdown of communication. This limitation was addressed as the MEd (educational psychology) students worked in collaboration with peers fluent in Northern Sotho and SiSwati to assist in translation when

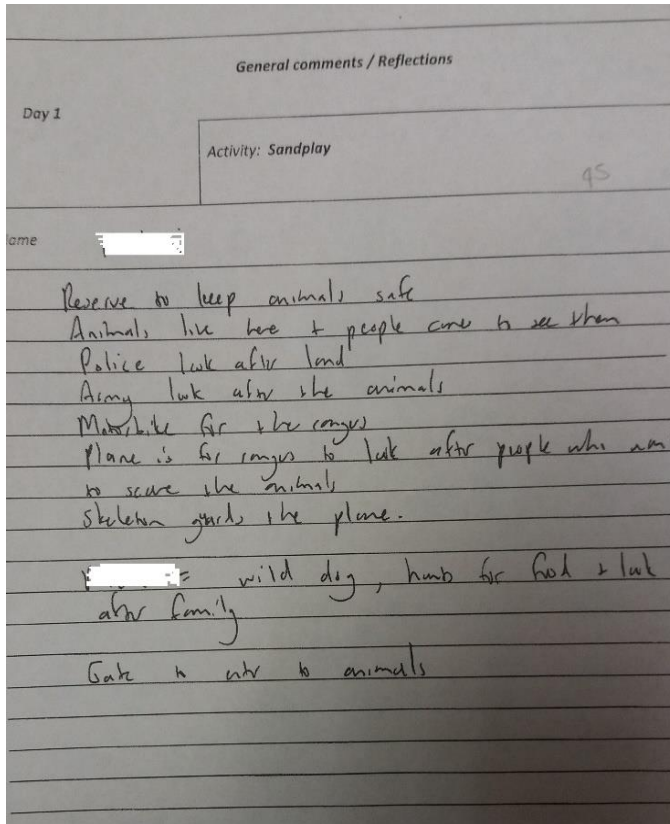
necessary (Nel, 2015). Despite the challenges of multilingual contexts, narratives seem to continue to contribute great value to research (Pavlenko, 2008).



Photograph 3.6: Photograph of narrative data included in Client File 352015

3.5.2.3 Observations captured/documentated as field notes

The observations included notes documented by the MEd (educational psychology) student relating to the client's construction of their first sandtray. Observations functioned as a means of capturing the process while it is happening, but also permitting for the processes to be reviewed later (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011; Mertens, 2009). One of the limitations associated with using observations as a data source is that observations are often subjective (according to the experience of those who documented the observations) (Mertens, 2009). The observations seemed to provide information regarding the physical setting, and the meaning that the client's attached to the first sandtray (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the observations were mainly used to supplement the visual and narrative data.



Photograph 3.7: Example of observations recorded by MEd (ep) student in client file 452015

3.5.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.5.3.1 Secondary data analysis

To do the basic qualitative research, document analysis is used as the research method for this study. The main use of document analysis is for the examination of printed text and documents and mass media items in particular (Bryman, 2012). There are several examples of documents which can be used for document analysis; for example written documents, maps, artefacts, photographs, posters, public records, biography, and written documents (Irwin, 2013).

As the contents of the client files had been previously analysed by others (Ebersöhn et al., 2017), for the purpose of this study I conducted a secondary document analysis. Secondary data analysis is analysis of data that was collected by someone else for another primary purpose (Johnston, 2014). Secondary document analysis is frequently used in cases where the researcher is not present during the data collection, but wishes to use the

collected, existing data to extract richer or more bespoke information to answer specific research questions (Irwin, 2013).

Some of the advantages of secondary data analysis as a research method is that it is stable, efficient, and cost effective (Bowen, 2009). Secondary document analysis is advantageous in that it is time effective (Ghauri, 2005). The researcher saves time by not having to spend his or her time collecting the data. One limitation of secondary data analysis is the lack of control over data quality (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Another limitation is that the data is not primarily collected by oneself and one thus has little control over the detail and amount of data collected (Denscombe, 2007). To address this limitation I familiarised myself with the client files (sandtray documentation) to ensure the data is sufficient in detail for analysis. Fifteen of the 65 client files were not used due to incomplete sandtray data (narratives of the sandtrays).

3.5.3.2 Deductive qualitative content analysis

In this study a deductive approach was applied in analysing the sandtray documentation. Deductive content analysis includes the use of predetermined codes that the researcher applies to qualitative data in order to answer the research question (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Deductive content analysis is used when the structure of analysis is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The analytic procedure requires the researcher to use the pre-determined codes to select, appraise and synthesise data contained in documents. Given the focus of this study, the predetermined codes are based on Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience (more specifically, the dimensions developed by Ungar in the diagnosing of resilience). These domains include the following: the presence and experience of adversity; and individual and contextual dimensions of resilience. The specific codes used which align with these domains were developed from relevant South African literature on the subject (which speak to risk and protective factors in a rural South African context) that I had reviewed (Chapter 2). For example, within the category of individual dimensions of resilience, three codes were listed, namely personal strengths, future orientation, and educational engagement. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to increase the credibility of the coding process (Addendum A).

3.5.3.3 Coding and emerging themes

Nieuwenhuis (2016) explains that if researchers work with pre-set codes (*a priori* coding), then they will probably also have pre-set categories into which to sort data. In this case researchers will start with a list of categories in advance and then search for the data for these topics using the *a priori* codes that fit with the categories. For this study I assigned the *a priori* risk and resilience codes by immersing myself in the data (i.e., the sandtray documentation) until I was well familiar with it. Words/sentences and visual indications that fitted with the predetermined risk and resilience codes, were sought and then labelled using the *a priori* code.



Photograph 3.8: Sandtray showing a tortoise with a shell protecting it from being hurt when beaten (demonstrating the community risk: *Lack of Safety: a need for protection*).

For example, Photograph 3.8 shows a picture of a tortoise and the narrative of this sandtray included the following evidence: ‘She stated that she would like to be the tortoise in the scene as the tortoise is protected by a shell and cannot be hurt when beaten’. This evidence was coded as SER3 (Social-Ecological Risk 3- Community Risk: *Lack of Safety: Need for Protection*).

Once the data was coded, I grouped the codes into risk and protective factors (at various systemic levels) and categorised them using the predetermined categories (Addendum A). I also documented the number of sandtrays that provided evidence of the various codes (i.e., how many sandtrays commented on the community risk - *lack of*

safety). This was to ensure that I was able to keep track of the findings and make meaning thereof after completion of the coding process (Stuckey, 2015). As I was conducting a secondary data analysis, the usual rules of data saturation could not apply (i.e. when the codes repeat regularly enough the researcher is confident that the findings are saturated/ supported by sufficient evidence, and that new data will not add new insights (Cresswell, 2012)). In the conclusion of this study I note this as a limitation.

3.6 QUALITY CRITERIA

Lincoln and Guba (1994) suggest that trustworthiness of a research study is important in assessing its worth. Trustworthiness involves establishing whether a variety of quality criteria are accounted for. These criteria include the following: credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, and authenticity.

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the ‘truth’ of one’s findings and whether the results of the research are believable (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Data verification was used as a method to ensure the data was coded accurately and the interpretations valid. The data was verified by peer review (another qualitative researcher assisted in verifying coding and interpretation of the data) (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The research supervisors’ input in the analysis and interpretation of the data also helped support the honesty of the coding and categorising processes.

3.6.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the researcher’s role to ensure that the research process and how findings were obtained are clearly documented and traceable (Toban & Begley, 2004). In this study I was involved in observing the data being collected. Although I was not involved in collecting or generating the data, I was involved in observing the process of data collection. Observation of data collection and documentation is one of the techniques documented in literatures as establishing dependability (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). By observing the data being collected the researcher was able to see that the research data (documentation of first sandtrays) had been clearly documented (by the facilitators) and that ethical procedures were adhered to. The use of inclusion and exclusion criteria when

coding (Addendum A) also heightened dependability by providing a clear account of how I analysed and coded the data. This will allow other researchers or readers to review the coding and evaluate how fitting the assigned codes were (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

3.6.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is associated with ensuring that the data and interpretations of the findings are not simply made up by the researcher (Toban & Begley, 2004). In this study I based interpretations and findings on extant literature to enrich her findings. The *a priori* codes as well as the coded data rely heavily on pertinent topics and themes found in South African literature. My supervisors were directly involved in confirming that the codes were correctly used. The coding was also verified by peer review.

3.6.4 Transferability

The extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred to another context is known as transferability (Malderud, 2001). This qualitative research study specifically deals with rural contexts in South Africa and the findings hereof are planned to relate to other similar contexts, rather than be generalizable to a variety of contexts. To this end, detailed and rich descriptions of the context and participants who generated the data were included (Section 3.5.2). This should help other researchers and practitioners decide to what extent these findings can be used in their context (i.e., the contextualisation should help others to judge the applicability of the findings to other similar contexts) (Seale, 1999).

3.6.5 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the degree to which researchers faithfully and fairly describe participants' experiences. In establishing authenticity the researcher needs to ensure that the way the research is conducted, as well as the evaluation of research are genuine and credible, not only in terms of participants' lived experiences but also with regard to the wider political and social implications of research (Given, 2008). This study seems worthwhile in its contribution towards studying a topic which has yet to be explored and may contribute positively in informing educational psychologists about the use of sandtrays to diagnose resilience (according to Ungar's diagnostic criteria). Authenticity was heightened in that the views of all 50 client cases were included in the study. The client files also represent the views of people who are usually marginalised; consequently, the

results can be considered authentic (and not biased to the views of the researcher or others with power).

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.7.1 Ethics of the Original FLY Project

The FLY project and generation of data through the project was ethically approved by the University of Pretoria (clearance number: EP 07/02/04 FLY 15-003). Ethical guidelines were followed in collecting of data and providing psycho-educational services to clients at the secondary school in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Among others, this included protection of client identities and permissions to participate in activities (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, as cited in Maree, 2007). In this study informed consent was obtained from all clients (and their caregivers, if they were younger than 18 years of age). By personally observing how some of the data was collected (at the rural school) I was able to see that the ethical procedures which were set out (such as obtaining consent) were conducted and adhered to by all the facilitators involved in the study.

3.7.2 Ethics of Working with Secondary Data

One issue pertinent to the use of secondary data relates to the safe-keeping and access to secondary data (Prasad, 2013). For this study, the data was stored safely at the University of Pretoria and could only be accessed through an allocated FLY research collaborator at the University who is responsible for the storage and safe-keeping of the data. The data was stored safely in locked cabinets at the University of Pretoria. The data was therefore kept safe from unauthorized access and/or accidental loss. I applied to the ethical committee at the University of Pretoria for access to the data and received written permission to do so. I also signed a memorandum of understanding for data use, which ensures the data is kept safe and used ethically by all research collaborators involved in the FLY project.

I was also responsible for handling the data with integrity. Anonymity of the clients represented in the documentation was another pertinent ethical concern, According to Polit and Hungler (1999), a promise of confidentiality to clients is a guarantee that any information relating the identification of the clients that is provided, will not be publicly

reported or made accessible to parties other than those involved in the research. The confidentiality and anonymity of clients involved in the FLY project was protected throughout this study. The names of the clients were not used to identify the data, and only the case file number was referred to in coding the data and reporting the findings.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a description and motivation was provided for my use of exploratory qualitative research as the research design of this study. Also provided was a detailed description of the use of the secondary document analysis and deductive coding procedures as the chosen method to code and analyse sandtray data. Essentially, this methodology was used to answer the question: *How do first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience among SiSwati-speaking rural South African adolescents?* In the next chapter a report is provided of the findings that emerged from this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 provides a report on the risks and protective resources (individual, family-related, school-related, community, and macro-systemic risks and protective resources) which were included in the analysis of the first sandtrays. The chapter is structured similarly to that of Chapter 2. This means that the risks and protective resources are reported on at various systemic levels (based on an adapted model of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Models of Human Development) (Figure 2.1). Due to the nature of this study being qualitative, qualitative descriptors are used to report the findings. The descriptors are as follows: 1-2 first sandtrays/less than 5% (minimal); 3-10 first sandtrays/ 6%-20% (a few); 11-25 first sandtrays/ 21%-50% (some); 26-37 first sandtrays/ 51%-75% (many); 38-50 first sandtrays/ 76% and more (most). Findings of gender-related differences are also reported. The reporting of gender reflects population diversity, which is considered particularly important in qualitative research (Allmark, 2004).

4.2 INDIVIDUAL

The first sandtrays included indications of individual risks and personal protective resources. This evidence is presented below. I also report on which risks and resources I had anticipated to have been indicated based on the literature review but were absent in the first sandtrays.

4.2.1 Individual Risks

Minimal first sandtrays indicated individual risks (including challenges associated with the adolescent life-stage). In the single sandtray that did include evidence of individual risk, the narrative of a young woman indicated alluded to negative peer influences and at-risk sexual behaviour leading to pregnancy. The following explanation was included in the narrative of the sandtray (File Nr. 612015 - 'She is not interested in having any friends or boyfriends, because friends hurt you and boyfriends only want to make you pregnant'). As summarised in Addendum A, I had anticipated that the individual level risk would include

experimentation with drugs and alcohol. However, this individual risk was not demonstrated in the first sandtrays.

4.2.2 Individual Protective Factors

The most common individual protective factor indicated in the data was personal strengths, which was included in some of the sandtrays (13 of the sandtrays). Personal strengths included a sense of self-worth, empathy/caring about the wellbeing of others and a desire to make a positive difference. In case File Nr. 272015, a young woman indicated a sense of self-worth as the narrative of her sandtray explained: ‘I have pride. I must have self-confidence and be proud of myself’. In another instance (File Nr. 262015) the narrative of the sandtray of a client indicated the personal strength empathy/caring about the well-being of others - ‘I am the eagle, sitting on top of the tree. I like people and don’t like to see people struggle’.

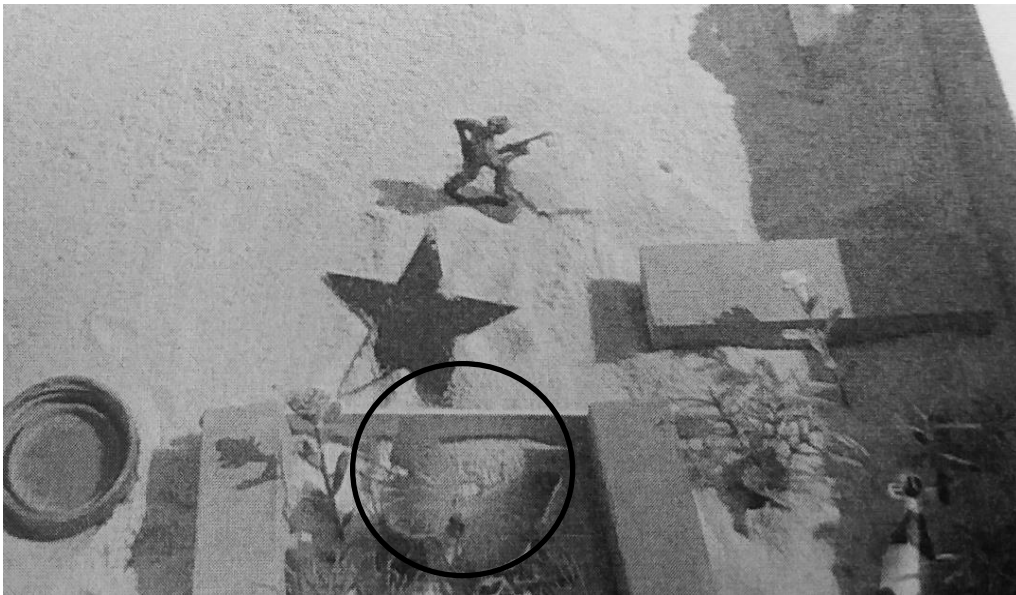


Photograph 4.1: Sandtray showing the client identifying herself as a doll, someone who is future orientated and has a desire to make a positive difference

A few sandtrays (10 sandtrays) showed evidence of determination to make a positive difference. For example, in case File Nr 612015, the photo of the sandtray showed a doll with a star in front of it; the client identified herself as the doll and the following evidence

was included in the narrative - ‘She wants to be a social worker one day and help people because of what she went through with her father’ (Photograph 4.1). In addition to this, the narrative of this sandtray (File Nr. 612015) also indicates a future orientation, as the client has indicated that she wants to work towards becoming a social worker one day.

In another instance (File Nr. 162015) in which determination to make a positive difference and agency was depicted, a client built a safe and unsafe area in the tray. The unsafe area included dangerous animals such as snakes, and the safe area showed cars and animals being protected by guards. The narrative of the sandtray explained: ‘If he could change anything he would change the bad place and make it good. He would do this by taking away the dangerous animals’. Case File Nr. 052015 also showed indication of a client’s agency when she used a military/army figure and identified it as herself acting as a bodyguard. The narrative explained the following: ‘She identified as the bodyguard inside the building, who is protecting the other figures—the bodyguard is rewarded for her effort’).



Photograph 4.2: Part of sandtray showing a butterfly (representing future orientation- the client’s goal to become a doctor)

A few of the first sandtrays (5 sandtrays) demonstrated the protective resource of future orientation. Future orientation included being focused on future goals and a future career. A young woman generated the sandtray depicted in Photograph 4.2 (case File Nr. 272015),

which provides evidence of future orientation. She explained: ‘The butterflies are making life beautiful. They are like me- I want to be doctor and help people’. In another instance (case File No. 602015) a young woman explained that she ‘she aims to achieve her future goals by being successful and working hard’.

In summary, both male and female clients offered indications of the above individual protective resources. 50 % of the adolescent’s first sandtrays which offered indications of individual resources were those of females and 50 % were first sandtrays of males. As summarised in Addendum A, the researcher had anticipated the following individual level protective resources: educational engagement (being committed to educational progress and scholastic progress or achievement). However, this protective resource was not demonstrated in the first sandtrays.

4.3 FAMILY SYSTEM

The first sandtrays included indications of family-related risks and family-related protective resources. This evidence is presented below. Also reported on are risks and resources that I had anticipated based on my literature review but were absent in the first sandtrays.

4.3.1 Family-related Risks

Minimal sandtrays (2 sandtrays) indicated the risk family violence. In one of the case files (File Nr. 622015) the following indicators were found in the narrative of a sandtray demonstrated violence within the family as a risk: ‘He told me he doesn’t know where his mother is since his father tried to kill his mother by strangling her’. In another instance (case File Nr. 282015) a young woman demonstrated violence within the family and the following information in the narrative of her sandtray represented this risk: ‘She told me her stepfather killed her mother’. In all of the narratives of the first sandtrays in which violence was identified, violence was expressed towards women in the family. Both male and females offered evidence of the family-related risk violence within the family. More females (66.5%) than males (33.5%) indicated violence within the family as a risk.

Minimal sandtrays (1 sandtray) depicted the risk of illness-related challenges. In the single sandtray that did include evidence of the risk of illness-related challenges, the

narrative indicated evidence of loss and psychosocial challenges. The following explanation was included in the narrative of the sandtray (File Nr 612015) - ‘Her father passed away and she had to care for him for two years. As a result she had to leave school to care for him for two years. Her mother is working in Swaziland to support all of them’.

As summarised in Addendum A, I had anticipated the following family-related risks: family poverty and divorce. However, none of these family-related risks were demonstrated in the first sandtrays. I had also anticipated HIV-related challenges. Although there was the above mentioned illness-related challenge, I cannot assume the illness was HIV.

4.3.2 Family-related Protective Resources

Some of the first sandtrays (11 sandtrays) alluded to supportive family systems as a protective resource. Supportive family systems included supportive family members (mothers, fathers, siblings, extended family). Both male and females offered indications of family-related protective factors. 55 % of the adolescents’ first sandtrays which offered evidence of family-related protective resources were those of females and 45 % were first sandtrays of male adolescents.

Case File Nr. 352015 provided evidence of the family-related resource supportive family members. The photo showed a river he built in the sand with aquatic animals in it, and the narrative explanation included the following: ‘He explained that the river in this tray are like his parents. They love him and will buy him anything he needs’ (Photograph 4.3).



Photograph 4.3: Sandtray showing metaphor ‘My parents are like a river’ (family as resource)

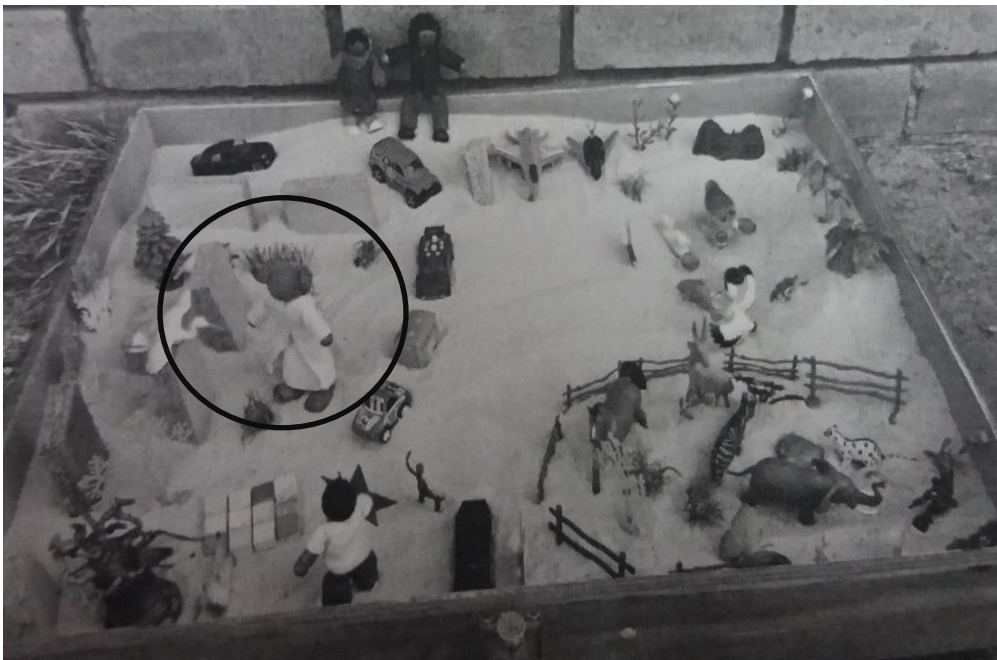


Photograph 4.4: Sandtray showing supportive family system as a protective resource

In another instance (case File Nr. 602015) a young woman built an area in the tray with a few human doll figurines gathered around animals and explained the following: ‘It is

important to have a happy home and good family’ (Photograph 4.4). In another case file (case File Nr. 112015), the narrative of a sandtray alluded to family as a protective resource: ‘Where I live. I lie with my family. I am feeling good’.

The African cultural reality of (strong) women who care for their families is demonstrated in the information relating to supportive family. For example, File Nr. 632015 - ‘His mother, which is the one standing in the middle of the town, was identified as an asset as she is currently looking after him’ (Photograph 4.5), and File Nr. 172015 - ‘In the house there are sisters. It is safe in the house. There are two sisters in the house and him. They are cooking food and keeping the house. They take care of him’.



Photograph 4.5: Sandtray showing family (a mother) as a strong woman and protective resource looking after her children

A few of the first sandtrays (3 sandtrays) represented the protective resource- provision of material resources within the family system. Case File Nr. 192015 includes the following indications of material resources within the family as a protective resource - ‘Inside the house it feels good. Mom want to open the fridge which has food and drinks in it’. In another case (File Nr. 352015) a young woman explains the following after using chicken figurines in her first sandtray - ‘The chickens provided food for other animals, people and family’.

4.4 SCHOOL SYSTEM

The first sandtrays included no indication of school-related risks, although there was evidence of school-related protective resources. This evidence is presented below. I also report the risks and resources which I had anticipated (based on the literature review), but were absent in the first sandtrays.

4.4.1 School-related Risks

As summarised in Addendum A, I had anticipated the following school-related level risks: school violence, unsafe schools, and poor quality education. However, none of these school-related risks were demonstrated in the first sandtrays.

4.4.2 School-related Protective Factors

Supportive teachers were the only school-related resource included in the first sandtrays and then only in minimal first sandtrays (1 sandtray). In the one example, a young man used a banana-leaf figurine to represent his teacher. He explained the following: ‘My teacher, Mr [surname], is supportive’.



Photograph 4.6: Sandtray showing a banana-leaf figure as supportive teacher

As summarised in Addendum A, I had anticipated the following school-related protective resources: flocking of teachers, a school community of connectedness or supportive school

structures as school-related resources. However, none of these were demonstrated in the first sandtrays.

4.5 COMMUNITY SYSTEM

The first sandtrays included indications of community-related risks and community-related protective resources. This evidence is presented below. The report includes which risks and resources, based on the literature review, I had anticipated were absent in the first sandtrays.

4.5.1 Community Risks

Community risks demonstrated in the first sandtrays included: lack of safety and structural disadvantage (including poverty, hunger and lack of infrastructure). The most common of these was a lack of safety (38 sandtrays alluded to lack of safety). Both males and females alluded to the risk- lack of safety: 43 % of the adolescent' first sandtrays which offered indications of lack of safety were those of females and 56 % were first sandtrays of male adolescents.

Lack of safety included experiences of violence and crime. Case File Nr. N282015 included the following indication of violence and crime in the narrative of the first sandtray: 'At the houses there is danger because thieves are killing people'. In another instance (case File Nr. 052015) a young woman explained the following about animal figurines she used in her sandtray: 'The animals outside are in danger of being killed'. A need for protection by external protection services (such as police and soldiers) was also demonstrated in a few sandtrays. This need further implies a lack of safety. For example, in one photo of a sandtray (case File Nr. 062015) a client used a 'bodyguard' figurine in the sandtray and the following was explained in the narrative: 'The house is being protected by a body guard. This is to protect the house against criminals'. In another instance, the photo of the sandtray in case File Nr. 472015, depicted a gun toy object being used in the sandtray and the following explanation was found in the narrative: 'I am the gun and can shoot anyone that threatens me'(Photograph 4.7).

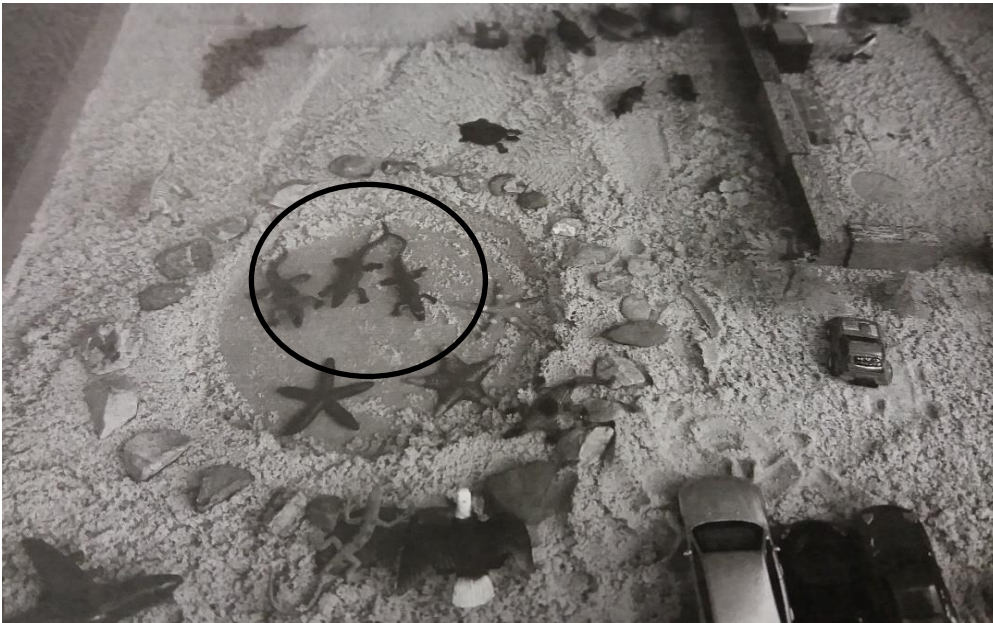


Photograph 4.7: Sandtray with a gun representing lack of safety (and a need for protection) in the community

In another instance (case File Nr. 382015), demonstrating a need for protection, a young woman identified herself as being the tortoise figurine in her sandtray and the following was explained: ‘She stated that she would like to be the tortoise in the scene as the tortoise is protected by a shell and cannot be hurt when beaten’ (Photograph 4.8).

In addition, minimal case files included indications of inaccessibility to police services. For example in case File Nr. 092015, a young woman's sandtray clearly demonstrated inaccessibility of police services: 'She would like to go see the animals on the other side of the road but is too scared. The car on the road contains an escaped criminal. Despite the frog's best attempt to escape it will be eaten as there is no chance of rescue by the police' - Photograph 4.9).

A few first sandtrays (5 sandtrays) offered indications of structural disadvantage (which included community poverty). In one instance (case File Nr. 182015) a young male explained the following about his sandtray: 'The right hand side is a village, the place where I grew up- it's not a nice place, a place of poverty and difficult life'. In another case (case File Nr. 082015), the photo of the sandtray showed a snake and in the narrative the following (demonstrating poverty) was explained: 'the snake is looking for food but has not found any'.



Photograph 4.10: Sandtray depicting crocodiles who want to eat other animals because they are hungry

Case File Nr.192015 also includes indications of the community-related risk poverty, in the narrative of a sandtray: 'The crocodiles want to eat the other animals because they are hungry' (Photograph 4.10). Lack of infrastructure, as a community-related risk was also reported, albeit minimally. For example, in one instance (case File Nr. 182015), a young

man explained the following about his sandtray: ‘If I can change anything I will add a shop for people to buy things and that a wealthy person can look after the people in the village’). As summarised in Addendum A, I had anticipated the following structural disadvantage risks: lack of sufficient infrastructure (such lack of access to basic sanitation, piped water and electricity, lack of access to health services, and lack of refuse removal facilities). However, none of these community level risks were demonstrated in the first sandtrays.

4.5.2 Community-related Protective Resource

The following community-related resources were represented in a few of the first sandtrays (3 sandtrays): supportive community systems (community attachments to reliable adults, sharing of resources; and supportive community structures). For example, in case File Nr. 592015, a young woman used an angel in her sandtray to represent the church as an important asset to the community. The following was explained in the narrative of her sandtray: ‘The angel shows that you still need to go to church to re-energise (Photograph 4.11)’.



Photograph 4.11: Sandtray with angel depicting church (supportive community-based structure) as a protective resource

In another two cases, there was indication of attachments or connections to reliable others and sharing of resources. For example, in the observation notes pertaining to case File Nr. 632015, there was comment that the male client in question identified his community life

as an asset within his life (Photograph 4.12). In another instance (case File Nr. 182015) a young man built two ‘houses’ in his sandtray demonstrated sharing of resources between community members: ‘The first is his house, the second is his neighbour. They are both ‘normal’ in terms of income and share household goods and support each other if either is in need’.



Photograph 4.12 Sandtray showing community life (on left), which the client identified as an asset in his life

In summary, both male and female clients alluded to the community protective resources: 33.3 % of the adolescent’ first sandtrays which offered indications of community protective resources were those of females and 66.6 % were first sandtrays of male adolescents.

4.6 MACRO-SYSTEM

With regard to macro-systemic risks and protective factors exemplified in the first sandtrays it is important to note, none of the first sandtrays offered indication of macro-systemic risks (such as disempowering national policies, social injustice and unequal distribution of resources).

4.6.1 Macro-systemic Protective Resources

The macro-systemic protective resource of cultural belonging (being value driven and adhering to values of Ubuntu and togetherness) was represented in minimal first sandtrays.

In the single case File Nr. 022015 which did offer an indication of the community resource cultural belonging, the photo of the sandtray showed that the client used various animal figurines gathering around each other and the following explanation was offered in the narrative: ‘All animals are gathering to be close to one another’(Photograph 4.13).



Photograph 4.13: Sandtray with animals gathering depicting values of togetherness

Spiritual resources were also demonstrated in a few of the sandtrays. For example, in case File Nr. 102015, the photo of the sandtray showed a skeleton figurine next to a banana-leaf human figurine used in the sandtray, and the following explanation was offered in the narrative - ‘The skeleton represents a ghost that has come to give the woman a shock, because she did not listen. She will listen after this’ (Photograph 4.14).



Photograph 4.14: Sandtray showing spiritual support (a banana-leaf woman figurine being ‘warned’ by a ghost (represented as a skeleton))

In case File No. 202015, the photo and narrative of the sandtray also provides indications of spiritual resources. The client used an angel figurine and baobab tree in the sandtray and explained the following: ‘The angels are coming to the pastor to talk to help people, the baobab is like a spiritual sea’. Case File Nr. 322105 also included indications of spirituality as a protective resource. In the photo of the sandtray it showed that the client had used a skeleton and the narrative explained that the skeleton represented a grave-yard and that ‘the grave-yard is a safe place where people can rest and there is peace’. All of the adolescent’ first sandtrays which offered indications of spiritual support as a resource were those of males.

As summarised in Addendum A, the researcher had anticipated the following macro-level protective resources: national policies (Children’s Act, Social Grant policy and other health policies). However these were not represented in the first first sandtrays.

4.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the following section, I comment on how the risk and protective factors identified in the first sandtrays are the same as those of youth in other South African studies (see 4.7.1, *Similarities*), and which risks and protective resources were not demonstrated or mentioned in the first sandtrays (i.e. *Silences* in the data, see 4.7.2) (Loots, 2010).



4.7.1 Similarities

In summary, the following risks and protective resources were included in the findings (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). South African literature on resilience has reported all of the risks and protective resources noted in the findings of this study.

Table 4.1 Protective Resources included in findings

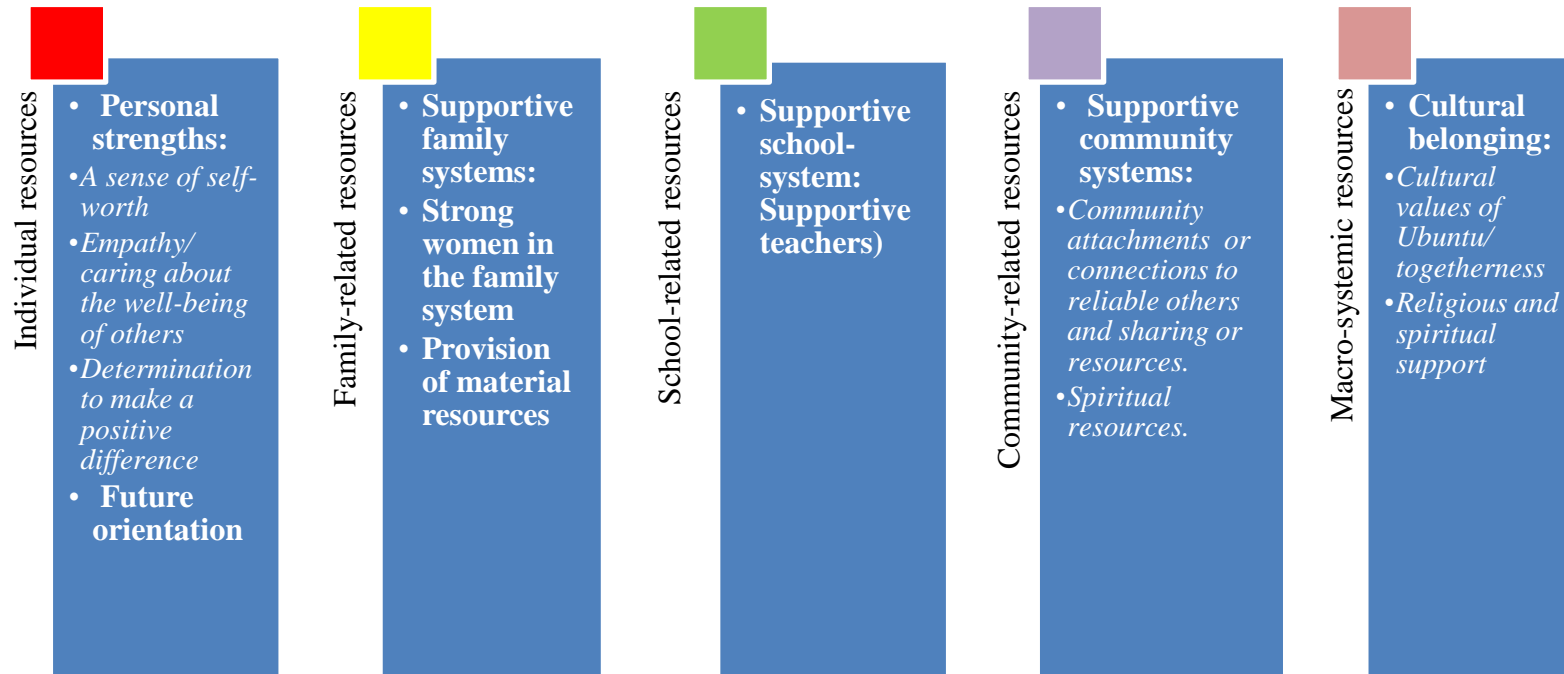
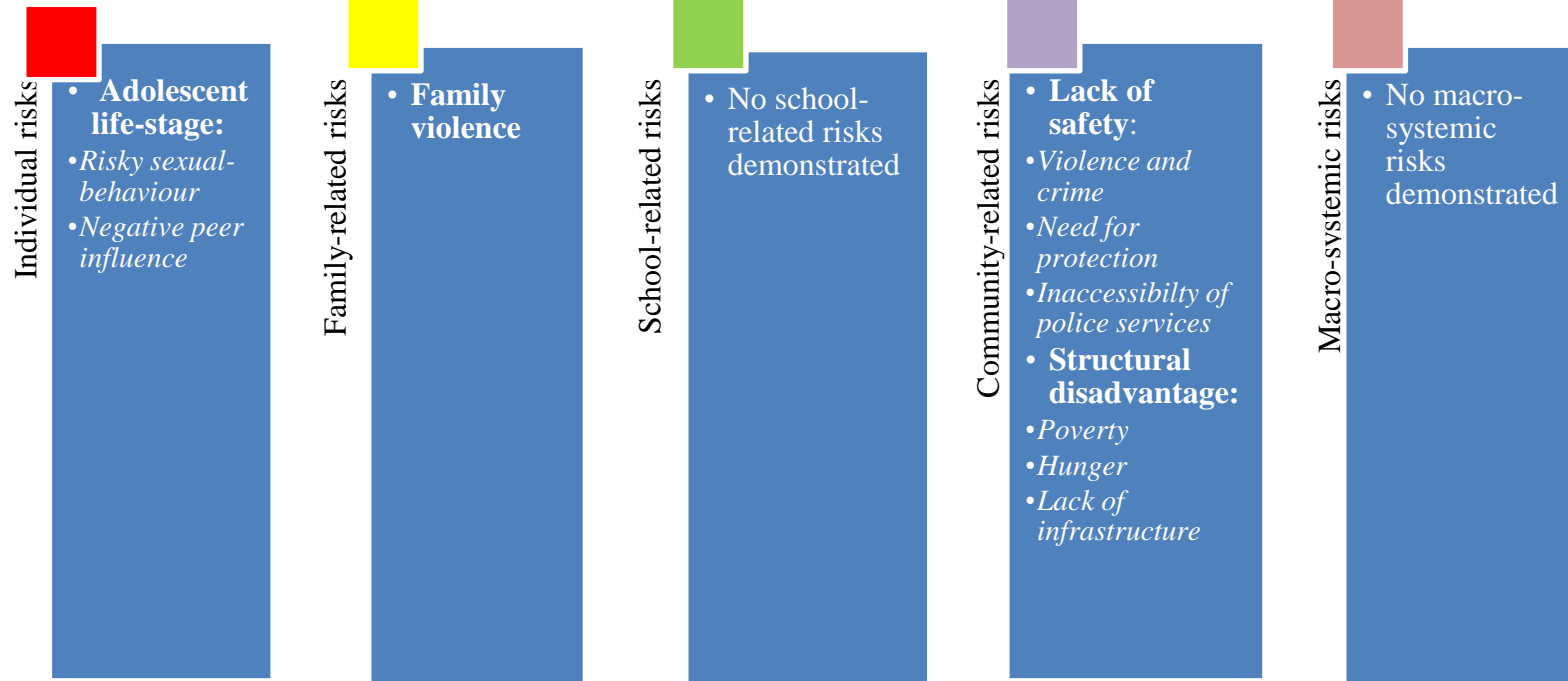


Table 4.2 Risk factors included in findings



4.7.1.1 Similar individual risks and protective resources

The indications of risks that characterise the **adolescent life-stage** (particularly negative peer influence and risky sexual behaviour) in the first sandtrays fits well with literature. In South African literature, risks which are related with adolescent life-stage (such as susceptibility to negative peer influence and risky sexual behaviour have often been reported as pertinent among rural South African youth (Ebersöhn, 2012; Murali & Oyabode, 2004). These risks are also reported in studies by many other researchers who worked with other youth populations (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003; Mothiba & Maputle, 2012; Reddy et al. 2010). Even though none of these previous studies specifically refer to SiSwati-speaking rural adolescents, they included black South African rural and urban youth facing a variety of adversities such as poverty, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS related challenges, violence within the family and divorce/ family-based conflict (Ebersöhn, 2012; Mothiba & Maputle, 2012; Murali & Oyabode, 2004; Reddy et al. 2010).

Individual protective resources such as **personal strengths** and **a future orientation** were demonstrated in the first sandtrays. Throughout South African literature individual personal strengths have been indicated as a protective resources in anchoring resilience in at-risk South African youth (Dass-Brailford, 2005; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Theron, 2004; Theron & Theron, 2010; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). Personal strengths were also found to be significant among resilient rural South African youth (Ebersöhn & Maree, 2006; Theron, 2013).

4.7.1.2 Similar family-related risks and protective resources

The findings of this study which indicated **family violence** as a risk correlates with South African literature which documents violence within the family as pertinent in rural South African contexts (Shields et al., 2006; Theron & Theron, 2013). What was particularly significant was that most of the violence documented in the first sandtrays was directed towards women. South African literature relating to violence within rural families, documents that the social and economic conditions under which rural women live often contribute to their vulnerability to domestic violence and limit their ability to escape it (Curran & Bonthuys, 2004). This is particularly relevant to current concerns being reported in the media. Recent statistics show that between April and December 2016, 14 333 people

were murdered in South Africa (including femicides- women killed by their intimate partners) and there were 37 630 sexual offences (with 30 069 rape incidents) (Mashego, *City Press*, 2017). The South African Medical Research Council (MRC) has found that 40% of men assault their partners daily and that three women in South Africa are killed by their intimate partner every day. The South African Medical Research Council has shown that intimate partner violence is the leading cause of murder of women in South Africa, accounting for 50% of female homicides in 1999 and 57% in 2009. A study conducted by the World Health Organisation confirms this issue and found that 65% of women in South Africa had experienced spousal abuse a year prior to when the research was carried out. The study also showed that their partners either always or sometimes drank alcohol before the assaults occurred.

As in other studies, my study highlighted **supportive family systems** as a protective resource to adolescents. Supportive family systems as a protective resource to at-risk youth (including black South African adolescents) has been reported in South African literature (Barbarin et al., 2001; Dass-Brailford, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2007; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005) as well as in literature reporting on protective factors of black South African adolescents living in rural contexts (Theron & Theron, 2013; Van Breda, 2015). Existing literature validates the findings of my study. South African resilience focused studies have also shown that women often play a pivotal role and act as a protective resource within families (including black South African families) (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006; Theron, 2007, 2015). This fits with the attention to women relatives as supportive in the sandtrays.

4.7.1.3 Similar school-related risks and protective resources

Supportive teachers (or a teacher) was in line with South African studies which document that teachers act as protective resources and contribute to the resilience of individuals (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2008, 2007; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). Teachers act as protective resources when they act as role models, mentors, a source of encouragement, and as persons who help children with their everyday lives (Dass-Brailford, 2005). For example, in a recent study, Loots and

colleagues (2010) noted that teachers acted as protective resources in promoting resilience in rural at-risk youth, by providing school-based psychosocial support to individuals.

From the indication in the single case file that included teacher support the researcher could not deduce what form of support was provided by the teacher who was mentioned. It is also interesting that teacher support was not more prevalently included in the case files given the repetition of teacher support in South African resilience literature (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2008, 2007; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). A reason for this could be that the medium of sandtrays was not conducive to allowing opportunity for school-related resources to be expressed. I observed during the original data collection (carrying out of sandtray activity) that there were very few school-related figurines available for the clients to use in their sandtrays, and perhaps this limited clients in their ability to express school-related risks and resources.

4.7.1.4 Similar community-related risks and protective resources

Lack of safety in the community is well-documented throughout literature as a risk to South African youth (including black South African adolescents) (Du Plessis, 2008; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Morojele & Muthikrishna, 2012). Inaccessibility to police services (which was identified as a risk in the findings) is highlighted too and it is stated that limited access to essential social services (such as police service) and other support, make it difficult for impoverished people living in rural contexts to deal with crime (Pelser et al., 2000; Theron & Theron; 2013).

Structural disadvantage (such as poverty and a lack of infrastructure) is also highlighted throughout South African literature (Ballantyne & Mylanos, 2001; Ebersöhn, 2010; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Morojele & Mutukrishna, 2012). Ebersöhn (2010) highlights that communities are confronted with risks such as poverty, which heighten the stress experienced by individuals. Various literature studies have confirmed that rural communities are more exposed to challenges such as economic deprivation, social deprivation relating to opportunities and lack of infrastructure, and social challenges, than individuals living in urban contexts (Ballantyne & Mylanos, 2001; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Morojele & Mutukrishna, 2012).

Community attachments and connections to reliable others, and sharing of resources was in line with South African studies which document that individuals often rely on community members and share resources with one another. This has been particularly true for South African people (including black South African adolescents) living in rural contexts (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005). For example, community support in the form of sharing of expertise, food, clothing, financial resources and advice between community members have been reported to act as a protective resource for South African adolescents (Pillay & Nesangani, 2006). **Supportive community structures** (in the form of supportive service providers such as churches) is also documented throughout South African literature a protective resource in promoting the resilience of black South African communities (including adolescents) (Ebersöhn, 2010).

4.7.1.5 Similar macro-systemic risks and protective resources

The protective factor, **cultural belonging** (being value driven and adhering to values of Ubuntu and togetherness) is exemplified throughout South African literature and has been shown to be significant specifically to black South Africans (who adhere to traditional values of interdependence) (Bujo, 2009; Ebersöhn, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Phasha, 2010; Theron et al. 2011). **Spiritual resources** are also well documented (Barbarin et al., 2001; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Edwards et al., 2005; Germann, 2005; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Smukler, 1990). Spiritual practices (Christian and ancestral), religious leaders, and personal faith (all of which were indicated in the findings) have been described as an essential protective factor in promoting resilience among rural black South African youth (Dass-Brailford, 2005; Theron & Theron, 2010).

4.7.2 Silences

The protective resource **educational engagement** (individual resource) is well documented as a protective resource throughout South African literature (Da Lannoy, 2011; Dass-Brailford, 2005; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Phasha, 2010; Theron, 2007, 2015; Theron et al., 2013), although it was not represented in the findings relating to the first sandtrays. Other school-related resources such as flocking of teachers, a school community of connectedness or supportive school structures which are also well-

documented in South African literature (Brooks, 2006; Ebersöhn, 2008; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005), was not demonstrated in the first sandtrays.

A reason for the above silences could be that the medium (of first sandtrays) was not conducive to the representation of such risk factors. It is possible that the medium of data collection limited client's opportunities to report the above. For example, there were not many school-related figurines which the clients could use in their sandtrays, which may explain why there were very few representations of school-related risks and protective factors. While I do understand that the sandtray figurines and objects can be used symbolically, if the figurines were more suited to the risk and protective factors that were absent the omissions of these risk and protective factors would be fewer. Theron (2016) commented that it is possible that the results of research findings may be shaped by the medium used in the research. Nevertheless, to truly understand these silences, further research is needed and recommended.

Family-related risks, including family-related poverty and divorce were also not documented in the findings, although many South African studies have commented that these risks are pertinent to South African youth (Ebersöhn & Bouwer, 2013; Hlatshwayo, 2003; Theron, 2015; Theron et al., 2013). Although challenges related to HIV/AIDS were possibly alluded to in one client file, it is interesting that illness related challenges was not more prevalently included in the case files, given the repetition of illness related-challenges and issues in the South African literature (Hlatshwayo, 2003; Richter & Desmond, 2008; Theron, 2015; Theron et al., 2013; UN AIDS, 2004). A possible reason for the above silences could be that these issues are stigmatised (Campbell, Skovdal & Madahire et al., 2011; Castro & Farmer, 2004; Cluver & Orkin, 2009; Fenton, 2004). Educational psychology assessments may then need to be adjusted to elicit comments about risks that carry stigma. For example, in a recent study (Campbell et al., 2011) in which the stigmatisation of AIDS and poverty-affected children in Zimbabwe were investigated using projective drawing and writing techniques, this medium of assessment was effective in allowing children opportunities to comment and respond appropriately regarding these issues.

4.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the risks and protective resources in the first sandtrays of adolescents living in a context of rurality were reported on and discussed. In summary, the most significant risk demonstrated in over 80 % of the trays (most of the first sandtrays) was the community risk ‘lack of safety’. The most significant protective resources, which some first sandtrays (between 21%-50%) offered indications of, included individual protective resources (personal strengths and future orientation), as well as family related protective resources (supportive family systems). By comparing these findings to literature, it became clear that all the findings correlated with current South African literature that documented risk and protective resources of youth living in a rural context, and there were no pertinent differences on which to report. In Chapter 5, which concludes this study, I detail how the findings fit with Ungar’s diagnostic criteria and discuss the applicability of Ungar’s theoretical framework as a tool for the educational psychologist to diagnose resilience.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION


In this chapter the research questions are re-visited and the findings of the study discussed as they relate to the sub-questions and primary research question. Thereafter, the limitations inherent in the study are discussed. The contribution the research makes to knowledge in the field is explained. The chapter is concluded with recommendations for future research.


5.2 QUESTIONS REVISITED

5.2.1 Research Sub-questions Revisited

The primary research question: *‘How do first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar’s diagnostic criteria for resilience among rural SiSwati-speaking South African adolescents?’* links to the following sub-questions:

- What does a first sandtray reveal about adversity?
- What does a first sandtray reveal about individual and contextual resources?
- What does a first sandtray reveal about developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant resilience processes?
- What are the implications for the utility of sandtray use with South Africa’s dominant population (i.e., black South Africans)?

Figure 5.1 provides an illustrated summary of the findings of this study as they relate to the sub-questions above. The figure depicts the individual adolescent and the various systems that surround the individual (i.e., the family, school, community, and macro-system). The risk factors (revealing information relating to adversity expressed by adolescents) are illustrated in the left-half of the various systemic circles. The protective resources (revealing information about individual and contextual resources) are illustrated in the right-half of the various systemic circles. The factors outlined in a square () refer to risks/protective resources which I identified as culturally appropriate (based on

literature such as Bujo, 2009; Edwards et al., 2005; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Germann, 2005; Mampane & Boucher, 2006; Mandela, 1995; Phasha, 2010; Smukler, 1990; Theron, 2015). The factors outlined in a circle () relate to risks/protective resources which I identified as developmentally appropriate (based on literature such as Ebersöhn, 2012; Mothiba & Maputle, 2012; Murali & Oyabode, 2004).

As summarised in Chapter 4 (Sections 4.1- 4-7), all of the above are noted in South African literature. Thus the answers to the sub-questions 1, 2 and 3 reveal that the risks and resources of SiSwati speaking adolescents fit with existing South African knowledge.

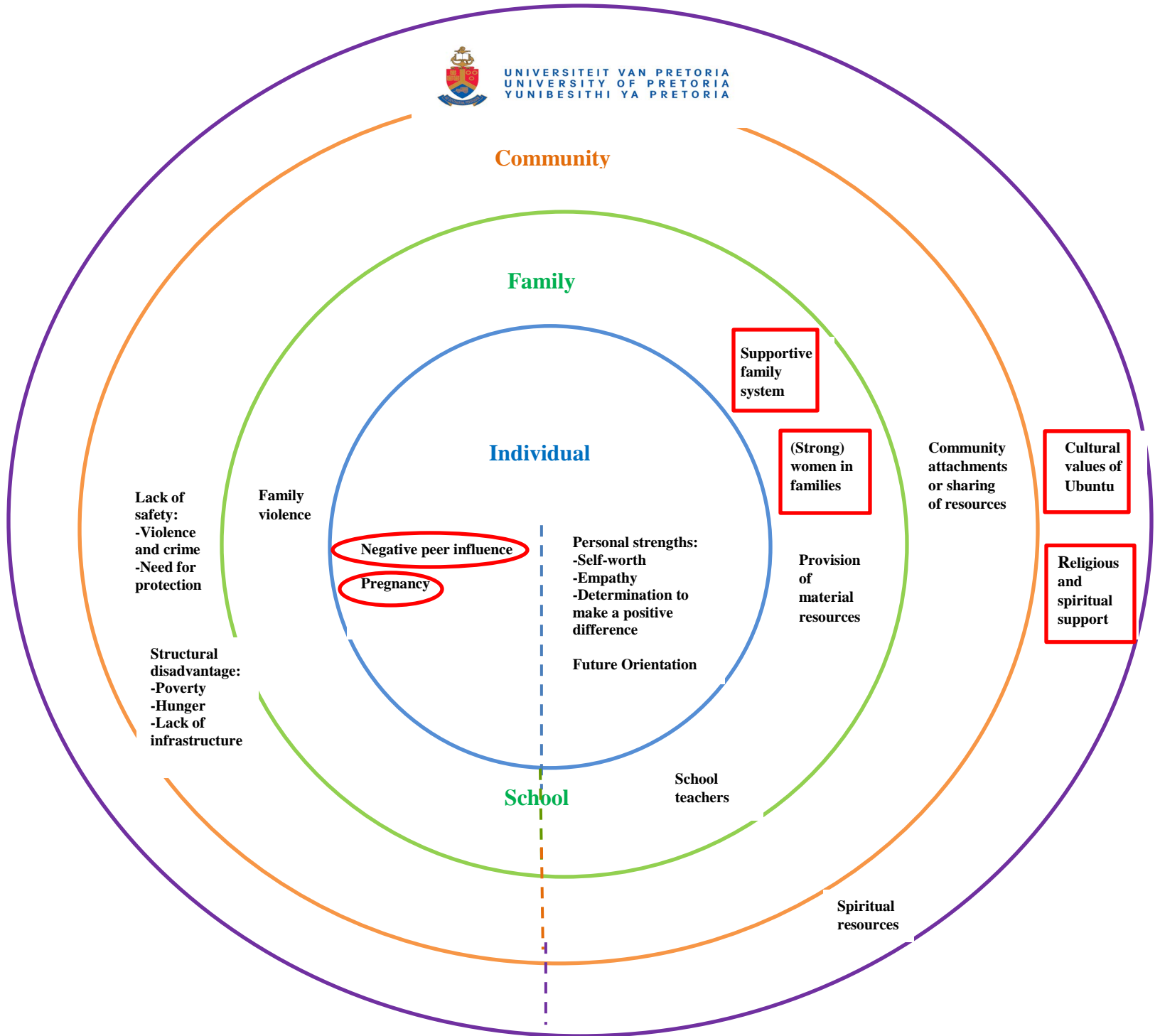


Figure 5.1: Summary of findings that answer the research sub-questions

From Figure 5.1, it is apparent that first sandtrays do provide indications of adversity as expressed by young people. Risk factors (individual, school-related, family-related, and community-related) were apparent in photographs of sandtrays, narratives of the sandtrays, and the facilitators' observations and reflections thereof. First sandtrays have utility to reveal information about individual and contextual resources relevant and important to adolescents from a rural school (including individual, school-related, family-related, community and macro-systemic resources). These risks and resources were made apparent even though the first sandtrays were constructed in a group context (i.e., while each young person had his/her own tray, the other group members could see what was built and hear the explanation). Working in a group context may have posed certain limitations on the clients and influenced the expressions articulated and responses provided by the client when probed by the MEd (educational psychology) students. For example, the clients may have felt uncomfortable expressing certain responses which other clients in their surroundings may have been able to observe. Clients could also have observed another client's sandtray and felt the need to replicate an expression they observed in another sandtray. However given that the context is a resource-constrained one, it seems that the benefit of using the sandtray in a group context outweighs its limitations.

Given what Figure 5.1 illustrates, it suggests that in the specific context of this study, which is a rural resource-constrained context, where the young people's mother language was SiSwati, there is utility for using first sandtrays, also in groups (sub-question 4). Research shows that there are a limited number of educational psychologists in South Africa (Flanagan, 2014). This means that a one-on-one therapeutic approach may be a limited modality to use in implementing effective assessments and psychological interventions. It thus seems that educational psychologists need to respond to the need of groups (instead of focusing on one-on-one individual interventions). If the educational psychologist considers the risks and resources that are common across the sandtrays of 50 young people, the educational psychologist may form a comprehensive understanding of the risks and the existing resources that can be used to manage those risks. In other words, the application of a resilience lens (Ungar's resilience criteria) to multiple first sandtrays has utility in that the resulting insights offer the educational psychologist a starting point to plan group-

based interventions. In addition, applying a resilience lens (Ungar's resilience criteria) to first sandtrays could support educational psychologists to be agents of change. Hart and colleagues (2016), and Seccombe (2002) have argued that it is not enough to understand how vulnerable adolescents 'beat the odds'. In addition, educational psychologists and other practitioners and service providers need to work to change the odds that result in young people being vulnerable. One way to do this is to understand which resources need to be sustained and which resources are absent and need to be amplified. To do this the educational psychologist may need to lobby various social groups and activists to provide those resources, as well to teach young people to negotiate with those resources.

The above resonates with my educational psychology internship experience, during which I experienced a great need for educational psychological services with too few educational psychologists to meet the needs of the majority of the population. The findings of this study excite me, as they offer a solution to this problem. Educational psychologists would do well to apply a resilience lens to diagnostic and therapeutic media (such as sandtray work) that are user-friendly for the majority of South Africans to better understand the needs and resources of a group. The educational psychologist can use these insights to support young people and their communities to manage the risks and to mobilise social support to gain additional necessary resources for this group. This implies that the insights can support the educational psychologist to work preventively but also proactively, and to do so in collaboration with a specific community (Theron, 2016a).

5.2.2 Primary Research Question Revisited

The answers to the sub-questions posed in Section 5.2.1 came from applying Ungar's diagnostic criteria and so imply that *first sandtrays can facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria for resilience, also among rural SiSwati-speaking Souths African adolescents*. Later in this section, how first sandtrays facilitate the operationalisation of Ungar's diagnostic criteria is discussed and illustrated by referring to each stage of the diagnostic process. The caveats implicit in each stage are noted, as relevant.

In Stage 1, assessment of 'above normal' exposure to adversity is required, and Stage 2 requires assessment (and indication of) of exposure to chronic and/or severe experiences of adversity. It was evident from the findings that the first sandtrays did

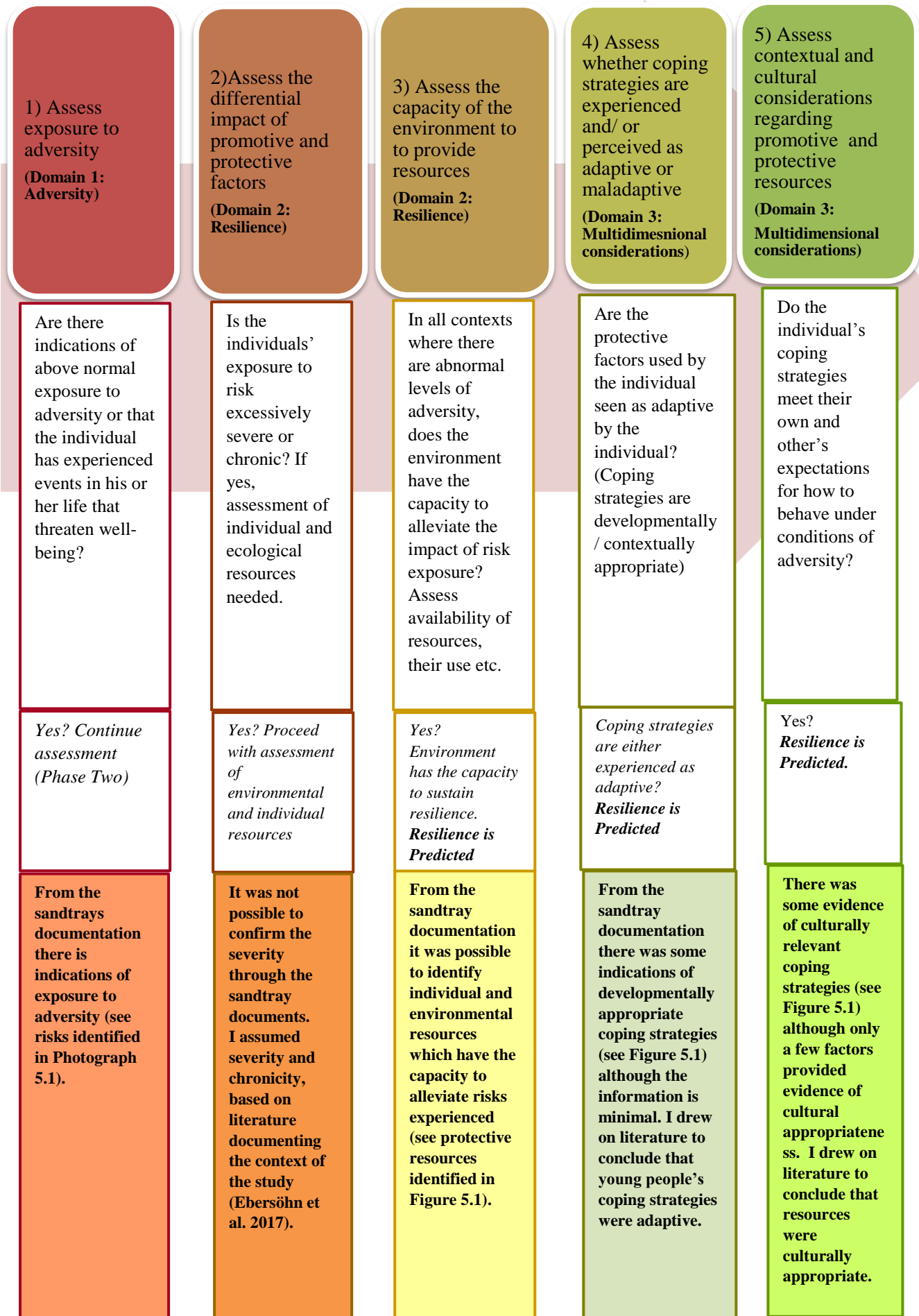
provide indications of exposure to multiple risks (Chapter 4, Sections 4.2-4.7) and thus there was evidence of adversity experienced (Stage 1). In addition, the sandtray documentation provided some indications of exposure to severe experiences of adversity (Stage 2). For example a few of the first sandtrays showed indications of violence and crime in the community (Chapter 4, Section 4.5.1), which can be considered severe. South African literature confirms that adolescents' experiences of violence and crime may be significant in negatively influencing their wellbeing (Leoschut, 2009; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007). Although there was limited information relating to the chronicity of adversity experienced, I assumed that adversity experienced was chronic. My assumption was based on relevant South African literature and on prior publications relating to the FLY study which showed that the environment (rural context) in which participating adolescents live is consistently challenged by various severe social and socio-economic issues (Ebersöhn et al., 2017; Makiwane et al., 2012).

Stage 3 requires assessment of individual and environmental resources (availability, their use). The sandtray documentation provided valuable information regarding individual and environmental resources which are important to adolescents and may help them in alleviating the impact of risk exposure (Figure 5.1). This was probably the easiest stage to operationalise and emphasises that sandtrays have utility for South African educational psychologists who work with dominant South African population groups.

Some of the multidimensional considerations required for a resilience diagnosis, such as the developmental and cultural appropriateness, can be identified in some of the risk and protective factors (as illustrated in Figure 5.1). However, information pertaining to developmental and cultural appropriateness of each risk factor or resource was limited. The first sandtray documentation did not provide sufficient detail regarding developmental appropriateness of individual and contextual risk factors and resources. The risk factors which I identified as developmentally appropriate, related to relevant literature documenting that these factors are relevant to adolescents (Ebersöhn, 2012; Mothiba & Maputle, 2012; Murali & Oyabode, 2004). In addition to this, the sandtray documentation did not provide sufficient detail relating to whether the individual contextual resources are culturally appropriate. The contextual resources, which I identified as culturally appropriate, once more reflected what I learnt from relevant literature documenting that these resources are culturally relevant (Bujo, 2009; Edwards et al., 2005; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Germann, 2005; Mampane & Bouwer,

2006; Mandela, 1995; Phasha, 2010; Smukler, 1990; Theron, 2015). Essentially, in order to understand cultural salience (one of Ungar's multidimensional criteria for diagnosing resilience) it was necessary to review relevant literature as well as to be culturally sensitive. Such sensitivity acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of culture (e.g., the norms, values and practices that a group shares and reinforces) and that culture is fluid (Panter-Brick, 2015). Cultural sensitivity promotes the adaption of psychological and other services to meet culturally unique needs (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). In spite of the paucity of developmentally and culturally explicit information obtained from the first sandtrays, the information obtained does still provide the educational psychologist with a culturally and developmentally sensitive tool to enable resilience (Figure 5.1). Particularly in South Africa, where there seems to be limited availability of such tools (Ebersöhn, 2008; Maree, 2010; McMahon & Patton, 2002), this suggests that operationalising Ungar's resilience criteria via sandtrays merits further study.

In summary, Figure 5.2 completes the decision tree for diagnosing resilience (first shown in Chapter 1, Figure 1.1) and summarises the researcher's answer to the primary research question.



5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

I identified a number of limitations for this study during the research process. The first limitation relates to the fact that the documentation I selected captured one point in time. The sandtray documentation I selected was generated on a single occasion, when a group of educational psychology Master's students worked with a group of adolescents at a rural school. SERT (Ungar, 2011) and other resilience theorists (e.g., Masten, 2014; Panter-Brick, 2015) respect that part of the complexity of resilience is that risks and resilience resources change over time. If I had sampled the FLY year in which a first and second sandtray were made by each client I may have been able to account/ monitor for time. If I had sampled the three years of available data, I may also have obtained different results. Caruana, Roman, Hernandez-Sanchez and Solli (2015) note the advantages of longitudinal cohort studies and state that longitudinal studies enable the researcher to follow change over time, and enable the researcher to define different exposures with regards to timing and chronicity.

Another limitation relates to clients of this study being a fairly homogenous group (e.g. SiSwati-speaking adolescents living in a resource-poor rural community attending high school). Including a more diverse sample of clients (rural and urban adolescents who have dropped out of school; or rural and urban school-attending adolescents from different ethnic backgrounds) may have produced different findings (alternative/atypical risk and resources may be identified).

A third limitation (which was hinted at in Chapter 4) is that what was built during the first sandtray might have been constrained by the choice of figurines. Although sandtray work relies on symbolic use of the sand and figurines (Gallerani & Dybicz, 2011; Weinrib, 2004), the researcher did wonder whether the lack of school-related figurines/symbols influenced the relative under-reporting of school-related resources. Theron (2016b) theorised that the research method and materials influence how South African adolescents account for their resilience. Allied to this, and as mentioned in Chapter 3, the secondary nature of the data meant that I could not collect additional data where the information for categories/codes was thin. I could not observe data saturation principles (see Creswell, 2012).



5.4 REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity, which may be defined as researcher's awareness of his or her effect on the process and outcomes of research is important to consider throughout the research process (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). In this section I discuss shortly the various personal limitations which may have influenced the research process.

I could not ignore the thinking about how I may have already influenced the research process by choosing specific research methodologies and literature. I have also thought about how the inherent qualities of the people who facilitated the first sandtrays (MEd educational psychology students) may have influenced the findings and recording of information. Because I was not directly involved in the collection of the data, I could not probe or ask clients for clarity on certain issues where it may have been necessary for me to do so. I had no control on the recording of information and data and it is important for me to bring this into consideration with regards to the possible influence this may have had on the research findings.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 Recommendations Relating to Future Research

It would be helpful to repeat the study in ways that address the above mentioned limitations. To this end the researcher recommends that the study be repeated with diverse groups of black South African adolescents (e.g., urban and rural, school-going and non-school-going). It is also recommended that another study be repeated in which groups be engaged in a longitudinal study that allows opportunity for multiple sandtrays with a wide variety of figurines (i.e. figurines relating to individual, family, school, community and macro-systemic risks and resources). It may then be useful in future research involving first sandtrays to explore how using various figurines (or a variety of objects) may accordingly influence or change the responses or comments of clients. All of the aforementioned factors could allow opportunity to learn whether/how the risks and resources reported in this study hold true for other South African youth and over time and provide greater insight into the complexity of resilience (Masten, 2014).

Although identifying and exploring how individuals cope with adversity is important in the field of resilience research, it is equally important to explore how change can be implemented and resources mobilised effectively to champion and enable resilience. Hart and colleagues (2016) note that it is urgent for resilience research

to go beyond understanding and documenting how individuals coped with adversity, to challenge structures that create disadvantage and to contribute to a new wave of research that unites resilience research and practice development with social justice and activism. To this end, it is my opinion that it could be useful to conduct a follow-up study in which the educational psychologist or researcher explores how adversity and resilience factors identified in this study could inform the planning of effective strategies to limit risk and amplify resources, and how the resources identified can effectively be used to mitigate risks and adversity experienced by adolescents.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Educational Psychologists

Educational psychologists should be trained in the sandtray modality and be trained to operationalise Ungar's resilience criteria via sandtray work, as this combination appears useful to generate useful information about risks and resources even when working with clients who do not speak the same language as the educational psychologist. This links to the need for psychological measures that are applicable to the majority for South Africans (Maree, 2010; Theron, 2016b). In addition, first sandtrays coupled with a resilience diagnosis provide meaningful information to practitioners about which resources may be most beneficial to individuals to encourage and enable positive change. In other words, the resulting information can be used to plan interventions. Educational psychologists will also need to be trained as culturally sensitive practitioners (Panter-Brick, 2015), and be competent in identifying developmentally appropriate risks and culturally and contextually relevant resources (in order to optimally understand and a champion resilience) (Section 5.2.2, discussing cultural competence and multidimensional criteria refers).

As explained earlier, it was noted that there is potential value in using a collective approach to diagnose resilience, as it allows for educational psychologists to understand risks and resilience of the group. If the educational psychologist understands what is common across the sandtrays of a group of young people, a fuller understanding may be formed of the risks and the existing resources that can be used to manage those risks. In other words, applying a resilience lens (Ungar's resilience criteria) to multiple first sandtrays has utility in that the resulting insights offer the educational psychologist a starting point to plan group-based interventions. This seems particularly valuable in a resource constrained society such as South Africa, in which majority of the population is challenged by social problems and in which the need for social services and

interventions outweighs the availability thereof (Gardiner, 2005; Henderson, 2006; Kritzinger, 2002).

5.6 CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study it can be concluded that first sandtrays can be used as a tool to diagnose resilience among SiSwati speaking adolescents at a rural school. Both adversity and resilience-promoting protective resources were identified in the first sandtrays and resilience could be predicted. This study highlights the importance of exploring the diagnosis of resilience and how the knowledge obtained in working with a collective or group may potentially be beneficial in informing intervention strategies for future studies of resilience. In addition, this study reminded me that change is key and, although knowledge regarding identification of risk and resilience is significantly important, educational psychologists should aim to use this knowledge to facilitate change in the lives of adolescents and communities. My vision for the educational psychologist is to act as an agent of change, and use the most effective measures to effect social change in the lives of young people by focusing on sustaining and mobilising resources towards groups. In the wise words of Nelson Mandela, *'Action without vision is only passing time. Vision without action is merely daydreaming. But vision with action can change the world'*. The use of sandtrays in conjunction with Ungar's resilience criteria potentiates this 'vision with action'.



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ADDENDUM A

***A-priori* coding table with evidence of relevant risks and protective resources (individual, family-related, school-related, community-related and macro-systemic risks and protective resources) obtained from documentation of first sandtrays.**

Risks/ Protective resources	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Relevant literature	Indications of risks and resources identified in sandtray documentation (according to client files)
Adolescent specific risks: Adolescent life-stage (AR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Negative peer influence; ○ ‘Risky’ sexual behaviour leading to pregnancy, STD’s; ○ Experimenting with drugs/ alcohol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive peer pressure; developmentally inappropriate behaviours that put young people at risk, e.g. taking on adult roles or responsibilities. 	Ebersohn, 2012; Murali & Oyabode, 2004.	File nr 612015- ‘She is not interested in having any friends or boyfriends because friends hurt you and boyfriends only want to make you pregnant’
Adolescent specific protective resources: 1) Personal strengths (PINTRA-1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Optimism ○ Sense of self-worth ○ Determination to make a positive difference ○ Showing agency towards solutions of problems ○ Equanimity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Excessive use of personal strengths to the detriment of an individual’s well-being. For example, having excessively high self-expectations leading to feelings of inadequacy. 	Cortina et al., 2016; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron et al., 2013; Van Breda, 2015.	File nr 052015- ‘She identifies as the bodyguard inside the building who is protecting the other figure- the bodyguard is rewarded for her effort’. File nr 062015- ‘He identifies as the bodyguard, no matter what a bodyguard will always be present to protect his family’. File nr 132015- ‘I am the security helping the animals and I save the sheep’. File nr 162015- ‘If he could change anything he would change the bad place and make it good. He would do this by taking away the dangerous animals’. File nr 172015- ‘In the garden I feel good because you are planting the flowers and I like the animals... my favourite animal is the rhino because it is a good animal and doesn’t fight with the others’. File nr 252015- ‘I am the big soldier helping the others’ File nr 262015- ‘I am the eagle, sitting on top of the tree- I like people and don’t want to see them struggle’.



				<p>File nr 272015- 'I have pride, must have self-confidence and be proud of myself'.</p> <p>File nr282015- 'She said that she wants to help people'.</p> <p>File nr 442015- 'He wants to be the ranger who protects the animals... it is safe with the ranger'.</p> <p>File nr 452015- 'I am the wild dog, I hunt for food and look after my family'.</p> <p>File nr 462015- 'I would be the police and protect people'.</p> <p>File nr 602015- 'She is the doll in the corner with the star in front of herself, meaning that she is a superstar... She wants to be a social worker one day and help people because of what she went through with her father'</p>
<p>2) Future orientation (PINTRA-2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focused on future goals; future career. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on future goals that may be potentially detrimental (e.g. wanting to be a gangster) 	<p>Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Theron et al., 2013.</p>	<p>File nr 032015- 'My goal is to have a house, a garden and to farm with animals'</p> <p>File nr 112015- 'When I am 20 I will be at university or in the military, reading my books'.</p> <p>File nr 212015- 'In the end I would like to be rich with money, cars and a big horse (so that I can put the cattle in place. This will make a good life'.</p> <p>File nr 272015- 'The butterflies are making life beautiful. They are like me- I want to be a doctor and help people'.</p> <p>File nr 602015- File nr 602015- ' She wants to be a social worker one day and help people because of what she went through with her father...she aims to achieve her goals by being successful and working hard'.</p>
<p>3) Education engagement (PINTRA-3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being committed to educational progress ○ Scholastic progress or achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support from educational role-players 	<p>Dass-Brailford, 2005; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Phasha, 2010; Theron, 2007; Theron, 2015; Theron et al. 2013.</p>	<p>No evidence</p>



<p>Social ecological risks (Family-related):</p> <p>1) HIV/AIDS and psychosocial challenges related challenges</p> <p>(SER-1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loss and grief; ○ Child-headed households; ○ Orphanhood; ○ Psychosocial and psychological challenges associated with HIV/AIDS, divorce or family poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pregnancy or risky sexual behaviour. 	<p>Ebersöhn 2010; Hlatswayo, 2004; Loots, Eberöohn & Eloff, 2012; Theron, 2015; Theron et al., 2013; UN AIDS, 2004.</p>	<p>File Nr 612015 - 'Her father passed away and she had to care for him for two years. As a result she had to leave school to care for him for two years. Her mother is working in Swaziland to support all of them'.</p>
<p>2) Violence within the family</p> <p>(SER-2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical, emotional or sexual violence within the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Experiences of violence outside of the family (e.g community-related violence). 	<p>Barabarin & Richter, 2001; Shields et al., 2006; Theron & Theron, 2013.</p>	<p>File nr 282015- 'She told me that her stepfather killed her mother'.</p> <p>File nr 622015- 'He told me that he doesn't know where his mother is since his father tried to kill his mother by strangling her'</p>
<p>Family-related protective resources</p> <p>1) Supportive family systems</p> <p>(PINTER-1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mother, father (or parents) ○ Cultural reality of strong women and nurturing women kin: Mothers, grandmothers, sisters and aunts as significant actors in the resilience processes of young people. ○ Guardians ○ Siblings (biological or step/half siblings) ○ Extended family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supportive neighbours, peers or community members (i.e., supportive others who might act like family but are not blood relatives or legal guardians). 	<p>Theron et al., 2013; Theron, 2015.</p>	<p>File nr 042015- 'The women in the middle are working'</p> <p>File nr 082015- 'The grandmother is feeding the chickens and they are happy'.</p> <p>File nr 112015- 'Where I live, I live with my family I am feeling good'.</p> <p>File nr 122015- 'I love my brother'.</p> <p>File Nr. 172015 - 'In the house there are sisters. It is safe in the house. There are two sisters in the house and him. They are cooking food and keeping the house. They take care of him'.</p> <p>File nr 182015- 'The single banana figure towards the right corner, he described as his mother. She is going to fetch bananas and other food from the forest'.</p> <p>File nr 232015- 'It's good to go home- the children feel happy to see their father'.</p> <p>File nr 352015- 'He explained that the river in his tray are like his parents. They love him and will buy him anything he wants'.</p>



				<p>File nr 602015- 'It is important to have a happy home and a good family'.</p> <p>File nr 612015- 'She loves her mother very much and in everything she does wants to make them proud of her'.</p> <p>File nr 632015- 'He portrayed a family that was happy and supported each other in all that they were doing. His mother, which is the one standing in the middle of the town, was identified as an asset as she is currently looking after him'</p>
<p>2) Material resources</p> <p>(PINTER-2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nutrition, ○ Shelter, ○ Clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Material resources, which are not essential to survival and healthy development of an individual. Eg. Access to Television. 	<p>Ebersohn, Eloff, Finestone, Grobler & Moen, 2015; Cameron, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2007.</p>	<p>File 192015- 'Inside the house it feels good. Mom wants to open the fridge which has food and drinks in it'.</p> <p>File nr 352015- 'The chickens provided food for other animals, people and family'.</p> <p>File nr 372015- '...the chicken and frog are resource as they are for eating and drinking'.</p>
<p>School-related risks:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor quality education (accessible, quality education) ○ School violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Violence and risks which are not directly related to school ○ School attendance 	<p>Loots, 2010; Spaul, 2015; Swartz & Soudien, 2015; Van Den Berg et al, 2015</p>	<p>No evidence</p>
<p>School-related protective resources:</p> <p>1) Supportive school systems</p> <p>(PINTER-3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adequate support structures ○ Caring teachers ○ School community of connectedness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community service providers who offer services at schools. 	<p>Ebersohn, & Fereirra, 2011; Engelbrecht, 2012; Malindi & Machejje, 2012; Mampane & Bouwer, 2006.</p>	<p>File nr 552015- 'My teacher Mr [surname] is supportive'</p>
<p>Community-related risks:</p> <p>1) Lack of safety</p> <p>(SER-3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inadequate shelter ○ Unsafe schools ○ Violence & crime ○ Inaccessibility of police services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-inflicted harm or violence. 	<p>Cramer, 2014. Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Richter & Desmond, 2008; Shields et al., 2006; Theron 2015; Theron et al., 2013.</p>	<p>File nr 012015- 'There are army men and guards looking after them'</p> <p>File nr 032015- 'People want to kill the animals' and 'police are protecting the animals'.</p> <p>File nr 052015- 'The animals outside are in danger of being killed'</p> <p>File nr 062015- 'There is a house which is being protected by a body guard. This is to defend the house against criminals'.</p>



				<p>File nr 072015- ‘The snake wants to eat the elephant and is dangerous’.</p> <p>File nr 082015- ‘The elephant and her baby would like to drink water but can’t because of a fight with the rhino’.</p> <p>File nr 092015- ‘She would like to go see the animals on the other side of the road, but is too scared. The car on the road contains escaped criminals. Despite the frog’s best attempts at escape, it will be eaten as there is no chance of rescue by the police’.</p> <p>File nr 102015- ‘Two armies are fighting, the silver circle represents danger’ and ‘the police are chasing a car because it is not legal’.</p> <p>File nr 122015- ‘It is not safe in the river- animals will kill and eat you’.</p> <p>File nr 132015- ‘People are shooting and steal the animals’.</p> <p>File nr 142015- ‘Animals are in the reserve. Soldiers are in the car and are shooting, people are stealing the animals’.</p> <p>File nr 152015- ‘Bad people are shooting, they don’t want each other in their worlds’ and ‘there is a skeleton, where someone died, I am scared because it might kill me too’.</p> <p>File nr 162015- ‘There is a game ranger who is telling people this place is dangerous’.</p> <p>File nr 172015- ‘The guards are looking after the animals because people are killing the animals and trying to take the rhino’s horn’.</p> <p>File nr 182015- ‘The guard protects the animals and shoots people who try hurt the animals’.</p> <p>File nr 192015- ‘At the front door there is a guard trying to keep the house safe’.</p> <p>File nr 202015- ‘The armies are fighting each other with zulu knives... and mean are bowing because they are afraid of the guns and the animals are afraid because of the sounds of the gun... soldiers will die’.</p> <p>File nr 212015- There is a big soldier (the captain) fighting against criminals and stopping the criminals’.</p>
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				<p>File nr 232015- ‘Soldiers want to kill the rhino. He feels cared because people are looking’.</p> <p>File nr 242015- ‘The dinosaurs want to eat the lion but the security called the police to shoot the dinosaurs... it is safe only inside the boundaries’.</p> <p>File nr 262015- ‘The bad guys want to shoot the animals’.</p> <p>File nr 272015- ‘The guards are at the house protecting you from anything that anything that wants to hurt you, like thieves that want to steal’.</p> <p>File nr 282015- ‘The soldiers are defending and preparing to help people- at the houses there is danger because thieves are killing people’.</p> <p>File nr 292015- ‘The fence is very important. The police came first when you have to go through the fence. They alarm you with alarms’.</p> <p>File nr 302015- ‘The road is not safe, people die because of drunk driving and accidents.....’The house is only safe with security guards’.</p> <p>File nr 312015- ‘The other section represents people fighting and killing each other, he calls it a war zone and it is unsafe’.</p> <p>File nr 322015- ‘There is a car crash where people died and it is unsafe’.</p> <p>File nr 342015- ‘An unsafe place is where there is a war-zone. The presence of thieves and rhino poachers also makes the place unsafe’.</p> <p>File nr 352015- ‘There are rangers and a tank to make sure the animals are safe. If the fences were removed and the animals were to run free they would eat each other’.</p> <p>File nr 382015- ‘She stated that she would like to be tortoise in the scene as the tortoise is protected by a shell and cannot be hurt when beaten’.</p> <p>File nr 452015- ‘There is a reserve to keep the animals safe... the army look after the animals... and the plane is for rangers to look after people who want to scare the animals’.</p>
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				<p>File nr 462015- 'The gate and rangers look after the animals and people'.</p> <p>File nr 472015- 'I am the gun and can shoot anyone that threatens me'.</p> <p>File nr 482015- 'Rangers look after the animals... it is only safe with the rangers'.</p> <p>File nr 562015- 'She wants to feel safe'.</p> <p>File nr 612015- 'Soldiers are fighting to protect the animals'</p> <p>File nr 622015- 'He told me that he doesn't know where his mother is since his father tried to kill his mother by strangling her'.</p> <p>File nr 642015- 'Throughout the sandtray there are soldiers that look after the animals... he doesn't like it when people hurt the animals and other people'.</p>
<p>2) Structural disadvantage (SER-4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poverty ○ Hunger ○ Limited access to basic essential infrastructures (such as electricity, running water etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access to services, which are not essential for the survival and healthy development of individuals. E.g. Access to Hairdressers, Shopping malls, etc. 	<p>Ebersohn & Ferreira, 2012; De Lannoy et al., 2015; Erasmus & Breier, 2009; Loots et al., 2010; Malleson, 2009; Spaull, 2015; Theron, 2015; Theron et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2013.</p>	<p>File nr 162015- 'They want food and something to sell to other people from the dangerous place'.</p> <p>File nr. 182015- A young male explained the following about his sandtray: 'The right hand side is a village, the place where I grew up- it's not a nice place, a place of poverty and difficult life'.</p> <p>File nr. 082015-, the photo of the sandtray showed a snake and in the narrative the following (demonstrating poverty) was explained: 'the snake is looking for food but has not found any'.</p> <p>File nr.192015 – 'The crocodiles want to eat the other animals because they are hungry'-</p> <p>Lack of infrastructure, as a community-related risk :</p> <p>File nr. 182015), a young man explained the following about his sandtray: 'If I can change anything I will add a shop for people to buy things and that a wealthy person can look after the people in the village'.</p>
<p>Community-related protective resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing of resources (such as food, clothing) and support from reliable others. ○ Supportive community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community structures which do not positively benefit (or contribute to) individuals well-being. 	<p>Pillay & Nesengani, 2006; Theron, 2007; Van Rensburg & Barnard, 2005.</p>	<p>File nr. 182015- 'The first is his house, the second is his neighbour. They are both 'normal' in terms of income and share household goods and support each other if either is in need'.</p>



(PINTER-4)	structures (e.g. churches/ counselling centres).			File nr 592015- 'You still need to go to church to re-energise'. File nr. 632015- 'He identified his community life as an asset in his life'
Macro-systemic risks: (SER-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social injustice and unequal distribution of resources has been found to be challenging ○ Negative cultural practices which hinder positive development (e.g. when family systems made demands that children and adolescents could not realise, resilience may be obstructed) 		Henderson, 2006; Panter-Brick & Eggerman, 2012.	No evidence
Macro-systemic resources: 1)Spiritual support 2) Adhering to values of Ubuntu 3) National policies (PINTER-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Religious and spiritual support (includes beliefs of ancestors and spiritual support and guidance). ○ Adhering to values of Ubuntu and togetherness. ○ Policies such as the Children's act, the Social Grant policy and other health policies) which support adolescents and may act as a protective resource in enabling youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Values, which are not specifically attributed to African contexts such as individualism (Western values). 	Ebersohn, 2014; Jamieson, du Toit and Dobson, 2015; Theron et al., 2013.	File nr 022015- 'All animals are gathering to be close to one another'. File nr 102015- 'The skeleton represents a ghost that has come to give the woman a shock, because she did not listen. She will listen after this' File nr 202015- 'The angels are coming to the pastor to talk to help people, the baobab is like a spiritual sea'. File nr. 322105-'The grave-yard is a safe place where people can rest and there is peace'.



ADDENDUM B

Ngilandi Assessment Battery- 2015 (Sandtray Activity only)



Ngilandi Assessment Battery

2015

Assessor Booklet



Activity 9: Sandtray

Time: Highly variable, will be done throughout day 1 and 2 (anywhere from 5 min to 45 min)

Try to complete the majority of clients' trays on the first day

Materials:

- Sandtray: painted blue on the inside, filled halfway with sand.
- Miniatures
- Water
- Notepad and pen for taking notes
- Camera

Domains:

- Adaptability
- Emotions
- Context / Rurality
- Sandtray

Instruction:

- Clients will be taken from the group one at a time to do a sandtray.
- *“Build your world in the sand/ build a world in the sand/ create your world in the sand/ create a world in the sand”.*

Prompts:

- a) What is the title of your world/ scene?
- b) Tell me about it?
- c) Tell me more about what is happening?
- d) Which miniature represents you?
- e) Ask about other miniatures in the tray.
- f) Who has the most power?
- g) If you could be anywhere in the tray, where would that be?



h) Ask further questions using the information that the client gives you.

<i>General'comments'/ 'Observations'</i>	
<i>Day'1'</i>	<i>Activity: Sandplay</i>



Name

<i>Name</i>