Enabling white, Afrikaans-speaking adolescents towards post-divorce resilience: implications for educators

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*Using rich qualitative data, we describe the ecosystemically-embedded pro-
tective antecedents that enabled 10 white, Afrikaans-speaking adolescents from
divorced families towards resilience. The description both confirms and extends
what was known about the roots of adolescent resilience, post-divorce. We use
these findings to capacitate educators who are mandated to care for needy lear-
ners, such as those from divorced homes. The findings provide more than mere
implications for educators — given their simplicity, they make it possible for
educators to make the most of these to champion resilience.*

Keywords: adolescence; divorce; ecosystemic; protective resources;
qualitative; resilience

Introduction

Resilience is notoriously difficult to define: since the late 1980s when it
garnered much research limelight, researchers have debated how best to
define this complex phenomenon (Luthar, Cichetti & Becker, 2000; Liebenberg
& Ungar, 2009; Masten, 2001). Although there is still little consensus, resili-
ence has come to mean adaptive behaviour in the face of difficult circum-
stances, be they acute or chronic (Masten, 2001). Such adaptive behaviour is
thought to be dynamic (i.e. not necessarily fixed, or achieved in a prescribed
period of time) and nurtured by reciprocal, health-affirming transactions
between young people and their ecologies (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009). The
evidence of resilience is found in the process and outcome of a young person
thriving despite adversity and/or recovering from trauma.

Divorce is one form of adversity (even trauma) that increasingly places
young people at risk for maladaptive outcomes, as the incidence of divorce is
mushrooming, also among South African families (Basson, 2003; Bezuiden-
hout, 2008) with white, Afrikaans-speaking families being most affected
(Statistics SA, 2007). International (Huurre, Junkkari & Aro, 2006; Storksen,
Roysamb, Moum & Tambs, 2005) and South Afrian studies (Basson, 2003;
Cowan, 1999; Jakobsen, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Venter, 2006) have docu-
mented the insidious effects of divorce on adolescents. In some instances, the
legal act of divorce brings relief from the adversarial family functioning, but
it is also frequently true that within-family adversity (such as conflict, parent
alienation and guilt-tripping) continue long after a marriage has ceased to
exist (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). For this reason it is hard to determine
whether divorce should be conceptualised as an acute or chronic stressor.
Regardless of which, divorce generally puts adolescents at risk for mal-
adaptive outcomes.

Although pitfalls of divorce enjoy the limelight, there are accounts of resilient adolescents from divorced homes (Amato, 1993; Eldar-Avidan, Haj-Yahia & Greenbaum, 2009; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). These studies transform (Mertens, 2009) how divorce is conceptualised. Likewise, we explore what contributed to the resilience of 10 white, Afrikaans-speaking South African adolescents whose parents divorced. This focus and our inclusion of adolescents as co-producers of a deeper understanding of adolescent resilience are essentially transformatory: we explore potential positives (resilience-promoting resources) in a traditionally negative context (divorce), and adolescents (often marginalised in the course of knowledge production) co-author this more positive knowledge (Mertens, 2009). Our aim in this article then is to use these transformatory insights to enable educators to better support adolescents challenged by parental divorce.

Increasingly resilience research is foregrounding educators as advocates of adolescent resilience (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Englund, Egeland & Collins, 2008). Similarly, South African educators are mandated to provide pastoral care to learners in need (DoE, 2000) (including adolescents in need because of parental divorce), but it is unclear to what extent educators are equipped to rise to this challenge. When educators have a rich understanding of what encourages resilience, they may be (more) enabled towards encouraging resilience and providing learners made vulnerable by parental divorce with apposite care. One way of encouraging educators (and their trainers) to develop such an understanding is via articles like this one.

Resilience following divorce: an ecosystemic understanding
Within a context of risk, resilience is a dynamic phenomenon that depends on a young person navigating towards and negotiating for resilience-enabling resources and on the ecology of that young person initiating and/or reciprocating negotiations for resilience-enabling resources (Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Othman, Kwong, Armstrong & Gilgun, 2007). Such resources include intrapersonal resources (such as problem-solving skills, relational skills, hopefulness) and interpersonal resources (such as adult mentoring, access to health services, and effective schools) (Masten & Reed, 2005). These resources are ecosystemically embedded in the four primary systems of the individual, culture, community and relationships (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Waller, 2001).

Typically, resilient adolescents report such intra- and inter-personal resources, including acceptance of their parents' divorce, positive reconceptualisation of divorce as an opportunity for growth, and limited lifestyle changes following divorce (Eldar-Avidan *et al.*, 2009; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003; Jakobsen, 2000). Resilient adolescents also report positive relationships with custodial and non-custodial parents, supportive parenting (also by stepparents) and the presence of supportive others (like siblings, grandparents, other adults, and caring professionals) (Eldar-Avidan *et al.*, 2009; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). Some adolescents are encouraged towards resilience

because parental divorce brings relief from difficult and conflicted home circumstances. For others, friends play key roles in healthy coping with divorce (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003; Howard & Johnson, 2000). Schools that provide safe routine and consistent, fair discipline, and that are staffed by caring educators encourage post-divorce resilience (Englund *et al.*, 2008; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003).

Clearly, post-divorce resilience is ascribed to resources integral to the ecosystemic situatedness of the adolescent. Most studies on post-divorce resilience reflect the ecosystemic situatedness of white, English-speaking (mostly north-American) adolescents. South African studies include white and non-white adolescents coping with divorce (Basson, 2003; Cowan, 1999; Hoek, 2005; Jakobsen, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Venter, 2006; Watson, 2003), but none of these studies focus on white Afrikaans-speaking adolescents and none emphasize resilience. More recently resilience researchers have cautioned that resilience research needs to be culturally nuanced (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Ungar *et al.*, 2007) if the resilience-process is to be fully understood. Because of this call for culturally-sensitive resilience research, the dearth of information on resilience among white Afrikaans-speaking adolescents and the fact that divorce is highest among white, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, we chose to explore the ecosystemic roots of their resilience.

Method
Data were collected using a triangulated mixed methods design (Ivankova, Creswell & Clark, 2007). Accordingly, we used the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM) (IRP, 2006) to identify the antecedents of resilience in post-divorce adolescents and semi-structured, individual interviews to understand the antecedents of resilience more deeply. Because we wish this article to enable educators to nurture the resilience of post-divorce adolescents, we are not as concerned with enumerating the antecedents of resilience as we are with deepening understanding thereof. For this reason, we report the qualitative findings and so only this part of the method will be described further.

Participants
The second author conducted semi-structured, individual interviews with 10 resilient white, Afrikaans-speaking adolescents from divorced homes (see Table 1 for demographic details). Only 10 adolescents were interviewed as data saturation was achieved (Merriam, 2008).

The participants were identified by two Advisory Panels (AP) (one per community). Because resilience is shaped by contextual and cultural variables, an informed AP (i.e. community members who had access to and knowledge of local young people) should guide the recruitment of participants in resilience-focused studies (Ungar, 2008). Our APs consisted of local headmasters, school counsellors and teachers. The second author met with the APs and provided a detailed ecosystemic description of resilience (Masten &

Table 1   Interview participants

Parti-cipant	Grade	Age	Gender	Years since divorce	Living arrangement	Area
1	9	14	Female	11	Father and stepmother	Mpumalanga
2	9	14	Female	7	Mother and stepfather	Mpumalanga
3	10	16	Female	6	Mother	Vaal Triangle
4	11	16	Female	16	Mother	Vaal Triangle
5	11	17	Female	14	Mother and stepfather	Mpumalanga
6	11	16	Male	9	Mother and stepfather	Vaal Triangle
7	10	16	Male	5	Mother and stepfather	Vaal Triangle
8	10	15	Male	6	Mother and stepfather	Vaal Triangle
9	9	15	Male	10	Mother	Mpumalanga
10	12	18	Male	1	Mother	Mpumalanga

Reed, 2005). The APs then discussed how they conceptualised resilience, especially within their context, and a working definition of resilience was agreed on. The working definition of resilience was conceptualised as evidence of adaptation to an altered home-life, future-orientation, positive behaviour, relational bonds, and school progress. This definition did not differ across the provinces, possibly because the socioeconomic (i.e. urban middle class) and cultural (i.e. Afrikaans) variables were homogenous.

Because resilience is generally defined as a positive response to 'current or past hazards' (Masten, 2001:228) and because it is difficult to determine when divorce stops being adversarial to individuals (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003), we did not prescribe the length of time since parents divorced. The AP focused on identifying youth from divorced homes that displayed resilience according to the aforementioned working definition.

Ethical considerations

An AP member contacted identified young people to invite voluntary partici-pation. This protected youth against coercion from the researchers (Mertens, 2009). When young persons agreed, the second author met with them and proceeded with a detailed and signed informed consent procedure. She also emphasized standard ethical rights (e.g. anonymity, right to withdraw, and debriefing) (Strydom, 2005). We were mindful that in reflecting on their resilience surrounding their parents' divorce, participants could experience discomfort related to memories of the divorce (Mertens, 2009). We were pre-pared to refer them to local counsellors, but this was not necessary.

Process of data generation

We chose individual interviews over focus group interviews as the latter were not well aligned with the ethical rights of privacy and confidentiality (Strydom, 2005), which we believed were of even more importance given the sensitive focus (i.e. resilience following divorce) of our study. Furthermore, very recent

resilience research encourages methodology that facilitates individual articulation of the experience of resilience or "... the interviewee's own theory of his/her way of making it against all odds" (Teram & Ungar, 2009:120). Individual interviews encouraged the latter. The interview protocol included:

- What/who made it possible for you to cope with your parents' divorce?
- What made it hard for you to cope with your parents' divorce?
- How do you think your parents' divorce is going to influence you in the future?
- What advantages did your parents' divorce have for you?
- What advice do you have for other teens whose parents are divorcing? (How can they cope better?)

Probing questions were added as necessary.

The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, before being translated. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and took place after school in venues convenient to the participants (mostly offices made available at participants' schools).

Data analysis

The transcripts were content-analysed: sensitizing concepts (i.e. responses suggestive of adolescent resilience reminiscent of current resilience theory) (Bowen, 2006) and indigenous concepts (i.e. responses suggestive of adolescent resilience not noted in current literature) were used to identify themes explaining post-divorce resilience. In this sense, the analysis was both deductive and inductive (Merriam, 2008). This data analysis was done independently by both authors. Following this we engaged in telephonic and face-to-face consensus discussions (Creswell, 2007). The emerging themes were then categorised to match the four systems of the ecosystemic resilience framework.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was sought by asking some participants to verify transcripts and emerging themes (member checking), and by engaging in debate with independent educators and the APs about emerging themes (Mertens, 2009). Furthermore, the consensus discussions between the authors were lengthy and rigorous.

Findings

As noted, the findings are framed by ecosystemic resilience theory and so the emerging protective resources are reported within the categories of individual, community, relational and cultural resources (Donald *et al.*, 2006; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Waller, 2001).

Individual protective resources

Five themes relating to individual protective resources emerged, including refocusing thoughts, reframing the divorce, acceptance of the divorce as a *fait accompli*, not accepting responsibility for the divorce, and emotional expression.

The resilient adolescents coped with their parents' divorce by **refocusing their thoughts** or **distracting themselves** so that they did not have to think about what was happening. This included focusing on school work, playing with pets, listening to music, playing computer games, dreaming or participating in sport. For example, Participant Six said:

> *I can run until I am so tired that everything just passes me by. I don't think about anything. I hear my heart beating in my ears. I get rid of all my frustrations that way ... the jogging gives me perspective and the game takes my mind off everything ...*

This allowed adolescents the chance to escape (albeit temporarily) from the pain that divorce mostly brought, thereby facilitating a reprieve to deal with the reality of divorce at their own pace.

Many of the resilient adolescents could **reframe** their parents' divorce more positively — they could find some benefit in what had happened, including improved home circumstances and less conflict following the divorce. For example, Participant 8 related:

> *... Actually it was better for me ... my dad drank a lot, and then he came home late in the evenings and then he and my mom would fight. ... [Now] I don't stay in a house where they fight all the time, I don't have a dad that comes home drunk and I have a step-dad that cares for me.*

Adolescents also reframed the divorce as an opportunity for personal growth and a chance to develop strength of character, assertiveness and empathy. For example, Participant 3 said:

> *I sometimes ask why it happened, but if it didn't happen I wouldn't have been the person I am now, then I would have been totally different ... I would have been much weaker. It taught me to stand on my own two feet and that nobody else is going to do it for you. You must stand up for yourself.*

Another protective resource was that of **accepting** what had happened. For example Participant 6 said:

> *You accept it when you see your dad doesn't come home. You get new routines in the house ... you miss your dad, but in your heart you know he is not coming back. You get used to doing things without him.*

Acceptance did not just relate to the fact of parents' divorce, but also to changes associated with this, like reconstructed families, step-parents, step-siblings, less contact with non-custodial grandparents, and poorer home finances. For example, Participant 7 related:

> *There isn't always money. Even now we have little money. It is difficult for us in the middle of the month and then we have to wait until payday ... and that is the way we live ... actually in a way it is an advantage because you learn to work for your own money, and you learn to look after your things because you got it the hard way, by earning it yourself.*

For some of the participants, acceptance of their parents' divorce and the concomitant difficulties and changes was encouraged by the idea that suffering (in various forms and fuelled by a variety of adversities) was universal. For

others, it was allied to their understanding that children and adolescents are typically not in a position to negotiate for change. As Participant 1 said:

> *I now accept what happened; I know as a child I cannot do anything to change it.*

Most of the participants reflected that their **parents' divorce was not their fault**: "*It is not our fault they got divorced*" (Participant 3). Often, available adults (e.g. parents and therapists) or older siblings helped adolescents believe that they were not to blame.

Participant 9:   *All I can remember is when he went. When he picked up his bag we ran to him and begged him not to go, we cried and promised to behave ourselves. We thought that it was our fault that he went.*

Interviewer: And now, do you still think it is your fault?

Participant 9:   *No, because my sister told us that it was because my mom and dad fought a lot.*

Previous South African studies (Basson, 2003; Hoek, 2005; Lefson, 1997) reported that adolescents mostly felt somehow responsible for their parents' divorce. Not taking responsibility for their parents' divorce contributed significantly to participants' self-reported resilience in this study. This also gave adolescents the opportunity to focus their energy on ordinary developmental processes (such as achievement at school or in sport, friendships) and on healing.

All adolescents reported that expression of emotion enabled them. Mostly this related to crying. The adolescents cried for different reasons including anger, frustration, helplessness and pain. Regardless of the reason, they all reported that crying facilitated resilience.

Interviewer: So you feel crying helped you cope with your mom and dad divorcing?

Participant 9:   *Yes, it did help because I could cry out the hurt.*

In some instances, adolescents expressed emotion by writing poems, letters and/or keeping diaries. This often provided safe opportunities to reflect or to vent, especially when participants destroyed what they had written before anybody else could read it:

Interviewer: Do you feel better after you have written it?

Participant 2:   *Yes, I keep it all to myself. Write it down and then throw it away.*

Relational buffers

Resilience-focused studies emphasize the importance of relational bonds with parents (and step-parents), siblings, extended family, friends and supportive adults when adolescents cope adaptively with divorce (Basson, 2003; Cowan, 1999; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003; Hoek, 2005). Although there was some mention of the protective power of relationships with grandparents and siblings, our participants emphasised positive relationships with step-parents, custodial and with non-custodial parents, and supportive peers.

Step-parents were instrumental in participants' well-being in that they

willingly provided advice, treated them no differently from their biological off-spring and nurtured them. For example, Participant 5's step-dad was a pillar of support to her:

> *... he really means a lot to me .... my step-dad feels like a real dad and not a step-dad to me ... He does a lot of things for me, and when he buys stuff for his children, then he also buys things for me.*

The resilient adolescents in this study felt that their **parents (both custodial and/or non-custodial)** were involved in their lives and supportive of them. These parents provided advice, emotional support, adequate attention and fair discipline. Often, there was opportunity to dialogue and even cry about the divorce. Participant 5 told us:

> *My mom is always there for me. I can cry with her and I can go and talk to her ... when I am sad, then I'll tell her and I'll tell her why and everything and then she will say everything will get better and she will give me advice.*

Non-custodial parents encouraged resilience by maintaining emotional ties, even if this meant frequent texting via sms-message or telephone contact. For example, Participant 10 related:

Participant 10:   *We have a hard time without my dad. It sometimes feels as if I took over his role — if something breaks I have to fix it and if a light fuses I have to exchange it. I don't mind doing it ... I just sometimes miss my dad.*

Interviewer: What do you do when you miss your dad?

Participant 10:   *I send him an sms or I'll phone him, or sometimes when I miss him I don't do anything about it ... He usually phones and tells me that he also misses me and that things will get better.*

Friends were a dominant source of support. Support appeared to be gender specific. Girls mostly confided in, or cried in front of, their friends about divorce-related distress and received emotional support and advice, whilst the boys were typically happy just to know that their friends were there for them. For example, Participant 10 related:

> *I have friends that support me. We boys don't cry together, but I always knew that my friends were here for me when I was unhappy. Then we talked about other things and we could visit and play games.*

Community buffers

Participants referred to two community resources which had enabled their resilience, namely, schools and psychologists.

Most of the participants voiced commitment to their **school** and spoke of the importance of academic achievement with regard to future plans (such as tertiary education or obtaining scholarships). They spoke of school as an important means to future ends:

> *I do my best at school so that I get good marks then I can go overseas to study and to work there.* (Participant 6)

In addition to this, some participants were grateful to their schools because they encouraged coping, either by way of supportive educators, or by way of

facilitating daily contact with their friends. Educators and peers provided accessible support. For example, Participant 5 reflected:

> *For instance, if I am sad when I'm at school, then all of them want to know what is wrong ...*

Schools also encouraged coping because they initiated extra-mural activities (like sport and clubs) which filled the participants' time and provided an escape from the pain of their parents' divorce (as discussed earlier). For some, school provided a sense of belonging and of an unaltered space which was welcome, especially because their home context had been altered.

Only two participants had access to **therapeutic spaces** following their parents' divorce. Both were unequivocal about the benefits, especially regarding space to vent and to learn coping skills. For example, Participant 2 related:

> *That* [parental conflict] *was very bad. Bad to hear all the time and I remember the psychologist once asked, 'When they fight, how do you feel?' and I said 'I don't know — like running away.' Then she told me to go outside and sit under a tree and play and forget about it. I always remember that, go and sit under a tree.*

Cultural buffers

Cultural buffers are protective resources that originate in socially constructed practices embedded within a given culture (Rose, 2001). Three themes emerged with regard to cultural protective resources, namely, religious faith, cultural tolerance of divorce, and positive life philosophies. Although religious faith or life philosophy could be conceptualised as individual resources (given that the individual must take ownership of both for either to be meaningful) it is more likely that religion and life philosophies are mediated via social practices and so we categorised them as cultural buffers.

The theme of **religious faith** was predominant. All the participants referred to the enabling power of their religious faith. For many, their faith gave them a sense of not being alone and provided a sense of comfort and advice:

Participant 5:   *Yes, I pray a lot. God helps me a lot, I can tell Him anything ... He always listens, no matter what happens. I just feel better when I've talked to Him about the things that bother me. It is as if I get new perspective on things when I talk to Him about it. He makes me calm and then I can carry on again.*

Interviewer: So faith is a way for you to cope with things that happen to you?

Participant 5:   *Yes, it helps me the most.*

Many of the participants liked the idea that God was omnipresent and not likely to desert them. The idea of a faithful god was perhaps even more appealing given their experiences of passing, changeable home lives.

Almost all participants reported a positive *life philosophy* and that this enabled them. In most instances, these life philosophies related to a personal culture of living life to the fullest, one day at a time. For example:

Participant 6:   *It boils down to the fact that I live life everyday to the fullest*
                     as if it is my last day on earth. I don't know how to shorten
                     that into a motto.
Interviewer: Does your 'motto' help you to cope?
Participant 6:   *Yes, in a way. It motivates me to leave everything that is over*
                     and done with behind me and to live for the future.

Some of the participants were enabled by the **commonplace reality of divorce**: they had witnessed divorce in the media, and as common to their own culture (to the parents of their peers and friends). This ordinariness of divorce and experiences of cultural tolerance thereof was enabling. Participant 7 recounted:

> *A lot of families go through divorce, life must go on. So I've heard about it*
> *a lot, people told me about it a lot, I'm used to hearing about these things*
> *from others and then it happened with me. I thought to myself if others can*
> *get through it, so can I, I'll just do it sooner.*

Discussion of the findings

We preface the discussion by acknowledgement of the small number of homogeneous participants and subsequent cautious generalisation. Nevertheless, the findings encourage a transformed conceptualisation of post-divorce adolescents and add to the growing body of literature that suggests post-divorce adolescents can be resilient.

Our findings that post-divorce resilience is encouraged by personal resources (ability to reconceptualise divorce; refocusing thoughts, accepting divorce as final; not taking responsibility for the divorce; expressing emotions), relational resources (parents, step-parents, friends,) and community resources (helping professionals; educators and schools) fit into traditional understandings of post-divorce resilience (Eldar-Avidan *et al.*, 2009; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003; Lefson, 1997), and confirm that resilience is a multifaceted transactional process (Sameroff, 2009). As such our findings illustrate that post-divorce adolescent resilience (like resilience for other cohorts) is nurtured by both intra- and inter-personal resources (Masten & Reed, 2005): post-divorce resilience requires the adolescent to navigate towards and negotiate for resilience-promoting supports and the adolescent's ecology to reciprocate. In other words, our findings emphasize that post-divorce resilience is a reciprocal give-and-take between adolescent and ecology (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009). Although this is not new knowledge, it extends transactional understandings of resilience to post-divorce resilience.

The findings that cultural resources (religion, positive philosophy, and cultural acceptance of divorce) also enabled resilience are important and add new understanding to what nurtures post-divorce adolescent resilience. Although Lefson (1997) did report that religion buffered divorce risks for adolescent females, religious faith has not been emphasised as integral to post-divorce adolescent resilience. Post-divorce resilience has not previously been linked to cultural tolerance or life philosophies. Our findings that these cultural resources buffer the risks of parental divorce therefore extend the

theory of post-divorce adolescent resilience, and contribute to nascent theories of resilience as a culturally nuanced construct. It would be interesting to explore whether post-divorce South African adolescents from other ethnicities and language groups report similar cultural resilience-promoting resources.

A possible limitation of our findings relates to the number of years since participants' parents divorced. Although we had valid reasons for discounting this time period (as discussed under participant recruitment), it is possible that time since divorce may have had an influence on participant resilience. We recommend that follow-up studies on post-divorce adolescent resilience control for time variables.

Implications for educators

Our participants endorsed the notion that educators and schools can champion post-divorce resilience (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003) and affirmed educators as resilience-agents. This is enabling knowledge for educators who are expected to provide pastoral support (DoE, 2000) and accentuates that not only are educators expected to, they do so, meaningfully.

As importantly, our finding that post-divorce resilience is embedded in a transactional gestalt provides guidance for educators who are tasked with learner support. This understanding that resilience is rooted in learners and in their socio-cultural ecologies instructs educators towards advocacy that harnesses both inter- and intra-personal resources, with special attention to the resources accentuated by the participant voices in this study. Given this deeper understanding, educator championing of resilience can take various forms:

Holistic approach

Although educators are tasked with pastoral care (DoE, 2000), they would do well to include stakeholders from learner ecologies: parents (custodial, non-custodial and positive step-parents), friends, peers, psychologists and culturally appropriate religious organisations in support of adolescents adjusting to divorce. Inclusion of multiple supporters within adolescents' ecologies will forge and/or fortify accessible relational bonds and nurture resilience (Ungar *et al.*, 2007) and probably bolster the educator who is often wearied by having to be all things to all people (Schulze & Steyn, 2007).

Participatory pedagogical-therapeutic approaches

Participatory pedagogical-therapeutic approaches afford opportunities for post-divorce adolescents to reflect and heal, whilst simultaneously acquiring literacy, research and/or life-skills. For example, participant reports of individual protective resources (like reframing the divorce, and emotional expression) and cultural protective resources (like life philosophy, and cultural tolerance) that encouraged healing, can inform learning area activities. Learners could keep reflective journals or write poetry about loss. Learners could produce a collage or poster expressing their life philosophy, or map community resources that support adolescents whose parents are divorcing, or

research how divorce is viewed by various South African cultural groups.

Opportunities for distraction
The finding that stimulating school work and extramural activity (such as sport) enabled adolescents, encourages educators to occupy adolescents from divorced homes meaningfully, provide opportunity for extramural activity and actively encourage participation in these opportunities.

Modelling tolerance
Participant reports that resilience was encouraged by community acceptance of divorce, challenges educators to reflect on their explicit and implicit attitude to divorce and how this impinges on the messages they convey (explicitly and implicitly) about divorce. Educators are in a prime position to sensitively address stigma that still surrounds divorce in some communities and in so doing, bolster post-divorce adolescents.

Celebration of divorce survivors
Knowing about adolescents who triumphed over divorce-related difficulties encouraged participant resilience. Educators are well positioned to broadcast such positive stories and venerate adolescent divorce survivors.

Endorsement of cultural resources and respect for cultural differences
Participant reliance on religious faith as protective resource could be related to Afrikaner culture, which is traditionally described as religious (Buhlungu, 2006). To enable learner resilience, educators need to explore, understand and accept the individual cultures of learners grappling with their parents' divorce, and use apposite cultural beliefs, values and practices to encourage resilience.

Conclusion
Although divorce is commonly conceptualised as damaging, our study suggests that adolescents can bounce back from its ravages. More importantly, the participants' stories provide clues as to how other adolescents grappling with their parents' divorce can be encouraged towards resilience. Educators are key to this process, not only because educator care is mandated (DoE, 2000), but also because educators can promote resilience as part of their everyday classroom routine. Thus, the findings reformulated as guidelines for educators have the potential to do more than guide — given their simplicity, they make it possible for educators to champion resilience.

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