

# Exploring the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context

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## **PERMISSION TO SUBMIT**

### **Letter of permission**

#### **Permission to submit this article for examination purposes**

I, the supervisor, hereby declare that the input and effort of Ms S Botha in writing this manuscript reflects research done by her on this topic. I hereby grant permission that she may submit this article for examination in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister in Social Work.



.....

Dr L Wilson

Supervisor

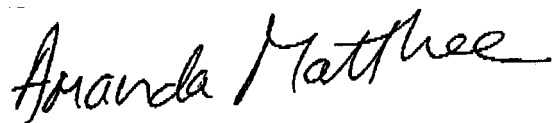


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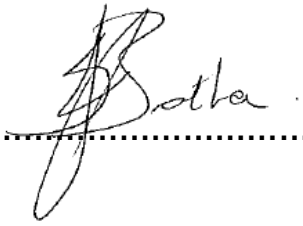


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**DECLARATION**

I, Susanna Johanna Botha, declare herewith that the dissertation entitled *Exploring the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context*, which I herewith submit to North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus, is my own work and that all references used or quoted were indicated and acknowledged.

Signature:  ..... Date: *24 April 2015* .....

## PREFACE

The dissertation is presented in article format in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Manual for Postgraduate Studies of the North-West University.

The article included in this dissertation entitled *Exploring the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context* is intended for submission to the journal *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*. The guidelines for submission to the journal are attached in Appendix 7: Guidelines for authors: SOCIAL WORK/MAATSKAPLIKE WERK Journal.

The referencing style used for the dissertation is in accordance with the NWU Harvard reference style as referred to in the North-West University Referencing Guide. The referencing in Section B corresponds with the Harvard referencing style as stipulated in the journal guidelines (see Appendix 7).

A letter of consent has been submitted by the supervisor for the submission of the dissertation for examination purposes for the degree Magister Artium in Social Work.

## **SUMMARY**

Divorce and family disruption are growing phenomena in the world and a reality in many children's lives. Almost half of all divorced families in South Africa have children under the age of 18 years. Divorce is a traumatic experience for children. Adolescent children in particular experience divorce as distressing. Adolescent children need to face numerous challenges while going through the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. They are in the process of identity formation and rely on their parents' support and presence to develop a strong and positive identity.

The Military is often described as a selfish entity, which demands members' undivided attention and loyalty. When Military families go through a process of divorce, they need to face the trauma of the divorce as well as the specific demands of the organisation. Adolescent children from divorcing families in a Military context experience specific needs, and their parents and the Military as organisation have a definite role to play in fulfilling these needs.

This study focused on exploring the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context. A significant amount of research has been done on adolescent children in divorced families, but little is known about the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context. Hence, it is in this particular area that this study endeavours to make a contribution.

The research was conducted in three Military bases in the Cape Town metropole area. Nine participants (five females and four males) consented to participate in the study. The size of the sample was not predetermined, but was based on data saturation. Participants were purposefully selected on the basis of the following: they are adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 years, they have parents whose divorce process has been finalised, and one or both of their parents are employed by the Military.

Data was collected through conducting semi-structured one-on-one interviews with all participants. A semi-structured interview schedule assisted the researcher to facilitate the interviews for consistency. The researcher was able to validate data and elaborate on certain issues during interviews. Data was analysed through thematic analysis and different themes and sub-themes were defined. The researcher ensured the

trustworthiness of the research process by following the guidelines as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

The study found that adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context have specific needs and that their focal need was for emotional support. They need their parents to communicate openly with them regarding the divorce process as well as the reasons for the divorce. Adolescents in Military divorced families long for a good relationship between them and their parents. They need to feel loved and want their parents physically and emotionally present in their lives. Participants need from the Military and schools to offer therapeutic support services as well as group sessions for adolescent children in Military divorced families. Although their basic psychological needs were met by the residing parent, they need to know that the newly formed single-parent family of which they now form part will be able to survive financially.

Some researchers found that adolescent children from divorced families tended to reject faith. However, participants in this study indicated that they strongly needed support from their spiritual organisations and youth movements.

In order to meet the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in the South African Military context, parents need to stay involved in their children's lives and communicate in an open and honest way with them. Military social workers, psychologists and chaplains need to ensure that therapeutic services are available to adolescent children of divorcing parents and that the adolescents attend these sessions. Work-related Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) could be put in place to ensure that all adolescent children from divorcing families attend therapeutic sessions. Group sessions should be available and accessible for adolescent children in divorcing Military families.

*Keywords:* Adolescents, Divorce, Military families, Needs

## OPSOMMING

Egskeiding en gesinsverbrokkeling is verskynsels wat wêreld toeneem en wat 'n realiteit in talle kinders se lewe is. Bykans die helfte van alle geskeide gesinne in Suid-Afrika het kinders onder die ouderdom van 18 jaar. Egskeiding is 'n traumatiese ervaring vir kinders. Veral adolessente kinders ervaar egskeiding as angswekkend. Tieners word met talle uitdagings gekonfronteer in die oorgangsfase tussen hul kinderjare en volwassenheid. Hulle is besig om hul eie identiteit te ontwikkel en het die ondersteuning en teenwoordigheid van hul ouers nodig om 'n sterk en positiewe identiteit te ontwikkel.

Die militêre omgewing of weermag word dikwels as selfsugtig beskryf. Die weermag verwag onverdeelde aandag en lojaliteit van sy lede. Wanneer militêre gesinne deur die proses van egskeiding gaan, word van die gesinne verwag om die trauma van die egskeiding te verwerk terwyl hulle deurentyd aan die verwagtinge van die weermag voldoen. Tieners van geskeide weermaggesinde het spesifieke behoeftes, en hul ouers en die weermag moet doelspesifiek in hierdie behoeftes voorsien.

Hierdie studie is gerig op die verkenning van die behoeftes van adolessente kinders in geskeide gesinne in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse weermagkonteks. Beduidende navorsing is reeds oor adolessente kinders in geskeide gesinne gedoen, maar baie min is bekend oor die behoeftes van adolessente kinders in geskeide gesinne in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse weermagopset. Die studie wil dus op hierdie spesifieke gebied 'n bydrae lewer.

Drie militêre basisse in die Kaapse metropolitaanse gebied is by die studie betrek. Nege deelnemers (vyf vroulik en vier manlik) het aan die studie deelgeneem. Die grootte van die steekproef was nie vooraf bepaal nie, maar is op dataversadiging gegrond. Deelnemers is doelbewus op grond van die volgende gekies: hulle is adolessente tussen die ouderdom van 11 en 18 jaar, hul ouers se egskeiding is afgehandel, en een of albei hul ouers werk by die weermag.

Inligting is ingesamel deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde een-tot-een onderhoude met al die deelnemers. 'n Onderhoudskedule is gebruik om die onderhoude te fasiliteer en konsekwentheid te help verseker. Die navorser kon sodoende inligting bevestig en op sekere aspekte tydens onderhoude uitbrei. Inligting is deur middel van tematiese analise ontleed en verskeie temas en subtemas is geïdentifiseer. Die navorser het die

betroubaarheid van die studie verseker deur die riglyne van Lincoln en Guba (1985) te volg.

Die studie het bevind dat adolessente kinders in geskeide gesinne in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse weermagopset spesifieke behoeftes het en dat die dominerende behoefte dié aan emosionele ondersteuning was. Hierdie kinders het 'n behoefte aan kommunikasie met hul ouers oor die egskeidingsproses asook die redes vir die egskeiding. Tieners in geskeide weermaggessinne het 'n behoefte aan 'n gesonde verhouding met albei hul ouers. Hulle het nodig om geliefd te voel en hulle wil hul ouers se emosionele en fisieke teenwoordigheid in hul lewe hê. Deelnemers wil hê dat die weermag en skole terapeutiese ondersteuningsdienste en groepsessies aan adolessente kinders van geskeide weermaggessinne moet lewer. Hoewel die ouer by wie hulle woon in hul basiese sielkundige behoeftes voorsien, het die deelnemers aangedui dat hulle 'n behoefte het om te weet dat die nuwe enkelouergesin waarvan hulle nou deel vorm finansiële sal kan oorleef.

Sommige navorsers het bevind dat tieners in geskeide gesinne geneig is geloof te verwerp. Die deelnemers in die studie het egter aangedui dat die ondersteuning van geestelike organisasies en jeugroepe vir hulle baie belangrik was.

Om aan die behoeftes van adolessente kinders in geskeide gesinne in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse weermagkonteks te voldoen, moet ouers in hul kinders se lewe betrokke bly en op 'n eerlike en oop wyse met hulle kommunikeer. Maatskaplike werkers, sielkundiges en kapelane in die weermag moet help om seker te maak dat terapeutiese dienste beskikbaar is vir adolessente kinders wie se ouers deur 'n egskeiding gaan en dat die tieners die terapeutiese sessies bywoon. Werkverwante standaardwerkprosedures kan geïmplementeer word om te verseker dat alle adolessente kinders in geskeide gesinne terapeutiese sessies bywoon. Groepsessies behoort beskikbaar en toeganklik te wees vir adolessente kinders in weermaggessinne wat deur 'n egskeiding gaan.

*Sleutelwoorde:* Adolessente, Behoeftes, Egskeiding, Weermaggessinne

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

MilSWPM	Military Social Work Practice Model
NWU	North-West University
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SAMHS	South African Military Health Services
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures



## SECTION A

### PART I: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past 50 to 60 years, divorce has become more common. It is believed that up to 50% of all marriages worldwide end in divorce (Amato, 2010; Cherlin, 2005; Kurian, 2006; Ngazimbi, 2009; Reiter, Hjörleifsson, Breidablik & Meland, 2013; Scherrer, 2012). In South Africa, divorce is also a reality for many families (Statistics South Africa, 2012; Vital Statistics, 2012). Although the 2013/2014 annual report indicated that no annual release on 2012 marriages and divorce rates were published (Statistics South Africa, 2014:59), statistics shown that 22936 divorces were published in 2010 (Statistics South Africa, 2011:32). Divorce is demanding on family members and many challenges are experienced as a result of the divorce (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Grossman & Henek, 2007). In general, children from divorced families are exposed to more conflict and bitterness than children from stable marriages (Oldehinkel, Ormel, Veenstra, De Winter & Verhulst, 2008:284) and they are more likely to experience emotional and behaviour problems than children from intact families (Hardman, 2012:181). These children's reactions to divorce are influenced by the developmental stage in which they are, their unique personalities, early experiences in the family and the degree of violence and conflict during the time of the divorce (Grossman & Henek, 2007:28). Adolescents from divorced families have, according to Theron and Dunn (2010:242), the ability to "bounce back from its (divorce) ravages". However, Pirkey (2011:63) reasoned that adolescents who experience high levels of conflict (including during parental divorce) while growing up are more likely to have insecure adult attachments.

Clever and Segal (2013:15) emphasised that the Military as well as the family have a "greedy nature" and that this placed unique demands on the Military family. They described the Military as a "strikingly diverse population with diverse needs". Military families have to deal with the same life issues as civilian families, but are also subjected to the unique stressors related to Military life, including separation from their families and specific work demands within a structured environment. They are also expected to behave in a certain way at all times (Drummet, Coleman & Cable, 2003:279). Military children, according to Kudler and Porter (2013:163), "don't exist in a vacuum"; they are rooted in families and communities within the Military culture. They are influenced by

and develop through their relations with their families, neighbourhoods, schools as well as the Military as an organisation and they have unique needs (Kudler & Porter, 2013:163). The researcher are therefore of the opinion that Military children need to work through the same changes and challenges as civilian children, with the additional stress and demands that the Military as well as the family system place on them. When these children are adolescents with parents who have gone through a divorce, they need to deal with their parents' divorce, their development changes as well as the Military demands.

## **2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In 1992, Cherlin (1992:23) already indicated that, in the United States, there was a rapid increase in the divorce rate since the mid-1800s. In other parts of the world, a decrease was noticed in the number of marriages and an increase in divorce rates. In 2005 the prevalence of divorce was at 6.2 per 1 000 people in the United States (Zagorsky, 2005:407). Although the mentioned authors noticed an increase in divorce rates in 1992, statistics from the US Census Bureau (2012) showed a decrease in divorce statistics from 4.1 per 1 000 people in 2000 to 3.4 per 1 000 people in 2009. However, statistics also showed a decrease in the marriage rate of 8.3 per 1 000 people in 2000 to 6.8 per 1 000 in 2009.

According to the census report, the prevalence of divorce in South Africa increased from 543 187 in 2001 to 853 523 in 2007 and 921 175 in 2011. The Western Cape Province had the second highest prevalence of divorce during 2011 (Census, 2011, 2012). The average number of children in a South African divorced family was between one and two children per family (Statistics South Africa, 2010:6). From all families affected by divorce in 2010, 54.4% had children younger than 18 years (Statistics South Africa, 2010:6). Unfortunately, no annual release on 2012 marriages and divorce rates were published according to the 2013/2014 annual report (Statistics South Africa, 2014:59). Van Jaarsveld (2007:6) stated that it seemed as if divorce in South Africa had become an accepted part of normal life, with the children involved in divorce typically suffering trauma, problems and emotional pain. The Military environment is no exception.

In an Australian Department of Defence Census, done in 2011, the Australian Defence Force reported that 3% of participants indicated that they were divorced or separated at

the time of the census (Department of Defence, 2011). In South Africa, divorce in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is also not a strange phenomenon. At Air Force Base Ysterplaat, an air-force base within the SANDF, 27 members of the 248 members at the base were divorced as observed by the researcher as unit social worker in 2012. This was more than 10% of the unit members. Sandell and Plutzer (2005:134) are of the opinion that although divorce is one aspect of the family structure and marital change, it is seen as the most ordinary marital transition that children, when they are adolescents, will experience.

A person reaches adolescence at the onset of puberty (between 11 and 13 years) and reaches the end of adolescence by the age of 18 years, or when that person starts to function independently or enter the workforce. Typically, adolescents have to take on new responsibilities, experiment with independence and search for identity (Pressley & McCormick, 2007:147). Erikson identified eight developmental periods or stages of psychosocial development. The stage of psychosocial development during adolescence is called Identity versus Identity confusion (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004:26; Hamman & Hendricks, 2005:72). Adolescents are directly confronted with the issue of identity and need to figure out who they are in the world. When adolescents are confronted with parental divorce, it could affect their ability to complete important developmental tasks.

The relationship between adolescents and their parents is also important in the process of identity formation as a solid, stable relationship between adolescents and their parents makes it easier for these adolescents to form a positive and strong identity with a high self-value (Novak, Pelaez & Pelaez, 2004:414-415). Access to support systems and solid relationships play a vital role in the development of adolescents' sense of worth and value in their communities (American Psychological Association, 2002:15). During this time, peer relationships are also of the utmost importance. A psychosocial crisis of this stage is called group identity versus alienation (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009:195; Louw, Louw & Ferns, 2007:279; Newman & Newman, 2009:318).

In the USA it was found that divorce is two and a half times as likely as the marriage of the single parent with whom the adolescent resides, and more than three times as likely as the death of a parent during the period of adolescence. It seems then that divorce has almost become an acceptable custom in today's society (Sandell & Plutzer

2005:134). Divorce is considered as one of the most stressful events encountered by families. Divorce also comes with challenges such as family systems that need to unite into new family systems and children who must adapt to living in single-parent families and later may have to adapt to reconstituted families. Children, however, react differently to these changes and some of the aspects that influence their adaptation are their relationship with their parents, the nature of conflict in the family system and support systems outside the family system (Kelly & Emery, 2003:353; Novak *et al.*, 2004:414-415). During the time of divorce, parents may be less available to their children's needs (physically and emotionally). Children are therefore unable to turn to their parents to assist them with the uncertainty and anxiety that divorce brings (Barsano, 2005:79).

Maslow (1943) identified five basic needs that can be arranged in a hierarchy. The motivational theory of Maslow points out that an individual will satisfy basic-level needs first before modifying behaviour to satisfy higher-level needs (Taormina & Gao, 2013:157). The Self-determination theory (SDT) stated that the disillusioned satisfaction of needs leads to negative functional consequences for mental health. Needs are identified as a linking pin between demands of the social world on the one side and a person's natural tendencies towards growth and well-being or accommodative tendencies towards self-protection and the psychological costs, on the other hand (Deci & Ryan, 2000:262). Maslow (1943:383) is of the opinion that certain conditions, for example the freedom to speak, the freedom to do what a person wishes as long as no harm is done to others and the freedom to express one self, are prerequisites for the satisfaction of basic needs. A threat to these requirements can almost be likened to a direct threat to the basic needs (Maslow, 1943:383). Koltko-Rivera (2006:313) stated that the inclusion of self-transcendence at the top of the hierarchy of needs is a more accurate reflection of Maslow's theory. The inclusion of self-transcendence as a motivational status provides a means to deeper understanding of how different people and cultures interpret the meaning of life (Koltko-Rivera, 2006:313). If the average child is confronted with unfamiliar, frightening situations such as quarrelling, physical assault, divorce or death within a family, these conditions can frequently provoke total panic and terror within the child (Maslow, 1943:378). Bukatko and Daehler (2004:527) stated that the first year after parental divorce is the most difficult time for children. It is during this time that children manifest with negative behavioural characteristics.

Except for going through the normal changes and challenges of the adolescence development phase, adolescents in divorced families and whose parents are employed within a Military context face multiple additional challenges (Drummet *et al.*, 2003:279). Herbst, as cited by Holm (2010:3), described Military children as children who are part of a special category who must master unique as well as common developmental tasks to establish a sense of self. Several recent international studies (Chrismer-Still, 2009; Chung & Emery, 2010; Pirkey, 2011; Polacek, 2005; Riina, 2011; Sweeney, 2007) as well as local studies (De Wit, Louw & Louw, 2014; Makofane & Mogoane, 2012; Theron & Dunn, 2010) focused on adolescent children in divorce situations while various international studies focused on divorce in the Military context (Huebner *et al.*, 2007; Karney, Loughran & Pollard, 2014). These studies indicated that divorce is distressing for adolescents and that this phenomenon is a reality among Military families. The mentioned studies indicated that organisational demands could contribute to the divorce rate of Military personnel.

In the Military environment, the adolescents in divorced families have to cope with the changes and trauma of the divorce as well as additional stressors and challenges like the deployment or long-term absence of their parents (Huebner *et al.*, 2007:120; Lincoln & Sweeten, 2011:83). The researcher also noticed from her own experience of working in the field of Military social work that the instability and emotions that accompany divorce have an impact on all members in the family. Children from divorcing parents are often neglected in terms of social support and therapy, mainly because of logistical arrangements. Families reside far from Military bases and parents are often unable to take children to regular therapeutic sessions. Lincoln and Sweeten (2011:78) stated that although the Military is not the only organisation that takes parents away from home for long periods of time, the ability to make contact and regular communication normally lack during Military deployments. From personal experience the researcher realised that members on deployment cannot perform daily tasks like fetching a child from school or attending important sports games or birthdays. When an adolescent's parent is employed by the SANDF and the parent needs to be deployed or is absent from home because of work demands, it complicates the situation at home, and even more so if the parent is divorced. If the deploying parent is divorced and needs to leave for an unplanned deployment, visitation arrangements for children to their non-residing parent often need to be adjusted. It seems that in situations like these, where parents are

divorced, their absence from home has an even greater impact on the children. These children then need to reside with their non-custodial parent, or an additional caregiver needs to be appointed to attend to the children's needs for the duration of the resident parent's absence. This could cause anxiety and confusion for the children, especially if the non-custodial parent needs to adjust his or her plans because of this new arrangement due to organisational demands. The researcher believes that this could further impact relationships between adolescents and their parents.

All of these changes and challenges, with the additional stress and trauma caused by the divorce of their parents, raise the concern that the needs that adolescent children experience during parental divorce are not always met. Within the Military context, Military social workers render a comprehensive social work service to the organisation and its members. Social workers within the organisation utilise the Military Social Work Practice Model (MilSWPM) to address the needs and problems of the organisation and its members. The MilSWPM is utilised to integrate the four identified practice positions to bridge the micro-macro divide (Van Breda, 2012:23).

This study, to explore the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context, was further motivated by the apparent lack of information on adolescents in divorced families within the South African Military context. The findings of the research can be used to create awareness of the specific needs of adolescents in divorced Military families within the SANDF. These findings can furthermore assist social workers in the development of programmes to address the needs of such adolescents.

From the problem formulation, the following research question was formulated: *What are the needs of adolescents in a divorced family in a South African Military context?*

### **3 RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of this research was to explore and describe the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context in the Western Cape.

### **4 CONCEPT DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of clarity, the following concepts were defined:

#### **4.1 Adolescence**

The transitional phase between childhood and adulthood is called adolescence. This is a biological process and it includes rapid physical growth, the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics and the stage during which a human being for the first time becomes capable of reproduction. However, this phase is also a psychological transition, which is shaped by its social context. It is seen and described differently in different societies (Beckett & Taylor, 2010:92). Louw *et al.* (2007:278) described adolescence as “a developmental bridge between being a child and becoming an adult”.

#### **4.2 Needs**

According to Deci and Ryan (2000:229), needs identify essential psychological characteristics (content of motivation) that are vital for continuous psychological growth, integrity and well-being. Needs are believed to have a basic relatedness; they all spiral from and refer to the basic tendency to maintain and enhance the organism (Rogers, 1998:138). Taormina and Gao (2013:156) defined a need as a lack of something that is essential to an organism’s well-being or existence.

#### **4.3 Divorce**

“Divorce is a final legal dissolution of a marriage that is the separation of spouses, which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious, and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country” (World Bank WHO, 2014:31). Divorce is normally associated with behavioural, psychological and academic problems among children (Amato *et al.*, 2011:511). Reser (2012:132) stated that divorce raises a “complex interplay of physical, cognitive and emotional transitions”. The process is stressful and difficult to manage.

#### **4.4 Military family**

Researchers generally define Military families as “the spouses and dependent children (age 22 and younger) of men and women on active duty or in the National Guard and Reserve” (Clever & Segal, 2013:14). Chandra and London (2013:188) indicated that Military families include at least one person who has served or is serving on active duty.

## **5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Context of the research**

Participants sampled for this study formed part of the divorced Military families of the Cape Town Metropole. They were adolescent children whose parents were divorced. All the families' divorce processes had been finalised by the time this research was undertaken. The time frame, after the finalisation of their parents' divorce, differs from a few months up to 6 years. Initially, the researcher focused on an air force base in the Cape Town metropole area. The base consisted of 545 members from the South African Air Force. The base has 124 residential units for married members and families. Most of the members resided on the base. The area has several primary schools and one secondary school. Most of the children residing on the base attended the secondary school in the area. Due to a lack of available participants, the study was expanded to three other Military bases in the Cape Town metropole, namely a health centre, army support base and navy base. Although many Military members resided on the Military bases, most of the participants in this study resided outside the Military bases. One or both of the participants' parents are employed by the SANDF and they are obliged by the rules and requirements of the Military.

### **5.2 Literature review**

In order to provide a broader context of divorce and clarify the scope of the study, a literature review has been undertaken on adolescent development to describe important phases through which adolescents go and how their development are likely to influence their reaction to their parents' divorce. The comprehensive literature review covered, among others, divorce as a phenomenon, therapeutic models and studies focusing on different aspects of divorce, the Military as an organisation and Military social work in South Africa. Themes included in the study are the development of adolescents, the current state of divorce, Military families and children in divorced families. The Military Social Work Practice Model (MilSWPM) was also explored and discussed in depth.

The researcher utilised the following databases: Google Scholar, Pro Quest, EBSCOhost and JSTOR. These search engines enabled the researcher to conduct an in-depth review of the themes evident in this research study.



## **5.3 Empirical investigation**

### *5.3.1 Research approach and design*

A qualitative approach assisted the researcher to answer the 'how' and 'why' questions (Creswell, 2003; Delpont & De Vos, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative research is described by Snape and Spencer (2003:3) as a "naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena within their social worlds". In this specific study, the researcher sought to gain a better understanding of the needs of adolescent children in divorced families within a South African Military context. The researcher studied the adolescents within their social worlds, she did the interviews in their homes and the Military environment is part of their social worlds. Rich descriptive data was therefore collected of a specific phenomenon with the specific goal to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:50). As the qualitative researcher is the instrument in gathering data, the researcher within this study utilised open-ended questions in personal interviews (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009: 298) to gather as much data as possible on the needs that adolescents had during their parents' divorce. She probed participants to share as much information as possible on their specific need during their parent's divorce.

The research design describes the research process as a whole, from formulating the research question, identifying and describing the research problem, and gathering and analysing the data to interpreting the findings and disseminating the results (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009:298). The researcher chose to apply a qualitative descriptive research design for the study (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000) to gain knowledge on the needs of adolescent children from divorced families in a South African Military context. According to Magilvy and Thomas (2009:299), a qualitative descriptive design allows the researcher to gain clear knowledge of a specific phenomenon. In this study, the design enabled the researcher to gain clear knowledge of the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context and to translate this into everyday language. A qualitative descriptive study also requires a low level of interpretation or suggestions from the researcher (Sandelowski, 2000:334,336). Therefore, the researcher applied interview skills to probe participants in order to gain more clarity on responses. No leading questions were asked. The data received from the participants were documented as received and not interpreted by the researcher.

Adolescents from divorced families had the opportunity to voice their specific needs during their parents' divorce.

### *5.3.2 Participants*

The population for the study included all adolescent children in divorced families from a Military milieu in the Cape Town metropole. Initially, only members from one Military base were considered for the study. However, as there were not a sufficient number of participants for the study on that base, the researcher involved participants from three other Military bases in the Cape Town metropole as well. Purposive sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:178) was used to select participants from this population. Members were chosen with a purpose to represent a specific group of people (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2009:78-79). This enabled the researcher to explore and understand the needs of a specific group of adolescent children from divorced families in the Military. Sample units that were chosen had to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Participants had to be between the ages of 11 and 18 years.
- Their parents had to be divorced and the divorce process had to be finalised by the time of the study.
- One or both of the participants' parents needed to be employed by the SANDF.
- The parents of the participants had to give consent for their children's participation in the study. The participants also had to consent to participation in the study.

The exclusion criterion for the study was: No previous clients of the researcher were considered for the study.

Social workers and medical professionals from the different Military bases provided the researcher with a name list of divorced families and their dependants from the Military bases. This enabled the researcher to identify families with adolescent children. Some of the identified families were informed by the social workers and medical personnel regarding the study; the researcher simply had to phone them to confirm their children's availability and willingness to participate in the study. Next, the researcher made contact with all the identified families who met the criteria. A total of nine participants were selected. The sample group consisted of five female participants and four male participants. The age of the participants' varied between 13 and 18 years. Francis,

Johnston, Roberson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles and Grimshaw (2010:4) emphasised that the sample size of a research project is of great importance. If the sample is too big it becomes an ethical issue and a waste of research money and participants' time. If the sample is smaller than required it leads to both ethical and scientific issues. If the sample is so small that idiosyncratic data is reflected, the data will not be transferable and it may become a waste of research money and participants' time as well. Therefore, the number of participants selected for this study was sufficient for the research to reach a point of data saturation (Francis *et al.*, 2010:4). Data saturation occurred after nine interviews as no new themes, findings, concepts or problems were observed once all the data had been analysed.

### 5.3.3 Data collection

The procedures followed during the research process included:

- A list of divorced families and the particulars of their dependants in the identified Military bases in the Cape Town metropole was received from the social workers and medical professionals from the Military bases. The 50 parents of potential participants on the list were contacted telephonically by the researcher to obtain permission for their adolescent children to be included in the research as well as to confirm the availability of these adolescents to participate in the study. The purpose of the study and the procedure to be followed were explained to all the parents. Of all the parents contacted, only 10 parents gave permission for their children to participate in the research. However, one of the adolescents was not interested in participating in the study and was not included in the study.
- Purposive sampling was used to identify adolescent children between the ages of 11 and 18 years. Before including the participants in the sample, the researcher ensured that they were between the ages of 11 and 18 years, that their parents' divorce had been finalised and that one or both of their parents were employed by the Military. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants had the opportunity or choice to withdraw from the study at any given point.
- Adolescents who consented to be part of the study were asked to sign a consent form with their parents. The consent forms were explained to participants and signed in their parents' presence. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage should they feel uncomfortable.

- A semi-structured interview schedule (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:186; Greeff, 2011:352; Rubin & Babbie, 2011:233) was compiled with input from experts in the field and tested before the interviews commenced (Greeff, 2011:352; Merriam, 2009:102; Nieuwenhuis, 2007:94; Rubin & Babbie, 2010:107). The researcher tested the semi-structured interview schedule with one of the participants. She found that she had to clarify the term *needs* before she started to ask the questions as stipulated in the semi-structured interview schedule. After the pilot study, the researcher scheduled interviews with the remainder of the participants.
- One-to-one semi-structured interviews (Greeff, 2011:351; Hunter & Beck, 2000:96; Polkinghorne, 2005:142), using the semi-structured interview schedule to guide the researcher, were conducted with all the participants. One participant was interviewed at the office of the social worker on the base. The other participants resided off the base and the researcher interviewed them in a private area in their homes.
- The researcher ensured that the participants' were comfortable and at ease before she facilitated and guided participants' through the topic of discussion (Greeff, 2011:353).
- The semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to obtain a detailed picture of participants' views and beliefs regarding a specific topic. Since the semi-structured interview schedule was not set in stone, it gave the researcher and the participants' the freedom and flexibility to elaborate on interesting avenues that emerged during the interviews (Greeff, 2011:351). The semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to validate data and to elaborate on certain aspects of the information provided by the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:87). The interviewer asked the key questions to all participants in the same way each time, and did probing for further information (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:88; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:111). The researcher interviewed participants until data saturation occurred (Francis *et al.*, 2010:4; Rubin & Rubin, 2005:67).
- Eco-mapping, as additional data collection method, was used during the interviews to identify the various systems that formed part of the participants' eco-systems and to interlink with the individual and family (Munger, 1991:97; Zastrow, 2010:224). The eco-mapping guided the researcher and participants in

identifying and exploring the role of all the systems in addressing the needs of adolescent children during their parents' divorce.

- During the nine semi-structured interviews the researcher also utilised communication techniques such as reflection, minimal verbal response, paraphrasing, clarification and probing (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:88; Rubin & Babbie, 2011:392; Rubin & Rubin, 2005:164). The interviews were once-off. No follow-up interviews were necessary. Each interview took between 30 and 90 minutes.
- The interviews were conducted between 18 July 2014 and 4 September 2014.
- The interviews were transcribed by "On time transcribers".
- Data was analysed and presented in article format.

#### *5.3.4 Data analysis*

The researcher utilised thematic data analysis to analyse the data and extract the main themes or patterns from the data received during the semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79; Clark & Braun, 2013:120, Strydom & Delpont, 2011:385).

The six steps as indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006:87) were used during the data analysis. The researcher familiarised herself with the empirical data. She read through the transcribed interviews a view times and created initial codes to interesting features; themes were identified once codes had been ordered and grouped together. The identified themes were mapped and reported by means of extracted examples. The data obtained from the eco-maps were analysed by applying the same steps, and similarities in specific contributions from the different systems were grouped together and mapped. Deductive reasoning was utilised in the study (Delpont & De Vos, 2011:48; Mouton, 2001:117). The researcher moved from general data to more specific data. She compiled a literature review and tested the findings against specific needs identified by participants during the interviews (Mouton, 2001:117).

#### **5.4 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a crucial part of any research project. It is about ensuring that the researcher comes as close as possible to the truth (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985:290; Nieuwenhuis, 2007:113). During this study, trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985:290):

### *Credibility*

Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) reasoned that credibility is the assurance of the reader that the content of the study is truthful. Credibility focuses on the match between the constructed realities of the participants and how the researcher represented those realities (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2009:699). Credibility in this study was ensured by sending the transcribed interviews to participants (member checking) to confirm the accuracy of the interviews. Another contribution to the credibility of the study was the fact that the empirical data received from the participants was supported by the literature.

### *Transferability*

Transferability was used to allow the readers of the research to apply the findings to other similar settings. The results of this study can be applied by Military social workers in their practice with adolescent children from divorced families. Purposive sampling and the occurrence of data saturation contributed to the transferability of the study.

### *Dependability*

The researcher ensured dependability within this study by providing an adequate audit trail of the research process. The audit trail provided adequate evidence that raw data received from participants had gone through a process of analysis, reduction and synthesis (Wolf, 2003:175). All original transcribed interviews, eco-maps and audio recordings, as well as all research notes are safely kept at the Centre for Child Youth and Family Studies at North-West University and are available when needed.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability entails that results are based on data received from participants only, and that no biases or other motivations were involved in obtaining and reporting on data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). Participants to the study were selected solely on meeting the inclusion criteria that were set. No compensation was offered and participation in the research was voluntary.

Crystallisation, as described by Nieuwenhuis (2007:81), “provides us with a complex and deeper understanding of the phenomenon”. Data received from the study develop into findings, and the crystallised reality of the findings, enhance the trustworthiness of

the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:81). In this study, crystallisation through a literature review, semi-structured one-to-one interviews and own practical experience provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the needs of adolescent children in divorced Military families.

## **5.5 Ethical considerations**

The researcher ensured that all ethical aspects were upheld during the research process. Ethical permission for this study was obtained from North-West University's Human Ethics Committee under ethics number NWU 00060-12-A1. The following research ethics were followed during this study (Strydom, 2011:113):

- The required institutional approval was obtained from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to conduct the research.
- Harm, emotional and physical, was avoided and minimised at all cost (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008:267; Strydom, 2011:115). The researcher ensured that all participants were thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the study. One of the identified participants felt too vulnerable to participate in the study and was replaced. Information regarding the research topic and the purpose of the study were explained to the parents of potential participants. After the parents gave written consent for their children to participate in the study, the research topic as well as the purpose of the study were discussed with the participants as well.
- Participation in the study was voluntary and participants had the opportunity to withdraw at any time without any consequences (Strydom, 2011:116). Participants were aware of this at all times.
- All information received from the participants were dealt with in a confidential manner (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008:266; Patton, 2002:407; Strydom, 2011:119) as all the information gathered was restricted to only the researcher, her supervisor and the Directorate Social Work from the SANDF. No names or identities were linked to any information.
- Every individual had the right to privacy. Interviews were conducted at the social worker's office or at the participants' homes in a private space, and after hours to ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- Anonymity was ensured through the use of pseudonyms at all times in order to protect the identity of the participants.

- Participants were treated with the necessary respect and dignity (Strydom, 2011:119).
- Written consent (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008:266; Patton, 2002:407; Strydom, 2011:117) was obtained from each participant's parent before the study commenced for the inclusion of the adolescent child in the research. Written consent was also obtained from the participants. Participants signed the consent form in the presence of their parents and parents co-signed the consent forms of the minor participants.
- The interviews were voice recorded to allow for transcription and to provide proof that none of the participants was misled during the interviews and that the researcher did not ask leading questions. Voice recordings enabled the researcher to provide truthful proof of the responses of participants. Written permission was obtained to voice record the interviews.
- Participants did not feel deceived in terms of the study and no remuneration was provided (Strydom, 2011:121).
- Debriefing and follow-ups with participants who requested follow-up services were arranged and rendered (Strydom, 2011:121) by the various unit social workers and psychologists. Debriefing sessions by the unit social worker after the completion of the study were available for all participants. However, none of the participants was interested in attending debriefing sessions.
- During the study, data was stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher had access. Hard copies of information were kept in a lockable filing cabinet at the researcher's home, and all participants were identified by numbers and not by their names or any other identifying information. During the time of the study, only the researcher, her supervisor and the transcribing company had access to any information related to the study.
- All data obtained from this study will be kept for a period of five years at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies, NWU, and then destroyed according to NWU procedures.

## **6 CHOICE AND STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The dissertation follows the article format as prescribed by North-West University. The dissertation consists of the following sections:

Section A:



- Part 1: Orientation of study (problem orientation)
- Part 2: Literature review

Section B: Article

The journal *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* has been identified as a possible journal for submission.

Section C: Summary and conclusion

Section D: Appendices

## **7 SUMMARY**

Divorce has almost become a normative phenomenon in the world. Almost 50% of all marriages end up in the divorce court worldwide. Family members need to adjust to the changes in family structures, which puts growing pressure on family members. Many children live in divorced families. Adolescent children in particular need to work through the changes and challenges characterised by their developmental phase as well as the trauma and challenges from the divorce of their parents. In the Military context, families and children need to adjust to the unique demands of the organisation. They experience the same challenges as civilian children, but need to behave in a required way. Their parents are often away from home as a result of work demands and they suffer the consequences.

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## **SECTION A**

### **PART II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Divorce is a reality in the lives of many people all over the world. It affects people and families in different ways and causes a complex interplay of physical, cognitive and emotional transitions in the family system (Reser, 2012:132). Children's lives are changed in major ways and family members need to adjust to newly defined roles required to meet the needs of the new, one-parent family (Amato, 2010:658). This literature review will focus on the prevalence of divorce in specific Military communities and it will provide an overview of divorce rates throughout the world. The Military as organisation and the unique demands it places on families will be described and taken into consideration when the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context are explored. This literature review will also comprise various aspects of adolescents' development as well as their specific needs and developmental tasks during this phase of development. The section also unpacks Military social workers' use of the Military Social Work Practice Model (MilSWPM) to address potential client systems within the organisation. Hence, this theoretical framework, which will be used to assist the researcher in this study, as well as important definitions, will also be covered in this section.

#### **2 DIVORCE**

##### **2.1 International and National overview of divorce**

Divorce is described as one of the more stressful events in a person's life, and the stress intensifies if the couple has children. Parents are expected to co-parent children despite the divorce and the status of their relationship (Reser, 2012:1). Kennedy and Ruggles (2014:587) are of the opinion that the divorce rate among persons over the age of 35 has doubled. They argue that divorce statistics after 1990 underestimated the recent marital instability. Kurian (2006:259) studied the divorce rate of 71 nations from 1995 to 1998. Divorce rates were calculated per 1000 population in the given year. He found that Georgia has the lowest divorce rate (0.42) while the divorce rate Belarus was

the highest (4.63). The average divorce rate for the studied nations was 1.72. On Kurian's list, the United States had a divorce rate of 4.34 in 1997, the United Kingdom's rate was 2.91 in 1996 and South Africa's rate was 0.8 in 1995 (Kurian, 2006:259). In South Africa, 22 936 divorces and 170 826 marriages were registered during 2010. Of all divorced couples, 54,4% had children under the age of 18 years. On average it indicated an average of between one and two children per divorce (Statistics South Africa, 2011:6). However, an official annual release on 2012 marriages and divorce rates were not available, according to the 2013/2014 annual report (Statistics South Africa, 2014:59). Ngazimbi (2009:2,31) indicated that the divorce rate in the United States reached a plateau at 50% while the divorce rate in Sub-Saharan Africa has been estimated at 21%. Parental divorce affects approximately 30 000 South African children annually (Botha & Wild, 2013:81).

An estimated 20% of children in the United States, whose parents were married when they were born, experienced their parents' separation or divorce by age 9, while 32% of children's parents will be separated or divorced before they reach the age of 12 (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008:1685). Theron and Dunn (2010:231) described the incidence of divorce in South Africa as "mushrooming". Marital dissolution is a process that unfolds over a period of time. This process starts while the couple is still married and ends years after the legal process is completed (Amato, 2010:656). Jarynowski and Klis (2012) are of the opinion that the dynamic of getting divorced depends on factors such as social norms, economical factors and personal factors. The large number of children who are experiencing parental divorce and family dissolution is concerning.

## **2.2 Divorce rates in the Military**

In an Australian Department of Defence Census, done in 2011, the Australian Defence Force reported that 3% of participants indicated that they were divorced or separated at the time of the census (Department of Defence, 2011). During 2011, Washington had a divorce rate of 3.6% of active-duty married members, and it seems as if the divorce rate is much higher for woman in uniform, than for their male counterparts (Chandler, 2011:39). In South Africa, divorce in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is also not a strange phenomenon. At Air Force Base Ysterplaat, an Air-force base within the SANDF, 27 members of the 248 members at the base were divorced as observed by the researcher as unit social worker in 2012. This was more than 10% of

the unit members. Sandell and Plutzer (2005:134) are of the opinion that although divorce is one aspect of the family structure and marital change, it is seen as the most ordinary marital transition that children, when they are adolescents, will experience.

### **2.3 Adolescents in divorced families**

Adolescents from divorced parents find it difficult to concentrate on the tasks and demands associated with their developmental phase. However, instead of focusing on such tasks and demands, the circumstances created by their parents' divorce force them to focus on survival and finding a way back to a feeling of well-being as experienced before their parents' divorce (Polacek, 2005:12). Reser (2012:22) described divorce as a "tradeoff". Apart from the benefit that is gained from the decrease in hostility between co-parents, it has the consequences of physical separation between children and one of the parents. Children's lives are disrupted and negatively impacted by the divorce. The post-divorce family might even appear to be in more chaos than before the divorce (Reser, 2012:22). Even in a so-called 'good divorce' setting, the interventions by parents to maintain strong relationships with their children and cooperation between divorced parents might not counter all the problems associated with divorce (Amato, Kane & James, 2011:522).

### **2.4 Adolescence and divorce**

Polacek (2005:11) is of the opinion that adolescents experience parental divorce as frightening. Thomas and Gibbons (2009:227) agreed and found that many adolescents are profoundly affected by their parents' divorce. Parental divorce is damaging and can put adolescents at risk of adjustment problems (Theron & Dunn, 2010:231). Children's lives are changed in major ways by parental divorce; one parent normally departs from the household while the resident parent needs to make several adjustments with regard to childrearing behaviour in order to compensate for the absence of the other parent; and family relocation is inevitable (Amato, 2010:657). Divorce is generally conflicting rather than harmonious which implies that adolescents will not receive the support they need during their parents' divorce process and will only reach a feeling of stability after three to five years after their parents' divorce (Polacek, 2005:12).

## **2.5 Divorce in Military families**

Karney *et al* (2012:1589) argue that although the stress on Military families increased dramatically after 2002, Military marriages seem more stable than civilian marriages. Male service members are more likely to be married compared to their civilian counterparts, but no more likely to be divorced. They were equally likely or significantly less likely to be recently divorced. A reason might be that Military members are more likely to remarry after divorce (Karney *et al*, 2012:1588). International statistics do however show that there was a large increase in the divorce rate of Army officers (Chandler, 2008:33).

Divorced Military families are exposed to additional stress such as deployment, when compared to their civilian counterparts. Deployments shown to increase marital strain and divorce among Military families (Satcher *et al*, 2012:9). If a divorced Military family is not used to regular deployments, the newly formed single parent family might experience uncertainties regarding family boundaries during deployment. This includes uncertainty about who is in, who is out and who performs what roles within the family (Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid & Weiss, 2008:222). Divorced families who tend to keep boundaries completely open during deployments struggle to adjust to the deployments whereas families who tend to close their boundaries completely adjust well to deployments but struggle upon the reunion of the soldier. After the reunion, families also experience boundary ambiguity regarding the redistribution of roles and responsibilities (Faber *et al.*, 2008:228). The researcher is of the opinion that this ambiguity regarding the redistribution of roles and responsibilities is very prominent in Divorced families. If a non-residing parent needs to take over the primary care of children during the residing parent's deployment the redistribution of roles and responsibilities might become a challenge.

Clever and Segal (2013:14) indicated that the Military is recognising the role and influence of soldiers' family members on the strength and effectiveness of the fighting force. Families continue to change, and this includes Military families. As more opportunities open up for women in the Military, more females may decide to join the force. This leads to more male civilian members who need to cope with the policies regarding moving and spousal employment training and deployments (Clever & Segal,

2013:34). Spouses and families are seen as formal support structures during Military separations (Kruger & Van Breda, 2001:947).

### **3 ADOLESCENCE AS DEVELOPMENTS STAGE**

Adolescence is generally defined as the period that commences with puberty and ends with the taking on of an adult identity (Hook & Duncan, 2009:566). Louw, Louw and Ferns (2007:278) described adolescence as “a developmental bridge between being a child and becoming an adult”. Adolescence seems to be a complex stage. A person reaches adolescence with the start of puberty and adolescence ends around the age of 18 years, or when that person starts to function independently or enters the workforce (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson & Collins, 2005:174). When considering the views of the mentioned authors on adolescence, it seems advisable to rather avoid linking the adolescent stage to age because of the different ages at which children reach puberty.

Adolescents are expected to master certain developmental tasks during this development phase. Pretorius (2009:24) defined developmental tasks as a set of skills and competencies that must be mastered by the individual during a specific period of development. The mastering of developmental tasks relies on the mastery of tasks during earlier developmental phases (Pretorius, 2009:24). Engaging in newly emerging tasks prematurely interferes with the successful achievement of the salient developmental tasks of an age period (Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth & Tellegen, 2004:130). The family, school, peer groups and the community all play a role in providing opportunities and constraints for the completion of the major developmental tasks of adolescence. Changing relations between the individual and these contexts constitute the basic process of human development (Tomasik, Pavlova, Lechner, Blumenthal & Körner, 2012:27).

An important developmental task during adolescence is the acceptance of a changed physical appearance (Louw *et al.*, 2007:285). Developmental tasks for early adolescence identified by Pretorius (2009:25) are physical maturation, formal operations, membership in the peer group and heterosexual relationships. The adolescent stage is characterised by rapid physical changes, significant cognitive development and emotional maturation as well as newly energised sexual interest. The



various developmental areas in the development of adolescents – namely physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development – will be discussed.

### **3.1 Physical development**

Early adolescence is characterised by rapid and extensive physical growth and the development of sexual maturity, which is called puberty (Beckett & Taylor, 2010:93; Louw *et al.*, 2007:283; Wild & Swartz, 2012:206). Irrespective of the timing of physical changes during adolescence, physical appearance seems to be extremely important. Adolescents will spend hours in front of the mirror to fit in with their peer group's norms. At the same time, they strive towards developing their own style (American Psychological Association, 2002:8).

Sexual development is one of the most dramatic events in the physical development of adolescents. Puberty is when girls' sexual organs start to enlarge, breast buds appear, bodily hair become visible and the menarche (first menstruation) emerge. Boys reach puberty when their reproductive system starts to develop, their voice becomes lowered, bodily hair appear and spermarche (first seminal emission) emerges (Louw *et al.*, 2007:284; Wild & Swartz, 2012:207).

### **3.2 Cognitive development**

Adolescents start to think and reason more like adults. They confront intellectual challenges almost on a daily basis (Louw *et al.*, 2007:298). Changes in thinking, reasoning and understanding during adolescence might be more dramatic to them than their obvious physical changes (American Psychological Association, 2002:11). Adolescence is the first time that young people have the cognitive capacity to intentionally explore who they are and what makes them unique (American Psychological Association, 2002:15). Pressley and McCormick (2007:147) referred to Piaget (1983) when they stated that "identity related struggles are made possible by the increased intellectual power that comes with adolescence". During this development stage, adolescents try to make sense of what is happening to them and to organise their world. They differentiate between important and less important ideas and ideals (Wild & Swartz, 2012:211). The National Institute of Mental Health (2011), as referred to by Wild and Swartz (2012:209), indicated that different parts of the human brain mature at different rates. The part of the brain that deals with emotional responses is fully

developed in adolescence, and even more active than in adulthood. However, the part of the brain involved in planning and decision making is not yet mature. This might play a role in the risky behaviour to which adolescents are vulnerable.

### **3.3 Emotional development**

Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Meyers and Robinson (2007:365) indicated that families, schools, neighbourhoods, peers and culture all play a role in the emotional development of adolescents. They believed that the environment in which children grow up affects their overall growth and development. The emotional climate in the family influences adolescents' emotional development. If the emotional climate in the family is overall negative, adolescents are at risk of becoming emotionally reactive (Morris *et al.*, 2007:369). Adolescents who have mood swings and emotional outbursts are often described as emotionally more unstable than other children. Louw *et al.* (2007:319) reasoned that these descriptions of adolescents are often over-exaggerated. Adolescents do experience emotional changes because of the developmental phase in which they are. However, they do have the ability to show insight into their own and other people's emotions because of their more abstract and complex way of thinking. It is evident of the development of their ability to experience empathy (Louw *et al.*, 2007:319).

Adolescents' emotional development is characterised by turmoil and extreme moodiness, which is possibly the reason why this phase is believed to be a time of "storm and stress" (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004:399). Adolescents experience more negative emotional interaction with their parents than children in other phases. This might increase the risk of depression for some adolescents (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004:399, 419; Louw *et al.*, 2007:319). However, Wild and Swartz (2010:215) believed that poor parent-child relationships during adolescence are the "exception, not the norm". Adolescents who have secure attachments with their parents seem to be better adjusted psychologically and more socially skilled than their insecurely attached peers (Wild & Swartz, 2010:216).

### **3.4 Social development**

A psychosocial crisis typical of this stage is called group identity versus alienation (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009:195). Erikson (1963, 1968) referred to the psychosocial crisis

during adolescence as identity versus identity confusion. The successful resolution of Erikson's identified psychosocial crisis during adolescence, namely identity versus identity confusion, leads to a healthy sense of "ego identity" (Beckett & Taylor, 2010:97). The individual then develops a defined personality within a social reality which they understand. These individuals have a high self-esteem and show the ability to form close relationships with others (Beckett & Taylor, 2010:97; Wild & Swartz, 2010:234). Louw *et al.* (2007:330) are of the opinion that adolescents have "an intense desire to belong". Access to support systems and solid relationships play a vital role in the development of adolescents' sense of worth and value in their community (American Psychological Association, 2002:15; Unicef, 2000:13). During adolescence their social context is mainly formed by parents and peers. Oberle, Schonert-Reichl and Thomson (2009) found that peer acceptance played a significant role in adolescents' positive dimensions of well-being. Unpopular adolescents often lack social skills (Louw *et al.*, 2007:331). Adolescents become increasingly involved with their peer group. The peer group contributes to the emotional needs of adolescents, but it is also seen as an opportunity to socialise and as a source of information. The peer group is regarded as a separate culture that assists adolescents with their transition from childhood to adulthood (Louw *et al.*, 2007:330). The support systems that adolescents develop in their parents and the attachment bonds between parents and adolescents play a significant role in assisting adolescents to enter a wider and more complex social environment (Louw *et al.*, 2007:325). During adolescence, teens and their families go through many transitions. It is important for both parties to understand the changes that adolescents go through and how the adults in their lives could assist them through this phase (Ruffin, 2009:1).

### **3.5 Moral development**

Moral development refers to the development of a sense of values and ethical behaviour (American Psychological Association, 2002:13; Louw *et al.*, 2007:340). As adolescents' social involvement expands, a personal value system guides their behaviour and assists them in practising socially and morally responsible behaviour (Louw *et al.*, 2007:340). Moral actions involve internal or cognitive components and cannot be defined and explored simply by behaviour (Kutnick, 2011:142). Kohlberg (as cited by Louw *et al.*, 2007:341) identified three levels in the development of moral reasoning and judgement progress. Moral development according to Louw *et al.*

(2007:341) is related to the stages of cognitive development outlined by Piaget (1896-1980). In order to reach the conventional level of moral judgement, an individual should have reached the stage of concrete operations in Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Most adolescents and adults will never develop beyond level ii (conventional level) and only a small percentage of adults will reach level iii (postconventional level) of moral development (Louw *et al.*, 2007:342). The levels of moral development as identified by Kohlberg are:

- *The preconventional moral level*, which is normally attained during childhood, is when children are responsive to cultural rules of right and wrong. Physical consequences determine whether behaviour is good or bad (Louw *et al.*, 2007:342).
- *The conventional morality level*, which is also referred to as the morality of conventional role conformity. This means that adolescents are able to adapt to social orders and expectations (Louw *et al.*, 2007:342).
- *The postconventional level*, which is the highest level of moral development and which is called "the morality of self-accepted or autonomous moral principles". Only a few people will reach this level (Louw *et al.*, 2007:342).

Adults can assist adolescents in their moral development by modelling unselfish and caring behaviour towards others and by assisting them to understand the perspectives of others (American Psychological Association, 2002:13).

#### **4 NEEDS**

It is believed that all human beings have basic needs (Johnston & Finney, 2010:280). Koltko-Rivera (2006:313) indicated that Maslow's hierarchy of needs serves as a theoretical tool to engage in a comprehensive and accurate understanding of human personality and behaviour. This hierarchy suggests that all humans will strive towards fulfilling basic needs before moving on to more advanced needs (Cherry, 2011).

Physiological needs are described by Maslow (1943:372) as the needs that are indicated as the starting point for motivation and are called "physiological drives". If all needs experienced by the person are unsatisfied, the physiological needs will be dominant. All other needs will become non-existent or be pushed into the background. The person's whole philosophy of the future tends to change if his physiological needs are not met (Maslow, 1943:373-374). When these basic physiological needs are met

another, higher needs will emerge and begin to dominate the organism. A satisfied need is no longer a need (Maslow, 1943:375). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is mostly displayed as a pyramid where the lowest level of the pyramid represents the most basic needs and more complex needs are placed at the top of the pyramid (Cherry, 2011). Maslow (1943:382) emphasised the importance of self-actualisation in the process of growing and developing an individual's potential. He described it as "What a man can be, he must be". Taormina and Gao (2013:156) argue that a need is rather a lack of something or a 'thing' as than it is the thing itself. Their study supports the validity of the measures, and it also lends empirical support to Maslow's theory (Taormina & Geo, 2013:174).

Maslow (1998:169-177) identified five different levels in his hierarchy of needs. They are the *physiological needs* that are determined by homeostasis in the body and appetites; *safety needs* that emerge when the physiological needs are satisfied; *belongingness and love needs* which are the next level of needs to be satisfied and which include love, affection and belongingness; *esteem needs* that include needs to strength, mastery and competence, as well as a need for reputation and prestige, and lastly the *need for self-actualisation*. This last need will emerge when people feel they are not doing what they are fit for. People desire to become more and more what they are. Figure 1 is a graphic representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Koltko-Rivera (2006:313) argue that self-transcendence instead of self-actualisation at the top of the hierarchy of needs is a more accurate reflection of Maslow's theory. The inclusion of self-transcendence as a motivational status provides a means to deeper understanding of how different people and cultures interpret the meaning of life (Koltko-Rivera, 2006:313). According to the Self-determination theory (SDT), the disillusioned satisfaction of needs might lead to negative functional consequences for mental health. Needs are described as the link between the demands of society and a person's natural tendencies towards growth and well-being on the other hand (Deci & Ryan, 2000:262).

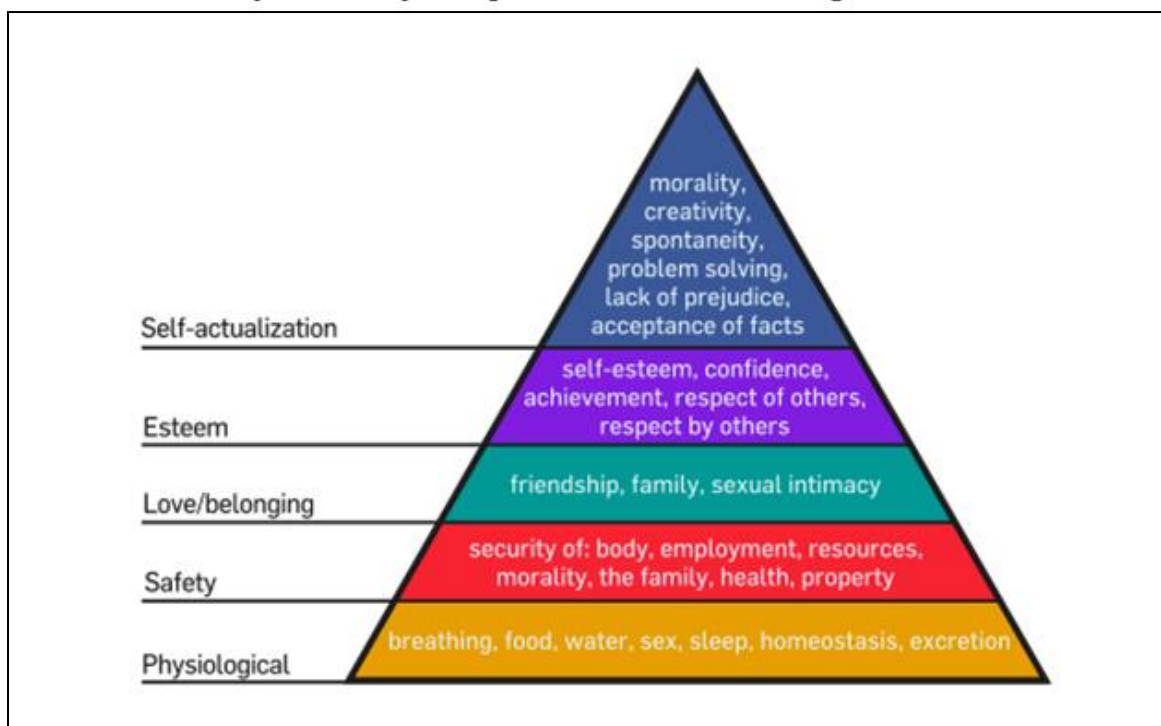


Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow (1943:377) is of the opinion that the role of parents and a normal family setup are indisputable in children's ability to satisfy their needs. Parental divorce, quarrelling and death in the family are described as particularly distressing for children. Children will often cling to a hating parent for sheer safety and protection instead of hope or love (Maslow, 1943:378).

## 5 THE MILITARY SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE MODEL AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a result of the transformation that took place in South Africa in 1994, the South African National Defence Force had to critically re-assess its directorate of social work and the services it rendered. The Directorate: Social Work compiled a formal business plan to align social work in the Military with the core business of the Military. In every Military unit, a Military Community Development Committee, consisting of the officer commanding, the unit social worker and other unit members, identifies the needs of the unit and its members. The needs are then addressed through projects and programmes organised by the committee (Kruger & Van Breda, 2001:947).

The Military Social Work Practice Model (MilSWPM) was developed in 1997. The aim of the MilSWPM was to integrate different "stages" of occupational social work with the

developmental social welfare's call to bridge the micro-macro divide. The MiISWPM's goal was to transform the micro-macro continuum from a line to a circle in order to include and address all potential client systems (Van Breda, 2012:23). The MiISWPM rests on two key concepts: binocular vision and practice positions. The binocular vision concept was adapted from the Ecological theory and guided Military social workers to focus on the "person-in-environment". The Ecological theory focus strongly on the interdependence of organisms and their environment, this theory assists social workers in endorsing their purpose for helping people and promoting responsive environments and enhancing social functioning (Gitterman & Germain, 2008:51). Healy (2014:122) noted that the ecosystems perspective focus on the "person environment" and the theory focused on restoring the relationship between the person and environment. Ecosystems theory indicates that problems arise due to a poor fit between the person's environment and his/her needs. Ecosystems perspective strives to sustainable change. Van Breda (2012:23) described binocular vision and practice positions as follows:

### 5.1 *Binocular vision*

A poor Fit between a person's perceptions of environmental resources and his needs and capacities, cause stressful experiences. How overwhelming clients experience daily life stress and how effectively they will manage life tasks largely depend on the perceived level of fit between the person and their environment (Gitterman & Germain, 2008:54,55). As indicated by the ecosystems theory, the one lens of the binocular is microscopic (focusing on the individual or family) while the other lens is telescopic/macroscopic (focusing on the organisation), as shown in Figure 2. Binocular vision occurs when a person simultaneously looks through both lenses. This enables a person to see the whole situation and enhances the quality and scope of assessments and interventions. If one eye is closed, a person loses half of its vision which could handicap his or her work (Van Breda, 2012:23).

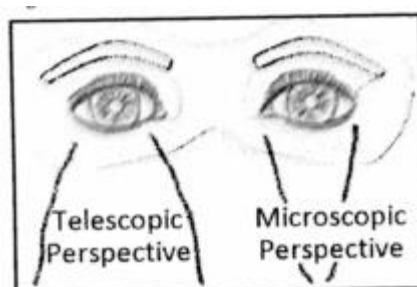


Figure 2: Binocular vision

## 5.2 *Practice positions*

Van Breda (2012:24) stated that the MilSWPM prefers to refer to positions rather than stages. The term positions describe the positions from which a person may view the external world as well as that person's experience of his/her internal world. The MilSWPM strived to move away from a linear approach in order to avoid the sense of prescriptive progression as described by Freud's psychosexual stages of development. It is believed that positions allow for greater fluidity of movement. All the positions have the same value; one position is not better than the other (see Figure 3). The practice positions will assist the researcher in determining what the needs of adolescent children from divorced families in a Military environment are as the researcher will be able to study adolescents' view of their external world as well as how they experience their internal world. How adolescents' in divorced Military families experience their external world and what the external world could contribute in addressing their needs can assist the researcher and the Military in developing specific programs to address the needs of adolescent children from divorced Military families. By exploring the needs of adolescent children from divorced families, the researcher can determine from which practice position services to the family and adolescents as individuals should be rendered. The following four practice positions were identified (Van Breda, 2012:25):

### 5.2.1 *Position 1: Restorative interventions*

In this position the social worker renders a problem-solving service to members encountering a biopsychosocial problem. The client is firstly viewed as a person and secondly as a soldier. A person's problem is resolved on a personal level (Van Breda, 2012:25). If an adolescent or family experience a problem on a personal level, restorative interventions will be rendered to the specific family.

### 5.2.2 *Position 2: Promotive interventions*

This position expects the social worker to render a preventative, educational and developmental service. This position aims at enhancing the social functioning of people. The soldier is first viewed as person and only secondly as a soldier. Interventions addressing the needs of people (rather than problems) at a personal level form part of this position (Van Breda, 2012:26). Adolescent's needs could be address from a promotive position. Group work with adolescents from newly divorced families to equip



them with tools that can help them work through typical needs they might experience after their parent's divorce.

*5.2.3 Position 3: Work-person interventions*

The systems of interpersonal relationships within the workplace are addressed in order to enhance productivity in the workplace. Interfaces between the workplace and other systems (including the family and community) are also important in this position. Interventions from this position address people in relation to the work setting. The soldier is firstly viewed as soldier and secondly as individual (Van Breda, 2012:26). When working from the work-person intervention, a social worker could for instance act as link between the family and the organisation to ensure that a single mother's name is not on the deployment list.

*5.2.4 Position 4: Workplace interventions*

In the fourth position, the Military social worker focuses on the Military as an organisation or client in order to create an environment conducive to Military work. The social worker is interested in the functioning of standard practices, structures, processes and policies, and focuses on structural or systemic changes at a macro level. Interventions addressing the workplace itself form part of Position 4 (Van Breda, 2012:27). Working from the workplace position, the Directorate Social Work might become involve in creating policies to prevent single parents from deployment, based on recommendations from unit social workers.

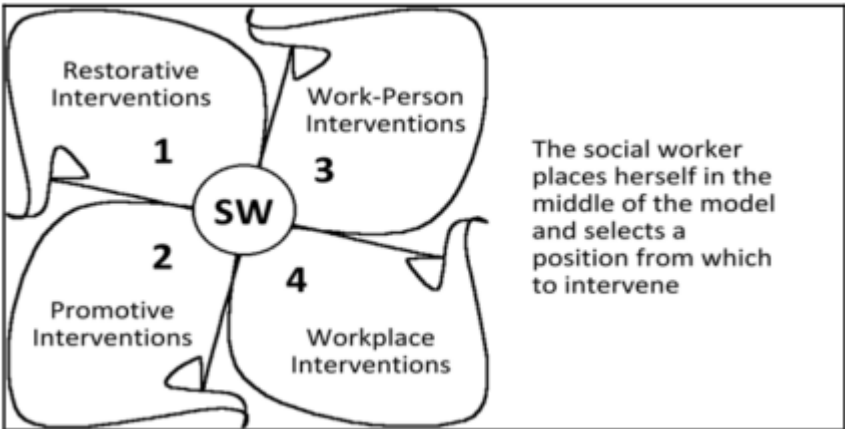


Figure 3: Practice positions

## 6 CONCLUSION

The literature review provided a broad description of the development of adolescent children, Military families and adolescent children in divorced families. Certain developmental tasks need to be mastered during this stage of adolescent development (Roisman *et al.*, 2004). Adolescents experience rapid growth and development that they need to deal with, including emotional turmoil and where they fit in their social environment. When considering the needs of adolescents during this specific developmental phase, Maslow's hierarchy of needs become prominent. Five different levels of needs, namely *physiological needs; safety needs; belongingness and love needs; esteem needs*, and lastly the *need for self-actualisation* were identified by Maslow (Maslow, 1998:169-177). Some authors criticize Maslow's hierarchy, and Koltko-Rivera (2006:313) argue that self-transcendence instead of self-actualisation at the top of the hierarchy of needs is a more accurate reflection of Maslow's theory and are linked to the meaning of life.

Divorce is seen as a stressful event in life (Reser, 2012:1). Adolescents experience their parents' divorce as frightening (Polacek 2005:11). During the time of divorce, adolescents experience their parents as less involved in their lives and they feel that they cannot turn to their parents for assistance and support (Barsano, 2005:79).

Adolescents from Military families are no different from civilian members, and they experience the same challenges as mentioned. However, these adolescents are part of a unique organisation with unique demands. Military members are expected to deploy on short notice. Family members do not know when their Military parent will be expected to perform duty away from home (Faber *et al.*, 2008:222).

In order to render comprehensive social work services to the organisation, social workers in the Military utilise the Military Social Work Practice Model (MiISWPM) to integrate the different practice positions of occupational social work to bridge the micro-macro divide (Van Breda, 2012:23). The ideal is to address all potential client systems (Van Breda, 2012:23). The soldier as well as the organisation are seen as part of the client system. Individuals and their individual needs and problems are observed within the bigger system as part of the organisation (Van Breda, 2012:23).

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**SECTION B**

**ARTICLE**

**Exploring the needs of adolescents in divorced families  
in a South African Military context**

# **EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS IN DIVORCED FAMILIES IN A SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY CONTEXT**

**Susanna Johanna Botha, Lizane Wilson**

## **ABSTRACT**

The study explored the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context. Statistics indicate that divorce is a reality in many South African households and therefore a reality for many adolescents. During adolescence, there are rapid developmental changes and demands. When one or both parents of adolescent children are employed by the Military and are divorced, this significantly impacts adolescent's circumstances and needs. This study used a qualitative descriptive research design and gathered data through semi-structured interviews with nine adolescents to determine the needs of adolescent children from divorced parents in a Military setting.

***Key words:** Adolescents, Divorce, Military families, Needs.*

## **INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Adolescent children in divorced families have specific needs. They are adjusting to the changes in their bodies and they also need to adapt to the newly formed single-parent family of which they become part after their parents' divorce. Parents, schools, friends, extended family members, spiritual institutions as well as the Military all have a role to fulfil in addressing the needs of adolescent children during this transitional phase in their families.

Worldwide, divorce has become a more common family transition. Between 45% and 50% of marriages end in divorce (Amato, 2010; Cherlin, 2005; Kurian, 2006; Ngazimbi, 2009; Reiter,

Hjörleifsson, Breidablik & Meland, 2013; Scherrer, 2012). Kennedy and Bumpass (2008:1685) are of the opinion that, in the United States, 32% of children's parents will be separated before these children reach the age of 12. Divorce is also a common phenomenon in South Africa (Census 2011, 2012:57; Statistics South Africa, 2012; Vital statistics, 2012). Pretorius (2006) indicated that one in three marriages in South Africa end in divorce. The Census 2011 report noted that 921 175 cases of divorce occurred in South Africa during 2011. Of the nine provinces in South Africa, the Western Cape had the second highest occurrence of divorce (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Statistics South Africa (2010:6) indicated that of the 22 936 families affected by divorce during 2010, 54.4% had children younger than 18 years.

Military members in South Africa and their families are also part of the divorce statistics of the country (Van Dyk, 2008:669). Acknowledging the demands of the organisation, the researcher is of the opinion that divorcing parents in the Military are facing even more demands than civilian couples. Kotlowski (2009:111) explained that Military members who experience high levels of psychological stress are more likely to divorce from their partners and that separation from family members is the largest source of stress for Military personnel. In the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) members are part of peacekeeping missions in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and these operations are stressful and sometimes traumatic to members (Van Dyk, 2008:669). Parental deployment has significant effects on family members and especially on adolescent members from Military families. They experience ambiguous loss and uncertainty during parental deployment and the effect of this loss is often evident in delayed adolescent development (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass & Grass, 2007:121).

Adolescence is described as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood (Bayer, Gilman, Tsui & Hindin, 2010:509; Louw, Louw & Ferns, 2007:278; Pressley & McCormick, 2007:147), but also seems to be a complex developmental phase (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004:401;

Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson & Collins, 2005:174). Adolescents need to master certain developmental tasks (Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth & Tellegen, 2004:130) and it is believed that the acceptance of their changing physical appearance is the most important developmental task (Louw *et al.*, 2007:285). Parental divorce is experienced as frightening by adolescent children (Polacek, 2005:11). During the divorce process, parents are less involved in their children's lives, causing these children to feel that they cannot ask their parents for assistance or guidance during this time (Barsano, 2005:79).

When adolescent children in divorcing Military families need to deal with their parents' divorce, it brings additional stress and trauma to an already stressful time in their lives. These changes and challenges raise the following question: What are the needs of adolescents in divorcing families in a South African Military context? Maslow (1998:169-177) identified five different levels in his hierarchy of needs, namely physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs and the need for self-actualisation. He emphasised that the need for self-actualisation is important in the process of growing and development. However, it is important that lower level needs are met before a person can move to the next level of needs. If the need is satisfied, it is no longer a need and the individual will move towards the next level (Maslow, 1943:382).

Considering the demands that the Military places on its members and their families, social workers, psychologists and chaplains play a vital role in counselling within the SANDF to enhance the well-being of the members (Van Dyk, 2008:673). Social workers in the SANDF utilise the Military Social Work Practice Model (MilSWPM) to guide their services (Van Breda, 2012:23). The MilSWPM utilises the binocular vision metaphor, as adapted from the ecosystems theory, to focus on the "person in environment" (Van Breda, 2012: 23). Furthermore, the MilSWPM refers to positions rather than stages. Four practice positions were identified to help ensure that the micro-macro division is removed. The person in the organisation is treated as an

individual in therapy, and the organisation is also viewed as a client in the counselling process (Van Breda, 2012: 25).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research approach and design**

The researcher applied a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2003; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Snape & Spencer, 2003) to explore the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context. She sought to understand the meaning that adolescents attach to their specific needs (Snape & Spencer, 2003:3) during their parents' divorce. A qualitative descriptive research design (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000) was utilised to gain a clear understanding of a specific phenomenon (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009:299), which in this study was the needs of adolescent children in divorced families within the South African Military context. Participants were given the opportunity to share as much information without the researcher interpreting the information. The qualitative descriptive design tends to draw from the general views of naturalistic inquiry (Sandelowski, 2000:337). The researcher studied the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in real-life situations. In order to gain a better understanding of the needs of adolescents' in divorced families', the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews (Greeff, 2011:351), with nine participants. This allowed her to gain a clear description (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009:298) of the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military setting.

### **Selection of participants**

Adolescent children in divorced families from four Military bases in the Cape Town metropole were included in this study. Purposive sampling (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant & Rahim, 2014:113) was utilised to sample the participants from the four identified Military bases. The

inclusion criteria for this study specified that participants had to be between the ages of 11 and 18 years, that their parents' divorce should have been finalised and that one or both of their parents should be employed by the SANDF. No previous clients of the researcher were considered for the study. Social workers and medical professionals from the Military bases provided the researcher with name lists of divorced members and their dependants. All divorced members on these lists were contacted to inform them about the study and to request their adolescent children's participation in the study. Nine participants between the ages of 13 and 18 were identified for the study. Five of the participants were girls while four boys participated in the study.

### **Research procedure and data collection**

The researcher obtained written permission to conduct the research from the SANDF as well as ethical clearance from North-West University's Human Research Ethics Committee. Through purposive sampling, the researcher identified the participants that met the inclusion criteria. The researcher made contact with the parents of 50 potential participants. Only 10 parents gave permission for their children to participate in the study while one of the adolescents was not interested in participating in the study. A semi-structured interview schedule (Delpont & Roostenburg, 2011:186; Greeff, 2011:352; Rubin & Babbie, 2011:233) guided the researcher in the semi-structured one-to-one interviews (Greeff, 2011:351; Hunter & Beck, 2000:96; Polkinghorne, 2005:142). Eco-maps (Munger, 1991:97; Zastrow, 2010:224) were utilised during the interviews to identify all social networks involved in the participants' lives. The researcher was able to validate data and elaborate on certain aspects during the interviews (Niewenhuis, 2007:87).

The interviewing continued until the researcher reached a point of data saturation as no new information resulted from the data received (Francis *et al.*, 2010:4; Rubin & Rubin, 2005:67).

During this study, Position 2 (promotive interventions) of the MilSWPM (Van Breda, 2012:23) was utilised to identify the individual members' psychosocial needs. However, the researcher did apply the binocular vision tool by viewing the individual within the bigger organisation. The individual adolescents' needs were explored.

### **Data analysis**

The researcher utilised thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006:87, Clark & Braun, 2013:122) to analyse data from transcribed interviews as well as the data received from the eco-maps. The steps of Braun and Clarke (2006:87) were used as the researcher, after she had read through the transcribed data a few times, created initial codes for interesting features. After the codes were ordered and grouped together, themes were identified. Identified themes were mapped and reported by means of extracted examples. During the recommendations and analysis of research data the researcher utilised the MilSWPM (Van Breda, 2012:27) as theoretical framework.

### **Ethical aspects**

Ethical approval for the research study was obtained from North-West University's Human Ethics Committee with ethics number: NWU 0060-12-A1. Institutional approval was obtained from the SANDF to conduct the study. All participants and their parents were informed about the purpose and potential impact of the study. Consent forms were signed by both participants and their parents. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any point with no negative consequences for them. Nobody received any remuneration from the researcher. All the information that was received was dealt with in a confidential way as no personal information regarding the participants was reported; only the researcher and her supervisor had access to participants' personal information. No names of participants were mentioned and pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants in the research report to ensure

anonymity. In order to ensure the privacy of the participants, interviews were conducted in the unit social worker's office or at participants' homes, in a quiet and private area. Interviews were voice recorded to allow for transcription and to provide proof that none of the participants was misled in any way during the interviews. Participants were treated with dignity and respect at all times, and debriefing and follow-up services by unit social workers were offered to all participants. None of the participants expressed any need for the mentioned services. All information obtained from the study was stored on a password-protected computer.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher applied credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985:20). Credibility in this study was ensured by member checking and by comparing the empirical data with the literature. Transferability was obtained by the fact that results of this study can be applied by Military social workers in the Military setting. Dependability was facilitated through an audit trail while confirmability was ensured through member checking.

To provide the researcher with a complex and deeper understanding of the needs of adolescent children, crystallisation was achieved (Ellingson, 2009:4, Niewenhuis, 2007:81). In this study, the researcher used a crystallisation framework to ensure trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of this study is also underpinned by a literature review of the phenomenon, the conducting of individual interviews and the application of the researcher's own practical experience as Military social worker.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews are shown in Table 1. Pseudonyms were used to differentiate the participants. Participant 1 was coded P1, Participant 2 was P2 and so forth.



**TABLE 1: Themes and sub-themes**

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Need for multi-level support</b>	
<i>Subtheme 1.1</i>		Parental support
<i>Subtheme 1.2</i>		Support from extended family
<i>Subtheme 1.3</i>		Support from the Military
<i>Subtheme 1.4</i>		Peer group support
<i>Subtheme 1.5</i>		Support from school
<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Relational needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 2.1</i>		The need to have a good relationship with their parents
<i>Subtheme 2.2</i>		The need to improve communication between them and their parents
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Physical needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 3.1</i>		Financial needs
<i>Subtheme 3.2</i>		Basic needs
<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Spiritual needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 4.1</i>		Support from spiritual organisations

## **Theme 1: Need for multi-level support**

The participants in the study indicated that their prime needs during their parents' divorce were the need for multi-level support. The multi-level support identified by participants included their parents' support, support from their extended family, peer group and school, as well as emotional support from the Military as an organisation.

### *Subtheme 1.1: Parental support*

The majority of the participants indicated that they longed for their parents to be more present in their everyday lives during the divorce as one or both of their parents were not there or unavailable to attend important events in their lives. *"... if I go and play soccer, then it's like not both my parents are there. Only my mother is there and not my father, like only sometimes that he will be there, but nowadays it's not anymore"* (P5). Several participants indicated that it was often work-related demands that kept their parents away from these important events. One of the participants described an absent parent in general: *"... she went away for a work function and she missed my drama practical final and she missed my, I think, was it my valedictory, ja, things like that, the things that are important"* (P2).

Information received from the eco-maps indicated that all nine participants identified their parents or mother and father as an important social network in their lives. It was the first social network identified by all nine participants.

According to Huebner *et al.* (2007:121), adolescents' responses to parental absence (due to Military deployments) under threatening situations are complex. The loss situation is described as infused with uncertainty and fear, and is seen as out of the family's control (Huebner *et al.*, 2007:121). Chandler (2011:5) agreed and referred to Military obligations when he reasoned that "[c]ountless children are inadvertently affected and are hurting as they endeavour to deal with

the absence of a parent”. Kotlowski (2009:104) found that the largest source of stress for Military personnel was being away from their family members.

Four of the participants indicated that they needed to feel loved during their parents’ divorce. “... *I wanted to somehow feel loved...*” (P2). One participant however indicated that she got more attention from her mother and felt more loved after her mother got divorced, “...*ons het meer aandag gekry sal ek sê*” (“... *we received more attention, I would say*”) (P4). As participants indicated that they needed to feel loved, the researcher is of the opinion that parents are often so busy trying to cope with their own loss and new circumstances that they tend to, unintentionally, neglect their children’s emotional needs. Emery (2012:79) confirmed this need to feel loved and indicated that parental divorce is challenging for children and that children need to learn how to balance relationships with both their parents. Children love their parents and when their parents no longer love each other, they can question their parent’s love for them (Emery, 2012:79). Emery (2012:81) also argued that children do not always have the cognitive capacity to understand the reasons for their parents’ divorce. They may therefore fear that their parents will abandon them.

#### *Subtheme 1.2: Support from extended family*

The adolescents felt that support from extended family members, especially from their grandmothers, played an important role in addressing their needs during and after their parents’ divorce. “*I mostly speak to my granny about my feelings, like I’d say my granny; I can speak to her about anything*” (P1). It was evident that, due to the parent’s absence because of work demands and deployments, grandparents play an important role. “*Like if your mom isn’t there at home, like they will be there, grandmother will be there to support you and even though, whatever the hard times that you’re having*” (P9). Grandmothers often take over the motherly role in the children’s lives during a time of divorce. “... *she (Grandmother) took care of us, so*

*like me and my brother, and, I would say we did quite good over there*” (P9). All the participants identified their extended family as a social network in eco-maps, while four only referred to grandparents; the other five referred to grandparents as well as other members of their extended family. Soliz (2008:77-78) confirmed that grandparent support minimised the potential negative effects of divorce on children, given that there is a strong positive relationship between the grandparents and the children. Hence, grandparents can be an important source for coping and comforting during this family transition.

Two of the participants mentioned that other members from their extended family (aunts) assisted them emotionally through their parents’ divorce. The one participant’s aunt is a psychologist and guided him through the process. He felt more at ease to talk to her than to another psychologist. “...*because she’s a psychologist*” (P9).

### *Subtheme 1.3: Support from the Military*

Louw *et al.* (2007:355) indicated that the presence of good social support during parental divorce could decrease the negative effects of divorce on children. They stated that this support system could consist of the church, teachers, professionals such as psychologists or social workers, family members, grandparents, siblings and/or friends, and that this support system could enhance children’s feelings of security and belonging. This is also evident from the participants’ feedback.

On the eco-maps, all nine participants identified the Military organisation as one of the social networks involved in their lives. They all agreed that the Military has a significant influence on their lives. All the participants identified a need for the Military to provide individual counselling during and after their parents’ divorce. Five of the participants indicated that they did receive individual counselling from either a Military social worker or psychologist. “...*maar met die tyd het ek ook sielkunde geloop*” (“...*but I also attended sessions with a psychologist*”) (P8). All

participants were of the opinion that they benefitted from the therapy sessions. *“Dit het my darem gehelp om daardeur te werk. Ek het te veel issues gehad en ek kon nie aanvaar dat dit nou gebeur het nie.”* (“It helped me at least. I had too many issues and could not accept that it was happening now”) (P8). Group sessions for adolescents whose parents go through divorce were identified as a significant need by all nine participants. All of them indicated that they would have liked to attend such group sessions to interact with other adolescents who are going through the same emotional hardship. None of the participants was however included or invited to attend such group session by social workers or psychologist from the Military. *“I think they could maybe perhaps have sessions for children who are going, like who’s being affected by their parents getting divorced, like maybe like where they can meet up with other teenagers also going through the same situation, like just to share how they feel, maybe if it’s like encouragement groups or just people that will encourage you”* (P1). Topics to be covered in group sessions, as identified by participants, are the reasons why parents’ divorce, different emotions that adolescents experience during their parents’ divorce, obstacles that adolescents can expect during the time of their parents’ divorce, and how adolescents can support their parents during the divorce process.

All the participants needed from the organisation to consider divorcing families’ personal circumstances before they send divorcing parents away from home for work demands. Even years after the divorce is finalised the participants still feel that the Military should consider divorced parents’ circumstances before deploying a single mother. *“Ek dink net die Militêr moet bietjie die kinders ook in ag neem en hulle behoeftes”* (“I think the Military should consider the children and their needs as well.”) (P8). This need from adolescents was confirmed by Huebner *et al.* (2007:121) when they stated that parental deployments have substantial effects on families and especially on adolescents. They found that adolescents might experience fear and uncertainty when their parents are absent during threatening times in their lives.

#### *Subtheme 1.4: Peer group support*

All the participants indicated that they would have valued group sessions with other adolescents going through the same situation, for various reasons. “*Ja, dit sou vir my baie help dat daar eintlik baie mense is wie sukkel soos wat ek sukkel.*” (“*Yes, that would have helped that there are actually a lot of people struggling like I am struggling.*”) (P4). Four of the participants indicated that they had a need to share their feelings regarding their parents’ divorce with their friends. “*Jy weet jy kan met hulle praat, ek kan hulle vertrou*” (“*You know you can talk to them, I can trust them.*”) (P8). Their need to share their feelings with their peers was motivated by the encouragement they received from their friends to be strong through the divorce process. “*They will give me advice on what to do, but they will like try something to encourage me to do, to stay good, like that*” (P5).

The need for peer group support during parental divorce is supported by Louw *et al.* (2007:333) when they noted that adolescents develop a significant need for “intimacy and self-disclosure”. Adolescents’ friendships are based on emotional attachment, trust, understanding and interest in one another (Louw *et al.*, 2007:334). Based on this mentioned information it is understandable why adolescents will trust their friends with their secrets and rather discuss their parents’ divorce with their friends than with their teachers.

#### *Subtheme 1.5: Support from school*

The participants all agreed that they had a need to talk to a psychologist or social worker from school, especially participants residing far from the Military basis and participants who were unable to attend regular therapy sessions at their local sick bay or Military hospital. Although this need was identified it did not always happen that the participants were referred to social work or psychological support services. As indicated by Participant 7, the teacher promised to refer him to a social worker, but this did not realise: “*... sy het gesê sy sal my na ‘n social worker*

*toe neem en dat my ma vir haar gesê het dat dit is swaar*” (“...she promised to take me to a social worker, and that my mom told her that I am struggling”) (P7). Although the majority of the participants indicated that they had a need for therapeutic services at school, not all of them desired to discuss their parents’ divorce with their teachers. Three of the participants did not have any need to discuss their parents’ divorce with a teacher at school. They felt that it was personal and that the teachers would not want to get involved in their private lives. “...because you don’t speak about these problems to your teachers or something like that. Maybe a friend, but not the teachers” (P5).

According to Wallerstein and Kelly (2008:3), adolescents will need the understanding, help and encouragement of all significant others, including teachers, parents, grandparents and other adults.

## **Theme 2: Relational needs**

The need to have a better relationship with their parents during the time of the divorce as well as better communication between them and their parents was emphasised by the participants.

### *Subtheme 2.1: The need to have a good relationship with their parents*

All the participants indicated that they needed a good relationship between themselves and their parents during the time of their parents’ divorce. Several of the participants indicated that they felt like the middle man in the divorce process, which left them feeling torn between their parents, “...because they had their differences or like their disagreements over things, so them not getting along, it will leave me like being the middle man and so I wouldn’t know if I had to like speak to my stepfather, like how my mother would feel about that”. (P1). One participant described how her parents physically fought over her during the time of the divorce: “...daar was hierdie een aand wat my ma en pa soos baklei het en toe kom my ma of my pa eerste na my kamer toe en sê ‘Kom saam met my’. ... my pa wou my êrens vat en my ma wou dit nie toelaat

*nie. En my pa was gedrink, toe het sy dit nie toegelaat nie*” (“...there was this one evening when my mom and dad were fighting and then my mom or my dad came to my room and my dad said ‘Come with me’. My dad wanted to take me somewhere and my mom refused. And my dad was under the influence of alcohol and then she refused.”) (P6). Some of the participants pointed out that they had a need for clear boundaries during parental divorce as the absence of clearly defined boundaries had a negative impact on their relationship with their divorcing parents. “...there were times when I was like very uncertain, should I speak to him, should I not or what must I do, like I was confused, like I didn’t know if I should speak to him or not” (P1).

Most of the participants indicated that they blamed themselves for their parents’ divorce. They are of the opinion that if they knew what the reasons for the divorce were, and if their parents could confirm that they were not the reason why their parents got divorced, they might have been able to move on without blaming themselves. One participant voiced this as follows: “*Ek het myself partykeer blameer, omdat ek het gedink dis oor my dat hulle geskei het*” (“I blamed myself at times, because I thought that it was because of me that they got divorced.”) (P8). This feeling of blame can continue for many years after the divorce had been finalised. One of the participants’ parents has been divorced for almost ten years and she still blames herself for their break up, as confirmed by statements like: “... *dit voel nou nog asof dit my skuld is, want nou dat hy ‘n seun het, is hy baie meer gelukkig as toe hy my gehad het en dit is bietjie moeilik vir my.*” (“...it still feels like it is my fault, because now that he’s got a son he is happier than when he got me and that is a bit difficult for me.”) (P4).

In a study on the ‘good divorce’ done by Amato, Kane and James (2011:520), it was found that regular contact between adolescents and their non-residing families, a good relationship between residing and non-residing parents and a well-functioning family system contributed to the well-being of family members of divorced families. However, when the divorce is accompanied by strong conflicts and when children are used as “weapons” in parental confrontations, contact



between one of the parents and the child might be limited or brought to an end. All parts of the family system suffer in such cases (Reiter *et al.*, 2013:7).

*Subtheme 2.1: The need to improve the communication between them and their parents*

Open communication regarding the divorce and honesty about the whole divorce process were identified by most of the participants as a significant need. As indicated by one of the participants, “... *I wished that they could just have been more open about what was happening and later on, like years later on, I found out that there were things that happened there that we don't really know about*” (P2).

Several participants indicated that they had a strong need to still have regular communication with the non-residing parent, especially if there was conflict between the two parents. “...*like I was confused, like I didn't know if I should speak to him.*” (P1). One of the participants did however indicate that she did not want to talk with her non-residing parent, “*I didn't want nothing to do with my father at that time just because they were still fighting all the time so I just kind of isolated myself a lot.*” (P2).

The need for more open communication has been recognised by Cherlin (2004:853) when he indicated that adolescents in divorced families strive towards personal growth and deeper intimacy with their parents through more open communication and mutually shared disclosures about feelings. Kelly and Emery (2003:353) acknowledged the need for honesty and open communication when they mentioned that if parents do not inform their children adequately about the separation and divorce, it complicated children's attempts to cope with the enormous changes initiated by the separation and divorce.

### **Theme 3: Physical support**

Most of the participants indicated that their basic physical needs were met during their parents' divorce. They had to make adjustments with regard to finances and had less than they had before, but for most of them that was acceptable.

#### *Subtheme 3.1: Financial needs*

Needs rise and living standards fall as a result of divorce (Emery, 2012:126). Wallerstein and Kelly (2008:90) are of the opinion that most of adolescents' anxiety about finances is focused on their future needs. This was confirmed by this study as well as all the participants indicated that their parents could still fulfil in their financial needs because they could still attend the same activities at school and had all the basic things they used to have before the divorce. *"...and like the things that I got when she, before she got married and while she was married were still the same and even now, like there isn't things that I need that my mother doesn't provide for me"* P(1). Four participants indicated that they did have to make some changes as they had to move to a smaller place or they experienced some financial difficulty, but their needs were still met. *"...daar was 'n big change financially. Ons moes nou na 'n kleiner huis toe trek but ons kon nog sê dat ons, you know financially we met"* (*"...there were big financial changes. We had to move to a smaller house, but we could still say that, you know, financially we met"*) (P2). The needs that were identified by the participants were pocket money, the attendance of school outings and camps, and the ability to continue their education at the school they attended before the divorce. *"...like I still do get, like my pocket money and I do get everything that a child, like I say, like a child would need"* (P1). Several of the participants were concerned that their newly formed families were going to struggle financially, as supported by statements like, *"So ek het nogal bang gevoel dat ons nie genoeg geld het nie"* (*"I felt scared that we would not have enough money."*) (P2).

### *Subtheme 3.2: Basic needs*

All of the participants indicated that they had a need for accommodation and food, and that these needs were met by their residing parents. *“Ek het 'n huis en kos en sulke goed gehad, maar dit was 'n klein plekkie gewees...”* (“I had a house and food and those things, but it was a small place.”) (P6). They either moved in with other people or moved to a smaller place than they were used to. *“Ons het 'n kleiner huis gehad ... ek en my suster moes 'n kamer deel, maar ek het nie regtig omgee nie...”* (“We had a smaller house ... my sister and I had to share a room, but I did not really mind...”) (P4). They had less money for treats like eating out, but they never went hungry. *“... ons het baie gaan uiteet toe hulle saam was en toe wanneer hulle geskei het, was, het on nie baie gaan uiteet nie want finance en alles, maar dit was nie soos in die 'n groot deal nie.”* (“...we were eating out a lot when they were still together and when they got divorced, we did not go out a lot because of finances, but it was not such a big deal.”) (P2).

Benson and Dundis (2003:316) referred to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and indicated that every person has basic psychological needs. However, people will only start focusing on higher level needs like social needs once these basic needs have been met. The fact that all participants indicated that their basic physical needs were met might be the reason why their emotional needs were identified as their core needs.

## **Theme 4: Spiritual needs**

### *Subtheme 4.1: Support from spiritual organisations*

All the participants indicated that they needed support from spiritual leaders or organisations like the Youth Organisation: *“Die enigste person met wie ek eintlik praat is my jeuggroepleier.”* (“The only person I actually talk to is the youth leader at church.”) (P4). Also, the participants said that they needed someone from church to trust with their concerns, *“I am at church, now there’s a lot of support, so there’s people that I also trust very much, so I can speak to them, like*

*the pastor and like my church mates. We're very open to one another and I trust them."* (P1).

Four of the participants indicated that they needed to speak to someone from their religious organisation. They needed to get answers on questions like "Why me?" "... I think in spiritual ways it would have helped me, like I would have been strong enough and emotional-wise it would have also helped me like not to break down..." (P1).

Six of the participants felt that the church should provide emotional as well as physical support to families who go through divorce. "*Ek dink hulle moet meer sessies hê vir tieners. Ek dink nie mense sal verstaan waardeur jy actually gaan nie. Miskien as hulle deur dieselfde ding gegaan het nie*" ("I think they should have more sessions with teenagers. I don't think people understand what you actually going through. Maybe if they went through the same thing.") (P8).

These findings correspond with the findings of Chandler (2011:110) who noted that Military chaplains have a responsibility to assist families of serving members with the challenges they experience in life (Chandler, 2011:110). Lau and Wolfinger (2011:98), on the other hand, found that adolescents from divorced families tended to strongly reject the faith in which they were raised or they adopted religion if they were raised without it.

## **CONCLUSION**

The complexity of the adolescent developmental phase and the fact that adolescents have to cope with their parents' divorce can negatively impact the ability of adolescents to focus on developmental tasks. Adolescents have specific needs during a time of parental divorce and if parents are too busy dealing with their own trauma and forget about their adolescent children's needs it negatively impacts adolescent-parental relationships as well. The adolescents who were interviewed all highlighted a strong need for multi-level support. Adolescents from the study indicated that a good relationship between them and both their parents is of utmost importance to them. They felt that their parents could have done more to explain the cause of the divorce to

them. They needed from their parents to communicate openly with them and to be honest about their circumstances. It was evident that adolescents needed to know why their parents decided to divorce, and they needed continuous re-assurance that it was not because of them and neither was it their fault. Good relationships with peer members and extended family members, especially grandparents were also identified as a great need and support for participants. Most of the participants indicated that grandparents, and other members from their extended family supported them tremendously during the time of their parents' divorce.

The adolescents also expressed a need for parental support and clear boundaries during their parents' divorce. They needed to know what exactly was expected from them especially with regard to the non-residing parent. They also wanted to feel loved by both parents. Extended family members played an important role in addressing adolescents' needs for emotional and physical support during parental divorce. Grandparents in particular are often involved in care and support when the parents are absent due to work demands. Most of the participants indicated that grandparents were available when needed and rendered good support during their parents' divorce.

Adolescents had the need to share their feelings with their peers. They felt that they could trust their friends and that their friends would understand what they were going through. Participants related far easier with their peers than with teachers or other professional personnel from school. Positive and supportive peer relationships were identified as helpful and supportive during parental divorce.

The Military is expected to render a more comprehensive service to the members of divorcing families. Adolescents felt that they were not aware of all the services that are available to them and all of the participants indicated that they should certainly benefit from individual and group sessions with professional personnel from the organisation. None of the participants was part of

support groups and identified it as a need. Topics proposed by participants included: the reasons why parents get divorced; different emotions that adolescents experience during their parents' divorce; obstacles that adolescents can expect during the time of their parents' divorce, and how adolescents can support their parents during the divorce process.

The adolescents in this study needed to know that their residing parent is financially secure. As long as their basic needs like shelter, food and clothes are met, they are content with the situation. Most of the adolescents' physical needs were met by their residing parent.

Spiritual support was of pronounced importance to adolescents. They wanted to know that they could talk to someone from their spiritual organisation and that they could trust them.

Although participants identified several needs that were not met during and after parental divorce, most of them also identified needs that were satisfied during this specific time. Participants mentioned that their basic needs were met at all times, although they had to make some lifestyle changes, they still have everything they needed. Good relational support from peer group members as well as extended family members were identified as a great help and assistance for adolescents from divorcing families.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations emerged from this study on the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a Military setting in South Africa:

- Divorcing parents employed by the Military should strive to have an open way of communication with their adolescent children. Parents should be open regarding the divorce process as well as what adolescents can expect from their newly formed single-parent families. Communication between the adolescent and the non-residing parent should be encouraged.

- Adolescent children in divorced families and their parents should work on their relationships to ensure that it is an open and supportive relationship. Adolescents need to trust their parents and they need to feel their parents' presence in their lives. Parents should strive towards attending important activities in their adolescent children's lives.
- Extended family members from adolescents in divorced families should be aware of the adolescents' needs during this transitional time in their lives. Grandparents should not underestimate their role in the divorcing family's lives.
- The Military as organisation should acknowledge its responsibility towards all family members from divorcing families. Support groups for adolescent children should be available and marketed. The formulation and application of policies and/or Standard Working Procedures that enforce counselling to adolescent children of divorcing families should be considered.
- Military social workers should strongly consider involving adolescent children from divorced families into group work services. Topics as identified by participants should be addressed to clear uncertainties and guide adolescents through this phase.
- Adolescent children should acknowledge the role they play in their peers' lives, especially during difficult times like parental divorce. Information shared with friends should be dealt with in a respectful and confidential way.
- Divorcing parents should be open and honest with their adolescent children regarding financial circumstances and living conditions during and after the divorce.
- Spiritual organisations should ensure that they have support services available to adolescent children in divorced families. Military chaplains should acknowledge their role in spiritual support to all family members of divorcing families.

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## **SECTION C**

### **SUMMARY, EVALUATION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The previous sections of the research described the orientation, findings and discussions of the research project. In this section, the findings are evaluated and recommendations made in terms of the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context.

#### **1 RESEARCH SUMMARY**

Adolescence is a stressful time in children's lives because they need to adjust to major developmental changes (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Louw, Louw & Ferns, 2007). When adolescents' parents get divorced, these children need to deal with the added stress and trauma of the divorce (Kelly & Emery, 2003; Kim, 2011; Theron & Dunn, 2010), and if one or both of their parents are employed by the Military, they are confronted with the unique demands of the organisation as well (Drummet, Coleman & Cable, 2003; Holm, 2010).

The Military is often described as a selfish organisation in general that makes huge demands on its members. Long working hours, ecologically fragmented families and deployments are but a few of the demands that Military families have to meet. During her employment as Military social worker, the researcher realised that the needs of adolescent children from divorcing families in the Military are often neglected. Divorcing Military members are on the base and have easy access to support services, but their children are often at school or residing too far from the Military base or sick bay to attend regular therapy sessions. In general, parents going through a divorce are so busy coping with their own pain and with the newly formed single-parent family that they do not recognise their adolescent children's needs.

From her practice experience as social worker in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) as well as the increase in the prevalence of divorce, the researcher identified the need to explore the needs of adolescent children during their parents' divorce in a South African Military context. A qualitative research approach with a

descriptive research design was applied to explore the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military setting. The researcher strives to understand the meaning that adolescents from Military families attached to their parents' divorce and their needs during that time (Snape & Spencer, 2003:3). Adolescents from divorced Military families were interviewed within their social environment and they were given the opportunity to voice their specific needs during their parents' divorce. The researcher utilised interview techniques like probing to motivate adolescents to share as much information regarding their specific needs as possible. A literature study was undertaken to explore the prevalence of divorce, adolescent development and Military families.

Nine participants were selected through purposive sampling and data was collected through semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The researcher utilised an eco-map to identify the social networks involved in the participants' lives. A semi-structured interview schedule guided the researcher through the interviews. During the interviews, the researcher made use of communication techniques such as reflection, minimal verbal response, paraphrasing, clarification and probing. All interviews were voice recorded and transcribed. Findings from the transcribed interviews were compared with content from the literature review and analysed. Main themes were identified and results were presented in article format. Recommendations and suggestions for future studies were made to improve support services to adolescent children in divorced Military families. The researcher utilised the Military Social Work Practice Model (MiISWPM) as theoretical framework during the research process.

## **2 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH**

### **2.1 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to apply a qualitative descriptive research design in order to explore the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context in the Western Cape.

The aim of the research was achieved through the mentioned research methodologies. If the needs of adolescent children are known during their parents' divorce they can be supported in appropriate ways. The researcher is of the opinion that the research process and design that she applied to this study was effective. The qualitative

descriptive design utilised by the researcher enabled her to study a vulnerable group of adolescent children within their own personal environment. She believes that the findings of the study could contribute in a positive way towards service delivery in the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS). The research process allowed the researcher to 'enter' participants' social world and identify the needs they had during the divorce of their parents.

## **2.2 Significant findings**

The research question, "What are the needs of adolescent children of divorced families in a South African Military context?" was answered through semi-structured interviews with nine adolescents whose parents are divorced and of which one or both parents are employed by the South African National Defense Force. After the study, the researcher has a much better understanding of what the needs of adolescent children from divorced families in the South African National Defense Force are. The aim for the study was reached through a qualitative descriptive research design, which enabled the researcher to gain a clear understanding of what the needs of adolescent children of divorced families in a South African Military context are. The needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context in the Western Cape was explored and described. The findings of the study revealed that adolescents from divorced families in a South African Military context share the same needs. All participants interviewed in this study indicated that they had specific needs during their parents' divorce.

To minimise the negative effects of parental divorce, the following specific needs of adolescents should be addressed:

- One of the main themes emerging from the study was the emotional needs that adolescents have during their parents' divorce. Divorcing parents are often so caught up in their own pain and frustration that they do not recognise the pain and trauma that their adolescent children experience.
- Adolescents need their parents to communicate openly and honestly with them regarding the reason for the divorce, issues regarding the future and the family's ability to survive financially.



- Adolescents need to still have a good relationship with both their parents during the divorce process. They often feel like a “middleman” between their two divorcing parents and this causes unnecessary pressure and trauma.
- Extended family members and the Military as organisation play significant roles in the lives of adolescents from divorced families. These adolescents need to voice their concerns and stressors toward someone, and extended family members are often the only place where they can obtain such support.
- Although the adolescents in Military families have similar needs to civilian children when their parents are getting divorced, it became evident that the Military adds additional stress. Hence, adolescents in a Military environment have specific needs when referring to the role of the Military during parental divorce.
- Military social workers, chaplains and psychologists need to be aware of their role in fulfilling adolescents’ needs during parental divorce.
- Adolescents place a high value on peer group support and it is important for them to be part of a group. With their peer group members, they feel safe and secure to share personal feelings and information. Therefore, peer group support plays an important role in addressing adolescents’ emotional needs during their parents’ divorce. It is of great importance for adolescents to be able to talk to someone from their peer group about their questions and concerns.
- Another interesting theme identified in the research is the physical needs that adolescents have during the divorce of their parents. It is important for adolescents to know that all the basic things – such as money, shelter, clothes and outings – will be the same as before the divorce. In general, they were not so concerned about the standard of living during the divorce. However, they wanted to be assured about stability and the availability of basic needs. This confirmed Maslow’s theory that once a person’s physiological needs are being met, they can focus on higher level needs like safety and love.
- Although the Military is a greedy organisation that makes additional demands on families, it does play an important role in addressing families’ basic physical needs.
- The last theme that transpired from the data was spiritual needs. Participants expressed the need to trust someone from a spiritual organisation. Although they did not necessarily need a priest or leader from the congregation to be there for

them, they needed peers from the same spiritual background and youth leaders to be available and to give support and advice.

- Several of the participants asked: “Why did this happen to me?” The participants all felt that the spiritual organisation should assist them in answering that question.
- The Military does employ chaplains, but the chaplains are not always accessible for adolescent children. Although literature on divorce indicated that adolescent children from divorced families tended to strongly reject the faith in which they were raised, the research findings in this study showed that the majority of the participants attended spiritual events more regularly than prior to their parents’ divorce.

### **2.3 Dissemination of information**

- An article has provisionally been prepared to be submitted to the journal *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* for possible publication.
- A feedback presentation and recommendations will be given to the SANDF to explain the research findings.

## **3 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS STUDY**

The findings of this study provide a clear understanding of the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context. The identification of adolescent children’s needs during their parents’ divorce illustrate that they have very specific needs during this transitional time. This study contributes to the identification and confirmation of these particular needs of adolescents.

From the findings of this study it is clear that adolescent children have specific and unique needs, especially in divorced families. Recommendations based on this study will be made in terms of various levels.

### **3.1 Micro-level recommendations: Employee as person**

- Divorcing Military parents should have an open way of communicating with their adolescent children, and communication with the non-residing parent should be encouraged. Adolescent children want to know what exactly is going on in their families and what the reasons for the divorce are. Parents should not lose interest

in their children's everyday lives and activities. Conflict between parents should not spill over to the adolescent children. Adolescent children must not be expected to be the middle men between their parents.

- Adolescent children in divorced Military families should not experience that the relationship between them and their parents are dismembered by the divorce. They should feel that they can still trust their parents and that there is still a sense of stability in their lives.
- Parents should be present (physically and emotionally) in their adolescent children's lives, as before the divorce. Adolescents need both parents to attend important sport and other activities in their lives.
- Extended family members should be aware of what adolescent children's needs are. They should listen to them and be available in their lives, especially during the time when their parents are so focused on the divorce that they do not have time to attend to their adolescent children's needs. Grandparents in particular should not underestimate their role in these adolescents' lives.
- Adolescent children should know that they play a significant part in their friends' lives. When a friend's parents are going through a divorce, they need to listen to that friend. Adolescents attach great value to the opinions and advice of their peers.
- Divorced parents need to be open and honest with their adolescent children with regard to their financial position and the possible changes that could emerge from the newly formed single-parent household.

### **3.2 Macro-level recommendations: Person as employee and the Military as organisation**

- The Military as an organisation should acknowledge its responsibility towards the family of divorcing members.
- Policies and/or Standard Working Procedures (SOP) that enforce counselling to children of divorcing parents should be considered.
- Military social workers should ensure that individual counselling as well as support groups for adolescent children in divorced Military families are available and accessible to all interested adolescents.

- Military chaplains should ensure that counselling is available to adolescent children of divorcing parents. Youth leaders should be aware of their role in these adolescents' lives and how they can assist them emotionally and spiritually.

### **3.3 Meso-level recommendations: National**

- Further research is required to explore the effectiveness of adolescent support groups during parental divorce. None of the participants attended support groups during their parents' divorce. Also, one of the study's inclusion criteria was that the divorce process of these participants' parents had to be finalised by the time of the study. Hence, the role of support groups was not explored.

## **4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This qualitative description of adolescent children's needs during their parents' divorce offered insight into the specific needs they have during this transitional time. Certain limitations were identified:

- Although data saturation occurred after nine interviews, only three of the six Military bases in the Cape Town metropole were included in the study.
- Another limitation of the study could be that all adolescents interviewed for the study were not in the same phase of processing their parents' divorce. Although all the divorces were finalised by the time of the interviews, some of the participants' parents had been divorced for years while other participants' parents were newly divorced.
- The study specified the following inclusion criteria for participants: Participants had to be between the ages of 11 and 18 years, their parents' divorce process had to be finalised by the time of the study, and one or both of the participants' parents needed to be employed by the SANDF. The inclusion criteria did not stipulate that the divorce process should have taken place while the participants were adolescents. When participants were requested to identify needs during their parents' divorce, they could have been in a different developmental phase.

## **5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The findings of this study provide a clear understanding of the needs of adolescent children in divorced families in a South African Military context. The identification of adolescent children's needs during their parents' divorce illustrates that they have very specific needs during this transitional time. This study contributes to the identification and confirmation of these particular needs of adolescents.

Another contribution of this research is the specific needs adolescents identified which may aid the Military in developing specific programmes to assist adolescent children in divorced families in the SANDF. Social workers and psychologists could utilise the information from this study in their counselling of adolescent children of divorcing Military members.

The study contributes towards the possible content of support groups for adolescent children from divorcing parents.

Parents with adolescent children who are opting for divorce may also benefit from the contribution of this study by noting the needs that adolescent children have during the time of parental divorce.

Schools and spiritual institutions could benefit from this research by taking note of the specific emotional and spiritual needs adolescents identified through this study. They could task specific people to address these needs of adolescent children from divorcing parents.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Although all adolescents in divorce situations experience certain needs, adolescent children in divorced Military families in South Africa have very particular needs. The Military makes unique demands upon their members and families. Regular absence due to work requirements and ecologically fragmented families form part of Military life.

It was identified in this study that adolescents need their parents present in their lives. In a Military context, parents are often deployed, sent on courses or expected to perform Military duties away from home. During these times in particular, adolescents draw from

the support of extended family members like grandmothers. Adolescents need their parents to be open and honest with them during the time of the divorce. Also, parents should never use their adolescent children “middle men” in the conflict between the divorcing parents. Adolescents have a need for regular contact and communication with non-residing parents. Both parents should ensure their availability and involvement in their adolescent children’s lives. Additional demands on the already terrified adolescents whose parents are divorced could be detrimental to their normal functioning and development.

In the light of this study, it seems that the various systems that form part of adolescents’ lives in a Military setting play a role in addressing their specific needs during the divorce of their parents.

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## SECTION D

### APPENDICES

#### APPENDIX 1:

#### Consent to conduct research study in the Military

Telephone: (021) 919 8651  
Cell Number: 082 577 1921  
Fax Number: 086 274 1369  
E-mail: susan.speel@gmail.com  
Enquiries: Susan Botha




6 Ysterhout Street  
Blommendal  
Bellville  
7530  
22 January 2014

#### APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH PROJECT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

##### Appendix A: Research Protocol

1. 7501270085087 Mrs S.J. Botha (Previously Captain Botha: 91003731MC), hereby request your permission to proceed with a research project at South African National Defense Force. As a Social Work Officer in the Defense Force I had a 'Confidential' security clearance. This research thesis is part of the requirements for the MA (Social Work) degree of the North West University. I am currently registered at SASWIPP and my registration at SACSSP is still current – number: 10-19413.
2. Mrs Botha is an ex-social worker from the Directorate of Social Work and was employed by the South African Defense Force (SANDF) over the period 7 October 2002 until 31 October 2012. She started her studies while still employed as unit Social Worker at Air Force Base (AFB) Ysterplaat and completed the theoretical part of her studies and start writing the research proposal during that time.
3. The goal of this letter is to request permission from the SANDF to complete my research studies in the organization. I need permission to contact Social Work Officers from Area Military Health unit Western Cape to identify all members in their units who are divorced and have adolescent children, and Mrs Botha needs permission to question identified adolescent children regarding their needs during their parents divorce.
4. The researcher plans to explore the needs of adolescent children in divorced families within the Military environment. She believes that the results of such study could improve service rendering to adolescents, especially those from divorced families. She undertakes to maintain confidentiality and protect the identifying particulars of the respondents at all times.
5. Mrs Botha initiated the research after she identified a gap in the services rendered to dependents, and especially the children of Military members going through divorce. Children are not always able to attend services that are available at the local Sick Bays. Mainly because they are at school during office hours and their parents are not always able to bring them to therapy, due to work demands and other personal reasons.
6. The aim of this research will be to, through qualitative descriptive research explore the needs of adolescents in divorce families in a South African military context in the Western Cape. The population for this study will be adolescents in divorced families from the military milieu in the Western Cape. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants from this population. The inclusion criteria for the participants will be that: the participants should be adolescent children between the ages of 11 and 18 whose parents' divorce has been finalized. No previous clients of the researcher will be considered for the study. Participants for this study will be selected from a list of all divorced members on the military base with adolescent children. The number of participants selected for this study will be sufficient so that people outside the sample will still be able to find some degree of association with the experiences of the sample and until data saturation.

6. Data will be collected through one on one semi-structured interviews until data saturation. This will help the researcher to get detailed data, and still allow flexibility if needed to follow up on any new information that may lead to more in depth knowledge on the phenomenon.
7. Mrs Botha hereby also request permission to consult with Social Work Officers under the Command and Control of Lt Col D.M. Medlar (Staff Officer of the Social Workers in Area Military Health Unit Western Cape) as well as Social Work Officers under the Command and Control of Lt Col M. van der Vyver (2 Military Hospital) to assist her in identifying children from divorced families who might be interested in participating in the research project.
8. This research project has been discussed with SO1 Social Work of Area Military Health Formation, Lt Col Pretorius in October 2012.
9. Since Mrs Botha needs to submit her Thesis by May 2014, she would like to start with her empirical study in March 2014.
10. Your favourable consideration of this request will be appreciated.

  
(S.J. BOTHA)  
SOCIAL WORKER IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

COMMENTS BY MILITARY HEALTH SECURITY OFFICER AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT  
WC: CAPT J. DAVIDS

*RECOMMENDED*

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(J. DAVIDS)

MILITARY HEALTH SECURITY OFFICER AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT WESTERN CAPE:  
CAPT

COMMENTS BY STAFF OFFICER SOCIAL WORK AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT WC: LT COL D.M. MEDLAR

*recommended.*



(D.M. MEDLAR)  
STAFF OFFICER SOCIAL WORK AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT WESTERN CAPE: LT COL

COMMENTS BY OFFICER COMMANDING AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT WC: COL E. DU PLESSIS

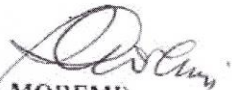
*supported*



(E. DU PLESSIS)  
OFFICER COMMANDING AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT WESTERN CAPE: COL

COMMENTS BY DIRECTOR SOCIAL WORKS SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY HEALTH SERVICES: BRIG GEN E.C. MOREMI

*The final thesis must be submitted to the Directorate. Also the feedback report must mention how well the DSD and DSW in particular benefit from this research.*



(E.C. MOREMI)  
DIRECTOR SOCIAL WORK SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES: BRIG GEN

**APPENDIX 2:**  
**Consent form**

**CONSENT FORM**

**NAME OR THE RESEARCHER:** Susan Botha

**Telephone number:** 082 577 1921

**E-mail:** susan.speel@gmail.com

Thank you for availing yourself to participate in this research project. Mrs S. Botha is conducting a research study under the North-West University for the completion of the MA degree (Social Work). The title of the research project is: **Exploring the needs of adolescents in divorced families in a South African Military context.**

You will be expected to partake in the interview process and answer questions regarding your needs during the time of your parents' divorce. All information is completely confidential and will be dealt with as such.

You are requested to answer all questions as truthfully as possible. There is a possibility that you might feel uncomfortable to answer certain questions. Please inform the researcher at any time if you feel that you don't want to continue with the process. You, as participant, are free to ask the researcher any question regarding the research and even afterwards to phone the researcher regarding any uncertainty.

The researcher hopes that the study will provide information to social workers, especially in the Military context on the needs of adolescent children in divorced families. This will enable Military social workers to develop programs to address specific needs identified by adolescents.

Every participant will be given a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent form and all participants are participating to the study freely without the use of coercion.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(name), ID number: \_\_\_\_\_

confirm that I have read the information in this consent form and that I fully understand my right as participant to this study.

**Signature Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3:

### Semi-structured interview schedule

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. How many children are in your family?
4. Who do you reside with?
5. How long ago did your parents get divorced?
6. What do you understand from the term *needs*? How will you describe it?
7. Can we draw an eco-map to see who are all the different role players in your life?  
(Make sure the Military is part of the eco-map.)
8. Tell me more about your needs during the time of your parents' divorce?
9. Do you feel that these needs have been met? Tell me more.
10. How had your needs been met?
11. By whom were your needs met?
12. What do you feel your parents could have done or could do differently to meet your needs? (Go through all role players indicated in the eco-map and ask the same question regarding each entity.)
13. What more could the Military have done to address your needs?

**APPENDIX 4:**  
**Particulars of participants**

**Table 2: Particulars of the participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>
Participant 1	Female	17
Participant 2	Female	18
Participant 3	Male	17
Participant 4	Female	14
Participant 5	Male	16
Participant 6	Female	13
Participant 7	Male	14
Participant 8	Female	18
Participant 9	Male	14

**APPENDIX 5:**  
**Example of eco-map P9**

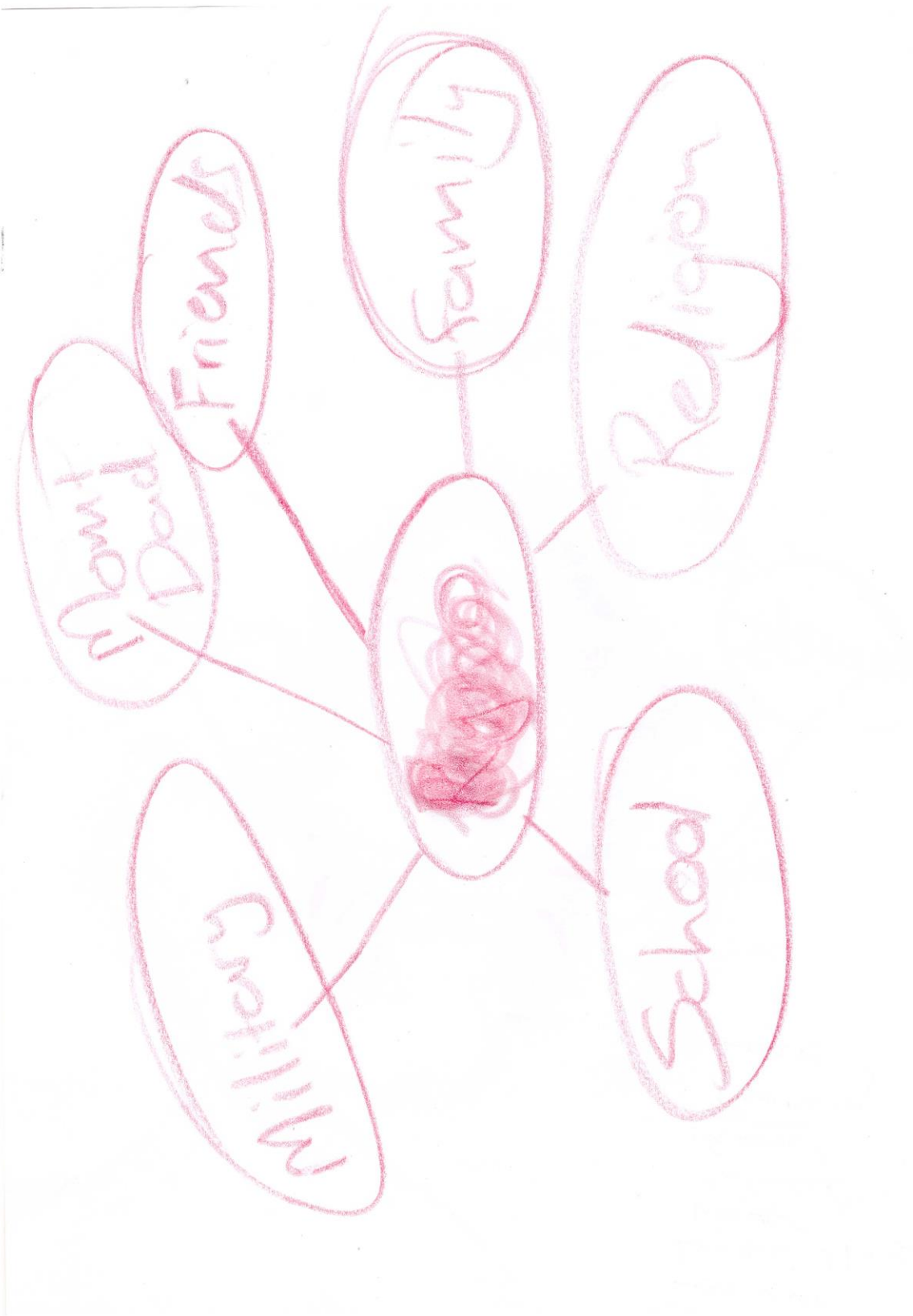


Figure 3: Example of eco-map P9



## APPENDIX 6:

### Example of colour-coded transcript of interview P3

**INTERVIEWER:** Daarsy, daar gaan ons. Ons kan daarvan vergeet. Okay, M... né?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yes. PARTICIPANT.

**INTERVIEWER:** PARTICIPANT, ek het vir jou nou verduidelik, vir jou en jou ma ook, dat dit gaan oor die behoeftes van adolessente kinders. Nou as jy kan dink, wat verstaan jy onder behoeftes? Of *needs*.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek is nie so seker wat jy actually bedoel met behoeftes en needs nie, maar ek dink dit is, dink nadat die ouers geskei is, wat is jou behoeftes of begeertes of so iets, in daai lyn, dis wat ek verstaan.

**INTERVIEWER:** Ja. Basically wat is die goed wat jy nodig gehad, né?

**PARTICIPANT:** Okay.

**INTERVIEWER:** As ons gaan kyk na spesifieke soorte behoeftes. Wat sal jy sê is spesifieke soorte behoeftes? As jy nou in die algemeen dink?

**PARTICIPANT:** Vir tieners of ...

**INTERVIEWER:** In die algemeen, vir enige mens. Wat het ons nodig om te lewe?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ons het ouers nodig, liefde van ouers het ons nodig. Ons het 'n huis, iemand wat jy kan terug staan op, soos ouers nou, en wat ons nog nodig, ons het God in onse lewe nodig, sonder Hom kan ons niks doen nie en ek dink dis basies dit, onderrig.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Ja. So jy het 'n goeie idee van wat's behoeftes né? Dis daai goeters wat ons nodig het om vir ons die lewe makliker te maak, om vir ons te help om te kan lewe, om te survive, daai tipe goed. Die goed wat ons sterk maak. As ons nou gaan kyk na die militêre, want in die militêr werk hulle baie sterk op behoeftes, needs, and stressors. Die goeters wat jou seer maak en die goed wat jou sterk maak. So, nou as ons gaan kyk na jou, hierdie is nou jy, PARTICIPANT, né? Wat is die goed of die mense wat in jou lewe, wat alles is deel van jou lewe?

**PARTICIPANT:** My ma.

**INTERVIEWER:** Jou ma.

**PARTICIPANT:** My pa, dan my stiefpa.

**INTERVIEWER:** Ma en pa, okay, en ek gaan nou hier so sê stiefpa, hulle is so in-een, ouers né?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, ouers.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay.

**PARTICIPANT:** God is deel van my lewe. God, vriende.

**INTERVIEWER:** Vriende.

**PARTICIPANT:** Familie.

**INTERVIEWER:** Familie.

**PARTICIPANT:** En wat's daar nog?

**INTERVIEWER:** Waar spandeer jy die meeste tyd?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek is meeste van die tyd by die huis, met my ma en deur die week is ek by die koshuis.

**INTERVIEWER:** Ah, so die koshuis is ook 'n deel van jou lewe, né?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, koshuis.

**INTERVIEWER:** Koshuis en skool en ... okay, sê maar.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek het nie buitemuurse skoolaktiwiteite nie so, ek's meeste by die huis of by die skool en het ek iets aan het sal ek nou soos social met vriende whatever, dan sal ek nou gaan, maar ek dink dis basis dit.

**INTERVIEWER:** En waar gaan jy skool?

**PARTICIPANT:** Hoërskool Jan van Riebeeck, dis in die stad.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh lekker, so jy's daar, so jy's nie te ver van ma nie.

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee.

**INTERVIEWER:** Hulle gaan haal jou darem elke naweek. Hoe lank is jy nou al daar?

**PARTICIPANT:** Van Graad 8 af.

**ONDERHOUDNEMER:** Van graad 8 af.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, dis my laaste jaar.

**INTERVIEWER:** Genade, kan jy glo? Okay, dan is daar nog iets wat deel van jou lewe en dis die militêr, né?

**PARTICIPANT:** Okay.

**INTERVIEWER:** Die Military, want jou ma en jou stiefpa is in die Military. Waar's pa?

**PARTICIPANT:** Hy is ook in die medies, ambulans, paramedic deel, is hy. Hy bly in Macassar, Somerset West se kant.

**INTERVIEWER:** So hy is nie in die militêr nie?

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee.

**INTERVIEWER:** Maar hy is ook in mediese lyn né? En wat gaan jy doen volgende jaar?

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee ek is nog nie seker wat ek kan doen nie. Kan nie my mind opmaak nie, waar ek wil wees, of wat ek will doen. Miskien kan ek die geld mors of, ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** Ag fantasties. So dit is, dit is nou wat alles deel is van jou lewe, so ons kan 'n bietjie kyk na hierdie verskillende entiteite, of hierdie is nou amper soos an eco-map, né? Wat alles wat deel van jou ekologiese sisteem, is soos nou in maatskaplike terme praat, maar dis nou basis van jou lewe. So ek wil hê jy moet bietjie gaan kyk, hoe lank terug is jou ouers geskei?

**PARTICIPANT:** As ek kyk, my ma is nou al agt jaar getroud. Ek dink hulle het getrou net nadat, toe ons getrek het toe 'n jaar daarna toe trou hulle. So ek dink omtrent sewe jaar, ek is nie seker nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek was Graad 5, wag, ja ,ek was Graad 5 toe hulle geskei is.

**INTERVIEWER:** En wat was die dinge wat jy nodig gehad het ná die egskeiding?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ná die egskeiding, dit was eers, was hard gewees om te aanvaar dat jou ouers geskei is, maar met die tyd het ek ook sielkunde geloop. Dit het my darem

gehelp om daardeur te werk. Ek het te veel issues gehad en ek kon nie aanvaar dat dit nou gebeur het nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** So wat was vir jou moeilik? Wat kon jy nie aanvaar nie?

**PARTICIPANT:** Die feit dat my ouers nie meer saam is nie en dat ek weg van my pa af getrek het. Dat ek hom nie elke dag kan sien nie en ...

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So wat jy nodig gehad het in daai tyd, is om vir jou pa elke dag te sien en jy het nodig gehad dat jou ouers bymekaar is. En nog?

**PARTICIPANT:** Soos dit aanbeweeg het, leer 'n mens maar met die proses dat jy dinge moet aanvaar soos dit is en daar is niks wat jy daaraan kan doen nie. So, die sielkundige sessies wat ek gehad het, het my so bietjie so nou en dan gehelp, maar daar is altyd tye in jou lewe soos wat ek ervaar het, wat ek altyd terugdink. Hoekom het dit gebeur, hoekom ek, maar aan die ander kant het ek ook verstaan, dan dink ek by myself, dan moet ek ook verstaan hoekom hulle geskei is en ek dink vandag is sy is gelukkig waar sy nou is en ek kan sien sy is gelukkig en, ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So, het jy geweet hoekom hulle skei?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, ek het geweet hoekom hulle skei.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. En as jy nou terugdink of jy nou kan raad gee vir ouers wat nou wil besluit om te skei. Wat sou jy sê, wat se raad kan jy vir ouers gee? Wat kan hulle doen om hulle tienerkinders te help?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek sal sê hulle moet ook sit met hulle kinders en sê hoekom hulle dit doen en as hulle sielkundige sessies nodig het, laat hulle gaan. Dan sal ek nog vir hulle sê... wat ek vir die kinders wil sê is hulle moet sterk wees, hulle moet aanvaar en daar

is niks wat hulle daaraan kan doen nie, maar hulle moet ook positief wees. Hulle moenie terug soos af van hulle die paadjie afgaan nie, maar nou dat hulle ouers geskei is verkeerde goed doen en hulleself blameer nie. **Ek het myself partykeer blameer, omdat ek het gedink dis oor my dat hulle geskei het.**

**INTERVIEWER:** So jy het partykeer gevoel dit is jou skuld.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** En dan God en godsdiens. Is jy baie betrokke by die kerk, by die jeug?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek is in die Jeug. Ek is in die kerk. Ek is in die (**indistinct 0:08:31.8**) kerk, maar partykeer kan ek net nie by die Jeug kom nie omdat ek deur die week ek (**indistinct 0:08:37.4**) loop is ek nie by die huis nie en sowaar ook al ons 'n ding aan het, sal ek bywoon.

**INTERVIEWER:** En ondersteun hulle vir jou? Kan jy nog met hulle ... wat doen kerke om vir tieners te ondersteun? Wat sal jy sê het tieners nodig in die kerk in sulke tye?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek dink **hulle moet meer sessies hê vir tieners**. Hulle meer leer oor God en wat God vir hulle kan doen en alles doen. **Ek dink nie mense sal verstaan waardeur jy actually gaan nie. Miskien as hulle deur dieselfde ding gegaan het nie.** So, ek dink kinders moet leer van God, wat hulle Bybel is en deur die proses, dit sal hulle nader trek aan Hom en hulle sal nie sommer ... hoe kan ek sê ... soos afdwaal nie en hulle sal op die regte pad bly.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was daar iemand by die kerk met wie jy kon gesels in daai tyd?

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee. Ek is 'n baie persoonlike mens. Ek praat nie sommer uit oor my probleme. Ek sal na ander mense se probleme luister en vir hulle raad gee, maar as dit by my kom, sou ek nie weet wat om te doen nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So, sou jy daarvan gehou het dat iemand van die kerk miskien met jou gesels? Miskien jou jeugleier of ...

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, ek sou. Maar soos ek sê...

**INTERVIEWER:** Jy is nie iemand wat ... jy sou daarvan gehou het, maar jy sou ook nie so baie daarvan gehou het nie.

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee.

**INTERVIEWER:** Jou vriende. Weet jou vriende dat jou ouers geskei is?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, hulle weet. Hulle ondersteun my sterk en rondom my vriende is ek is gelukkig dieselfde.

**INTERVIEWER:** Jy sê hulle ondersteun jou. Wat doen hulle om jou te ondersteun?

**PARTICIPANT:** Partykeer as jy soos af voel of wat vriende maar altyd doen as jy af is. Jy weet jy kan met hulle praat, ek kan hulle vertrou.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is daar van jou vriende wat se ouers ook geskei is?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, daar is van hulle wat geskei is. Hulle gaan ook maar aan met hulle daaglikse lewe. Party van my vriende soos sien hulle pa's nie eers nie, want hulle is so ver.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So julle kan mekaar ondersteun. Jy kan met jou vriende gesels of jou vriende wie se ouers geskei is as iets vir jou moeilik is en hulle kan weer met jou gesels.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, ons kan mekaar ondersteun omdat ons deur dieselfde prosesse gaan.

**INTERVIEWER:** En dit help vir jou.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, dit help.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Dis vir jou lekker om te weet daar is iemand wat ook deur hierdie goete gaan waardeur jy gaan.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** En dan jou familie. Wie van jou familie het vir jou ondersteun?

**PARTICIPANT:** Almal het geweet, maar ek dink nie hulle het geweet wat agter die deur aangaan nie en hoekom rêrig ons ouers geskei is nie. So, hulle het my ondersteun. Nie net fisies met my gepraat en sê alles gaan okay wees nie. Hulle was net daar in case ek iemand nodig gehad het.

**INTERVIEWER:** Miskien is daar iemand spesifiek met wie jy kon gesels het? Wat jy gemaklik gevoel het mee om te kan gaan gesels as jy nodig sou hê?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek en my broer het 'n goeie verstandhouding. Ek vertel vir hom alles wat ek voel.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So jy en jou broer is close. Hoe oud is hy nou?

**PARTICIPANT:** Hy is 10 jaar ouer as ek, hy word nou 28.



**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So waar's hy?

**PARTICIPANT:** Hy bly ook in Macassar, naby my pa.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So, sien jy hom gereeld?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, somtyds.

**INTERVIEWER:** En dis vir jou lekker.

**PARTICIPANT:** Dis net partykeer vandat hy uit die huis uit getrek het, is ek so alleen. Ek is nou die enigste kind in die huis en my stiefbroers bly by hulle ma.

**INTERVIEWER:** Hoe oud is hulle?

**PARTICIPANT:** Een is nou 18, een is 15 en die ander een 10.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So hulle is ook nog in die skool. Is daar goeie 'n verhouding tussen julle?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, ons verstaan mekaar.

**INTERVIEWER:** Julle praat nie oor die goed nie.

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Koshuis en skool, dis nou maar dieselfde. Is daar iemand by die skool soos 'n onderwyser of so, 'n terapeut of iets wat jy...

**PARTICIPANT:** Ons skool het nie 'n terapeut nie en nee, ek sal nie sommer na 'n onderwyser toe gaan nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** Sal jy graag wou of hê daar moet iemand wees met wat jy mee kon gesels?

**PARTICIPANT:** Onderwysers ... ek sal nie met 'n onderwyser kan praat nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** So, jy het nie daai behoefte nie. Okay, en dan die militêr. Die militêr vat baie keer ons ma's en pa's weg. Ek dink jy het goeie ervaring daarin. Was daar in daai tyd na die egskeiding wat jou ma moes weggaan, of weg werk of op kursus gaan?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek dink dit was lank na die egskeiding, twee jaar of so, dat my ma Kongo toe was. Dit was vir 6 maande. Toe het my ouma by ons kom bly. Ek was nog in laerskool gewees. Ja, partykeer dink jy net hulle is onredelik, want hulle weet ouers het kinders en hoekom vat hulle ons ma's weg vir so lank? Ek het survive, ek het elke dag met haar gepraat, so.

**INTERVIEWER:** En wat sou jy vir die weermag sê, wat kan hulle doen om vir kinders te help as ouers so net geskei is?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek dink die weermag moet in ag neem dat ouers het kinders wat klein is en kinders wat groot is en vir ons is dit moeilik, want as ons eksamen miskien skryf het ons altyd 'n moeder nodig om te sê praat my bietjie moed in of kan ek jou sien. Of kan ek huis toe kom, maar as jy huis toe kom is jou ma nie hier nie, want sy sit so ver en wat ook al. Ek dink net die militêr moet bietjie die kinders ook in ag neem en hulle behoeftes.

**INTERVIEWER:** En daar is 'n spesifieke behoefte om ma naby jou te hê.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** Om haar ondersteuning te hê. Veral as ma en pa nie meer bymekaar is nie. Jy wil tog nie met jou stiefpa praat nie, jy wil met ma praat. Al is hy goed vir jou, nê, maar nog steeds soek jy jou ma. En dan het ons gepraat, jy het nou baie gepraat oor die emosionele behoeftes en die liefde en ondersteuning en goed, maar as jy

terugdink aan daai tyd. Ander goed wat jy nodig gehad het soos jy vir my gesê het. 'n Huis, ouers. Het jy dit alles gehad ná die egskeiding?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja, ons het uit die huis uit getrek en toe trek ons 2Mil basis toe waar my stiefpa gewoon het, toe trek ons daar by hom in en ons sit so nou en dan vas, ek en my stiefpa. Dis nogal... ek weet nie hoe om dit te beskryf nie. Partykeer sit ons vas oor onnodige goed, maar...

**INTERVIEWER:** Hoe was dit vir jou dat jy uit jou pa se huis uit na 'n ander man se huis toe moes getrek het. Was dit vir jou okay?

**PARTICIPANT:** Dit was 'n aanpassing. Ek moes aanvaar dis nou my ouers en dis nou nie my pa nie. So, dit was... ek het my dae gehad van moeilik wees en goeie dae.

**INTERVIEWER:** Hoe was jou gevoel? Hoe het jy gevoel?

**PARTICIPANT:** Hoe het ek gevoel? Ek het ... dit was ... ek weet nie, ek was nog daai tyd by die sielkundige, maar partykeer was dit net moeilik om te aanvaar en dan... andersins was dit maar okay.

**INTERVIEWER:** Jy was nooit kwaad nie?

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee, ek het net altyd myself blameer.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So, dit was meer selfverwyt as kwaad.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** Jy was kwaad nie vir iemand spesifiek nie?

**PARTICIPANT:** Nee.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Is daar enige iets anders wat jy dink jy vir my wil sê hier rondom behoeftes in die tyd van egskeiding en so?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek dink nie daar is nog iets anders nie. Ek dink net kinders wat daardeur gaan, daar gaan dae wees wat jy gaan af wees en daar gaan dae wees wat jy vol nukke wees, maar ons moet net verstaan hoekom en waarom hulle dit gedoen het en om vir ons 'n beter lewe te gee op die einde van die dag.

**INTERVIEWER:** So, jy dink 'n groot behoefte van tieners sal wees dat ouers moet met hulle eerlik wees oor die rede vir die egskeiding?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** Hoekom dit gebeur. As die maatskaplike werkers of die sielkundiges in die militêr iets kan doen vir sulke kinders. Jy het nou vir my gesê jy het 'n sielkundige gesien. By Youngsfield of by 2Mil?

**PARTICIPANT:** By 2Mil en dan was daar een by 9SAI dink ek. Ek kan nie meer onthou nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So, jy het 'n sielkundige gesien. Het dit vir jou gehelp? Jy het gesê dit het soms gehelp.

**PARTICIPANT:** Soms, maar kort-kort het ek ook die gevoel, dit help nie, want, wat kan hulle doen, want hulle gaan nie deur dieselfde proses nie.

**INTERVIEWER:** So, jy het iemand nodig gehad op daardie stadium wat deur dieselfde proses as jy gaan.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** So, sou dit vir jou gehelp het dan as daar soos groepe was met ander tieners wat se ouers deur 'n egskeiding gaan?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ek dink dit sou my gehelp het. Ons kon meer ge-interact het hoe daai persoon voel en hoe ek gevoel het en wat dink jy kan ons saam doen om deur dit te kom.

**INTERVIEWER:** So, wat kan ons doen en hoe kan ons hierdie ding beat.

**PARTICIPANT:** Ja.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Ek dink dis dit, dit is dit van my wat ek wil vra, nog iets?

**PARTICIPANT:** Wou tannie nog iets gevra het?

**INTERVIEWER:** Nee, nee, ek is alright. Ok. Baie, baie dankie. Soos ek gesê het. Dit is moontlik dat ons kon sensitiewe draadjies aangeraak het, die nerves en goeters. Jy voel miskien nou fine, maar as jy op enige stadium voel later, al is dit as jy klaar eksamen geskryf het, want ek weet die adrenalien pomp nou en dis nou besige tye, maar as jy op enige stadium voel as jy nou begin rustig raak en jy voel maar hierdie goed waaroor ek nou oor gepraat het begin by jou spook of so. Gee asseblief vir my 'n lui, dan maak ons 'n plan.

**PARTICIPANT:** Okay.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay? Ek kan jou verwys na iemand toe of ek is bereid om jouself ook te sien in terapie dan vir 'n paar sessies.

**PARTICIPANT:** Okay. Jy kan net vir my ma sê ek het niks sessies nodig nie. Ma's worry net eintlik te veel oor ons. Wat ons nie verstaan nie.

**Table 3: Key to interview colour coding**

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Emotional needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 1.1</i>		<i>Parental support</i>
<i>Subtheme 1.2</i>		<i>Support from extended family</i>
<i>Subtheme 1.3</i>		<i>Support from the Military</i>
<i>Subtheme 1.4</i>		<i>Peer group support</i>
<i>Subtheme 1.5</i>		<i>Support from school</i>
<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Relational needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 2.1</i>		The need to have good relationships with their parents
<i>Subtheme 2.2</i>		The need to improve the communication between them and their parents
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Physical needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 2.1</i>		<i>Financial needs</i>
<i>Subtheme 2.2</i>		<i>Basic needs</i>
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Spiritual needs</b>	
<i>Subtheme 3.1</i>		<i>Spiritual needs</i>

## APPENDIX 7:

### Guidelines for authors: Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk

This South African academic peer-reviewed journal – *Social Work / Maatskaplike Werk* – publishes articles, books reviews and commentary on articles already published from any field of social work.

Manuscripts covering the following, among others, are considered for publication: social work, welfare organisations, society, social welfare, family and child care, community work, substance abuse, substance dependence and welfare law.

#### Author guidelines:

1. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans.
2. All articles should include an abstract in English of not more than 100 words.
3. All contributions will be critically reviewed by at least two referees on whose advice contributions will be accepted or rejected by the editorial committee.
4. All refereeing is strictly confidential (double blind peer review).
5. Manuscripts may be returned to the authors if extensive revision is required or if the style or presentation does not conform to the Journal practice.
6. Articles of fewer than 2000 words or more than 10000 words are normally not considered for publications.
7. Manuscripts should be typed in 12 pt Times Roman double-spaced on A4 paper size.
8. Use the Harvard system for references.
9. Short references in the text: When word-for-word quotations, facts or arguments from other sources are cited, the surname(s) of the author(s), year of publication and page number(s) must appear in parenthesis in the text, e.g. “...” (Berger, 1967:12).
10. More details about sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption “References”.
11. The sources must be arranged alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors.

#### Submission preparation checklist:

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all of the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors who do not adhere to these guidelines.

1. The submission has not been previously published, nor has it been submitted to another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in comments to the Editor).
2. The submission file is in Open Office, Microsoft Word, RTF or Word Perfect document file format.
3. Where available, URLs for the references have been provided.
4. The text is single-spaced; uses a 12-point font; employs italics rather than underlining (except URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points rather than at the end.
5. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirement outlined in the Author guidelines.
6. If submitting to a peer-reviewed section of the journal, the instructions in *Ensuring a Blind Review* have been followed.

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