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The development and relevance of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation

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The study of family resilience has gained momentum within the field of family psychology over the last two decades. This paper focuses on the development of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, which has a long history and is substantiated by research dating back to 1946. The factors comprising the model have been empirically tested, and related measuring instruments have been developed in order to evaluate resiliency factors within the family context. Each of the Resiliency Model's antecedent models is outlined here, while its potential relevance to the South African context is also debated.

Die ontwikkeling en toepaslikheid van die Veerkragtigheidsmodel van Gesinstres, Skikking en Aanpassing

Die studie van gesinsveerkragtigheid het in die afgelope twee dekades in die veld van gesinsielkunde in momentum toegeneem. Hierdie artikel fokus op die ontwikkeling van die Veerkragtigheidsmodel van Gesinstres, Skikking en Aanpassing oor tyd. Hierdie model het 'n lang geskiedenis wat tot 1946 terugdateer en deur navorsing oor dekades heen ondersteun word. Elk van die modelle wat die Veerkragtigheidsmodel voorafgaan word verduidelik. Die faktore waaruit hierdie model bestaan is empiries getoets en verbandhoudende meetinstrumente is ontwikkel om sodoende veerkragtigheidsfaktore binne die gesinskonteks te evalueer. Die moontlike toepaslikheid van hierdie model vir die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks word ook gedebateer.

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Walsh (2003a: 1) defined resilience as the ability to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges. It refers to the ability of a system to remain intact in spite of adversity, and either to return to the same level of functioning as before the crisis or to surpass this pre-morbid level. The study of resilience has its origins in developmental psychology and was launched by the pioneering work of Garmezy *et al* (Hawley 2000: 101). To date, the study of the concept has focused primarily on individual health and functioning (Hawley 2000: 101, Patterson 2002: 233). According to Hawley & De Haan (1996: 283), the last two decades have seen a shift of attention from family deficits to family strengths, resulting in a movement towards strengths-based models in the field of family psychology.

One such strengths-based model which has been developed over a number of years is the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation. Many researchers (eg McCubbin & McCubbin 1988 & 1993, McCubbin & Patterson 1982 & 1983b, McCubbin *et al* 2001) have collaborated over a number of decades to arrive at this model. They have taken it beyond the theoretical level by empirical testing and developed related measuring instruments to evaluate various resiliency components within the family context. The model has its origins in family stress theory, having evolved from Hill's (1949 & 1958) ABCX Model, via McCubbin & Patterson's (1983a & 1983b) Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation, the process-oriented Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model (Patterson 1988), and the Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989) into the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993 & 2001, McCubbin *et al* 1996). Each of these models resulted from research that revealed the limitations of its predecessors. This research will be discussed in conjunction with each of the models.

1. Hill's ABCX Model

The ABCX Model developed out of Hill's (1949) research on the adjustment of families to the crises of war, separation and reunion during and following the Second World War. Hill (1958: 140) acknowledged that families are not ideally constituted to withstand the amount of stress imposed on them by societal expectations. The formula for the ABCX Model can be presented as follows: A (the event) interacts with B (the family's crisis-meeting resources) and with C (the definition the family gives to the event) in order to produce X (the crisis). Each of the factors in Hill's formula requires discussion.

1.1 Family demands: stressor and hardships (Factor A)

The stressor or crisis-precipitating event can be defined as "a life event or transition impacting upon the family unit which produces, or has the potential of producing, change in the family social system" (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 8). The family has usually had very little or no preparation for this stressor (Hill 1958: 140). Changes in the family system that may result from the stressor may include changes to goals, roles, values, boundaries, and patterns of interaction (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 8). The crisis-precipitating event or stressor is usually different for each family, depending on the accompanying hardships: those demands on the family system which are specifically associated with the crisis-precipitating event and which demand competencies of the family which the event has rendered temporarily unavailable. The stressor and its accompanying hardships place demands on the family system which have to be managed in order to prevent the system from going into a crisis (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 8).

1.2 Family capabilities: resistance resources (Factor B)

Hill (1958: 141) referred to resistance resources as crisis-meeting resources. Burr (1973: 201-2) defined them as the family's ability to prevent change in its system from leading to disruptiveness or a crisis. Angell (1936: 15-6), who was the first family sociologist to describe family resources, employed two concepts: family integration and family

adaptability. The former refers broadly to the bonds of coherence and unity which constitute family life; the latter to the family's capacity to overcome obstacles and shift its course of action. Other identified resources on which families can draw include the existence of agreements on role structure and goals toward which the family is moving collectively, as well as the subordination of personal ambitions to family goals and the family system's ability to meet the physical and emotional needs of its members (Koos 1946: 33). Hill (1958: 144) drew a distinction between adequacy and inadequacy of family organisation in relation to the presence or absence of such resources. Inadequately organised families are likely to be vulnerable to crisis-precipitating events.

1.3 Family definition of the stressor (Factor C)

This component, considered to be the most important in the model, plays a crucial role in determining whether the family will move from the stressor event into a state of crisis, or not. A family's definition of the stressor event is a reflection of its value system, its previous experience in meeting crises, and the mechanisms it has used in previous definitions of events. There are three possible ways in which a family can define the crisis-precipitating event: objectively, culturally or subjectively (Hill 1958: 145, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 9). The most relevant definition, a subjective definition, is formulated by the family itself and can range from perceiving stressors as challenges to perceiving them as uncontrollable (Hill 1958: 145).

The family's experiences of stress also depend on how the family members perceive their ability to meet the demands of the stressor event. While families may actually experience an imbalance between the demands and their capability, there may also be times when they only perceive such an imbalance to exist. The family stress then becomes distress because the family subjectively defines the stressor event as unpleasant and undesirable. Family distress is defined as "an unpleasant or disorganized state which arises from an actual or perceived imbalance in family functioning and which is also characterized by a multidimensional demand for adjustment or adaptive behaviour" (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 11).

1.3 Family crisis (Factor X)

McCubbin and Patterson (1983a: 9-10) drew a distinction between family stress and a crisis. While family stress results from an actual or perceived imbalance between demands and capability in the family's functioning, crisis results from the family's inability to restore stability. Family stress does not necessarily result in a family crisis: a crisis comes about when there is a deficiency in existing family resources (B factor) and when there is a tendency to define stressor events as crisis-producing (Hill 1958: 143-6, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 10). Burr (1973: 200) defined the X factor as a continuous variable indicating the amount of disorganisation in the family system.

Hill (1958: 143-6) suggested that while it may not be uncommon for families to experience crises from time to time, some families appear to be crisis-prone. This comes about as a result of experiencing stressor events with greater frequency and severity, as well as more frequently defining such stressor events as crises. Crisis-prone families are therefore described as being more vulnerable to stressor events because of the paucity of their resistance resources as well as their failure to learn new ways of defining stressor events from past experiences. The family may then be described as inadequate.

1.4 Adjustment to the crisis

This is the favourable outcome for families in crisis, and forms the final phase of Hill's ABCX Model. The path followed by families adjusting to a crisis varies from family to family and from crisis to crisis. However, Hill (1949: 14 & 1958: 146) attempted to theorize the typical course of adjustment. When families are faced with crises, they typically experience a sense of disorganisation. Members may not perform their roles as expected, and conflicts may arise. When the lowest point of disorganisation is reached, families may enter a recovery phase. New routines and roles may be attempted and the family may start to orientate itself towards the future, subsequently entering a phase of reorganisation.

Hill (1958: 148) identified several factors within families that are conducive to good adjustment to crisis. These include family

adaptability, family integration, affectionate relations among family members, good marital adjustment of both partners, companionable relationships between parents and children, and previous successful experience with crises.

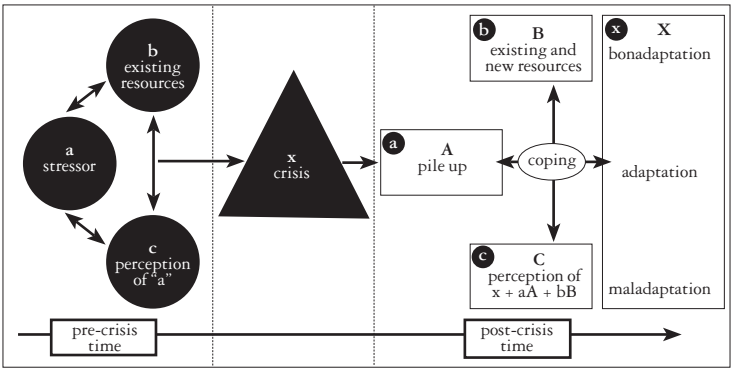
In summary, Hill's ABCX Model took a categorical approach to conceptualising family stressors and the process of adjustment to crisis. While this model is simple and inextravagant, it fails to recognise the complex and diverse processes involved in family adaptation. Important research led to the expansion of this simplistic model into the Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation.

2. The Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation

McCubbin and associates conducted studies on families whose husband or father was missing in action or a prisoner-of-war as a result of the Vietnamese War. They initially used Hill's ABCX Model as a guide, but their research revealed certain additional factors that influence the course of family adaptation over time (McCubbin & Dahl 1976, McCubbin & Patterson 1982, 1983a & 1983b). The Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation (hereafter referred to as the Double ABCX Model) was developed to incorporate these factors, including the accumulation of additional stressors and strains, the family's efforts to activate, acquire, and utilise new resources, both from within itself and from the community, modifications in the family's definition of the situation, with a different meaning attaching to its predicament, and coping strategies designed to bring about changes in family structure in an effort to achieve positive adaptation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 10 & 1983b: 90-1). Hill's ABCX components now became known as pre-crisis factors, and the idea of post-crisis variables was introduced to describe the additional factors. Figure 1 illustrates how the components of Hill's ABCX Model form the pre-crisis phase of the Double ABCX Model. Hill's X factor, the crisis, is followed by the post-crisis factors suggested by the Double ABCX Model. As the pre-crisis factors have already been outlined in the discussion of Hill's ABCX Model, only the post-crisis factors of

the Double ABCX Model will be described in the discussion which follows.

Figure 1: The Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & Patterson 1982)



2.1 'Pile-up' of additional stressors and strains (aA Factor)

McCubbin & Dahl's (1976: 138-9) longitudinal study on prolonged family separation in the military highlighted the fact that it is rare for families to be dealing only with the stressor event (factor A) identified by Hill (1949: 9 & 1958: 141). It is common, particularly following a major stressor, for families to experience and struggle with an accumulation of prior or co-occurring stressors, strains, demands and hardships emanating both from individual family members and from the family system and/or community.

McCubbin & Patterson (1982: 29-33 & 1983a: 11-4) identified five broad types of stressors and strains which can contribute to such a pile-up in the family system in a crisis situation. The first broad type of stressor is reminiscent of Hill's identification of a stressor event and its accompanying hardships (which may place additional strain on the family system, contributing to its distress). Secondly, normative transitions related to the family life-cycle may also contribute to the experience of a pile-up of demands (McCubbin *et al*

1976: 469). The transitions are concurrent with the stressor and also place demands on the family system as they usually require change (McCubbin *et al* 1976: 469, McCubbin & Patterson 1982: 29 & 1983a: 13). Thirdly, prior strains resulting from unresolved hardships of earlier stressors may also contribute. Such prior strains usually intensify when a new stressor presents itself, renewing the family's awareness of them. The fourth potential source of a pile-up of family demands surfaces as a result of the coping behaviours which families employ in an attempt to manage the crisis event. Lastly, intra-familial ambiguity and social ambiguity are also cited as possible sources. The former occurs when a family system experiences uncertainty about its components and structure; the latter when society fails to meet the expectation that it should provide guidelines for coping with family crises (McCubbin & Patterson 1982: 39 &1983a: 18).

These many possible sources of pile-up of family demands resulting from a crisis demonstrate the magnitude of what the family system is expected to contend with during times of crisis. However, the family often has resources at its disposal, referred to as family adaptive resources, which may assist it in such cases (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 14).

2.2 Family adaptive resources (bB Factor)

McCubbin and Patterson (1983a: 14) claimed that resources form part of the family's potential for meeting demands and needs, and that they generally include characteristics of individual family members, the family system and the community. There are two types of family adaptive resources: existing resources and expanded resources (Lavee *et al* 1985: 812, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 14-5 & 1983b: 96). The former already form part of the family's range of resources and serve to minimise the impact of stressor events and to reduce the likelihood that the family will enter into crisis. Examples include family resources of togetherness, role flexibility and shared values, as well as community resources such as friendship and religious involvement. Expanded resources are new resources developed and strengthened in response to the demands of the crisis or as a result of pile-up (Lavee *et al* 1985: 812, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 15 & 1983b: 96).

According to Lavee *et al* (1985: 812-3), family adaptive resources include personal resources such as the knowledge and skills of individual family members, which can be made available to the family when needed; family unit resources such as cohesion and communication, and social support. This last factor is an essential resource as it contributes significantly to a family's resistance to crisis, its recovery from crisis and its ability to restore stability to its system (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 15).

Adaptive resources are thus essential in the family's adaptation to crisis. They also interact with the definition and meaning which the family attributes to a crisis (cC factor).

2.3 Family definition and meaning (cC Factor)

The cC factor in the Double ABCX Model recognises that the meaning families attach to the crisis encompasses more than the C factor in Hill's ABCX model. While Hill's C factor focused on the family's definition of the stressor event and its severity, the Double ABCX Model recognises that the appraisal of the crisis is more complex and involves an assessment of the total crisis situation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 15). This includes the stressor event thought to have caused the crisis, added stressors and strains, old and new resources, and estimates of what the family needs to do to bring itself back into balance. Successful redefinition of the crisis situation symbolises efforts to cope with the crisis and involves clarifying hardships and rendering them more manageable and responsive to problem-solving efforts. It also entails reducing the intensity of the emotional burdens created by the crisis and encouraging the family system to continue with the fundamentals of promoting the social and emotional development of family members (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 16).

McCubbin & Patterson (1983a: 16) emphasised the value of focusing simultaneously on a family's adaptive resources, meanings, perceptions and coping behaviours. Research has shown that coping behaviour is an important aspect of a family's adaptation to stress (McCubbin 1979, McCubbin *et al* 1976: 468-71). Essentially, the components of the Double ABCX Model interact: after a crisis, families direct coping efforts simultaneously at multiple stressors. The

Double ABCX Model demonstrates the complexity of the process that a family faces when attempting to manage a crisis. The proposed outcome of the Double ABCX Model is adaptation balancing (xX factor) (Lavee *et al* 1985: 813, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 17 & 1983b: 100).

2.4 Family adaptation balancing (xX Factor)

Lavee *et al* (1985: 813) defined family adaptation as "the outcome of the family's processes in response to the crisis and pile-up of demands". Family adaptation is therefore viewed as a "useful concept" in describing the outcome of a family's post-crisis adjustment (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 17). The purpose of post-crisis adjustment is to reduce the disorganisation resulting from the crisis and to restore the family system's homeostasis (McCubbin & Patterson 1982: 37, 1983a: 17 & 1983b: 99). However, it is often this very disorganisation that offers the family an opportunity to renegotiate its structure and relationships. Even apart from the disruptions in family organisation caused by a crisis, family systems are constantly in a natural process of evolution, initiating changes to facilitate growth. Post-crisis adjustment therefore involves more than simply reducing the effects of the crisis (McCubbin & Patterson 1982: 38, 1983a: 17 & 1983b: 99).

Three elements are involved in family adaptation: the individual family member, the family system, and the community of which the family forms a part (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 17 & 1983b: 99-100). These elements interact *via* reciprocal relationships as the capabilities of one may satisfy the demands of another and achieve a balance, usually at two primary levels of interaction simultaneously. At the first level, balance is sought between individual family members and the family system. This is referred to as member-to-family fit. When a demand-capability imbalance occurs as a result of the incapacity of the family system to meet the demands of an individual family member, the system may attempt to find a new balance between itself and the individual member. At the second level of interaction, balance is sought between the family system and the community of which it forms a part (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 18 & 1983b: 100). The systemic nature of the family implies that

while it is attempting to achieve a balance at both levels of interaction concurrently, any change at one level will inevitably affect the other. As a result, a family's efforts at adaptation will always simultaneously involve both levels of functioning.

Another critical factor in family adaptation is family coherence (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 18-9). As a family system struggles to achieve a balance between resources and demands, it is faced with the reality that no perfect fit exists between the two. Rather, the family system is expected to have a general orientation, referred to as a sense of coherence (Antonovsky 1996: 15 & 1998: 7), that reflects an understanding that they have done the best that they could under the circumstances. This sense of coherence can be defined as a

> pervasive, enduring, though dynamic feeling of confidence that internal and external environments are predictable and there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected (Antonovsky 1979: 123).

Family adaptation ranges on a continuum from positive adaptation (bonadaptation) to negative adaptation (maladaptation) (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 20 & 1983b: 101). Bonadaptation is defined as involving a minimal discrepancy between the pile-up of demands and the family's capabilities and enabling a balance at both levels of family functioning. It is characterised by the maintenance and strengthening of family integrity, the family members' sense of wellbeing and the family's independence and sense of control over environmental influences (Lavee *et al* 1985: 813, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 20 & 1983b: 101). Maladaptation is defined as a involving a continued imbalance at either level of family functioning, or as an attainment of balance at both levels of functioning, but at a cost to the family system. This cost may include deterioration in family integrity, reduction or corrosion of the family members' or the family unit's sense of wellbeing, physical and/or psychological health, or a loss or decline in the family's independence and autonomy. Bonadaptation and maladaptation are relative concepts, since what may be functional or adaptive at one time may become maladaptive or dysfunctional at another (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 20 & 1983b: 101).

In addition to providing theoretical expansion, the Double ABCX Model has also proved to be empirically testable (Lavee *et al* 1985). However, despite its more dynamic and complex nature, it too evolved into a process-oriented model called the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model. According to Patterson & Garwick (1994: 290), the Double ABCX Model was simply renamed the FAAR Model. However, the discussion of the FAAR Model provided here will highlight its improvements on the Double ABCX Model as well as emphasising its process approach, which is absent in the conceptualisation of the Double ABCX Model.

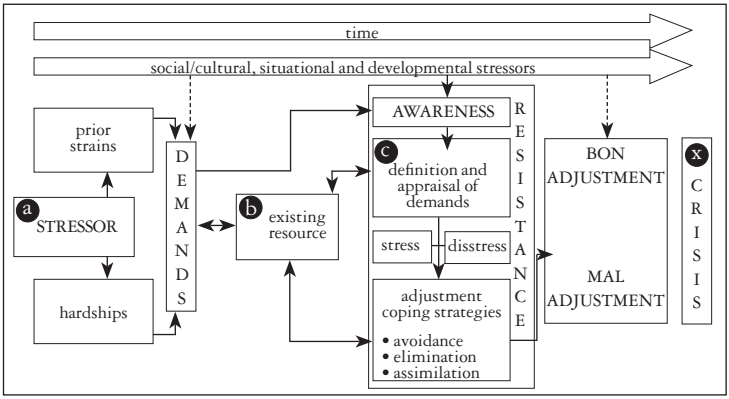
3. The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model

The process orientation of the FAAR Model resulted from the recognition that changes in family patterns of interaction and structure, as well as recovery from a family crisis involve complex family processes (McCubbin *et al* 1975: 476-8). Observations derived from longitudinal studies of families faced with prolonged war-induced separation and subsequent family reintegration on a prisoner of war's return indicated that families tend to go through three stages of adaptation: resistance, restructuring and consolidation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 20). The FAAR processes occur within the two distinct phases of adjustment and adaptation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 22, Patterson 1988: 209). Family resistance to change typically occurs in the adjustment phase, while family restructuring and consolidation typically occur in the adaptation phase (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 22-32).

3.1 The family adjustment phase

When the family is faced with a stressor, the family system may be anywhere between maladaptation and bonadaptation as a result of previous crises and stressors. The family's position on this adaptation continuum will determine its level of vulnerability to the impact of the stressor event. The family's general level of satisfaction with its structure and patterns of interaction at the onset of the stressor is also important (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 22-4).

Figure 2: The Adjustment Phase of the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a)



During the adjustment phase (Figure 2), the family attempts to meet the demands of the stressor within its existing capabilities, making minor adjustments to its patterns of interaction with minimal disruption to established family structures and behaviours (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 24, Patterson 1988: 227). According to the FAAR Model, capability refers to the family's aptitude for meeting the pile-up of demands (Patterson 1988: 215). There are two types of capabilities: resources and coping behaviours. Resources refer to the personal resources of individual family members such as self-esteem and sense of mastery; family resources such as cohesion, adaptability, family organisation and effective communication skills, and community resources such as health-care facilities and social support (Patterson 1988: 215-8). The second capability, family coping behaviour, refers to the co-ordinated problem-solving efforts of the family system as well as the complementary efforts of individual members within the system (Patterson 1988: 218). The longitudinal research referred to above emphasised the importance of including coping strategies in family stress theory and in adjustment and adaptation processes (McCubbin *et al* 1976: 461-71). When the family members become aware of the demands being faced, the family system engages in re-

sistance as it attempts to avoid major changes in family patterns of interaction and organisation. Continued resistance means that the family is not making the changes needed to cope with the stressor. Existing capabilities become inadequate to deal with the stressor and a family crisis may then emerge. The family formulates a definition of the demands and decides what needs to be done to manage the situation. It may experience stress, which is characterised by mostly positive definitions of the situation, or distress, which is characterised by mostly negative definitions (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 24).

During the adjustment phase, the family attempts to protect itself from change by employing three adjustment coping strategies: avoidance, elimination and assimilation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 25, Patterson 1988: 227). Avoidance entails ignoring or denying the existence of the stressor and its demands, hoping that it will go away. Elimination entails active efforts to remove the demands by changing or eliminating the stressor or changing the definition of the stressor. With assimilation, the family absorbs the demands created by the stressor into its existing structure and patterns of interaction. Importantly, adequate and appropriate existing resources influence both the definition of the stressor and the demands, as well as the choice of coping strategies that will be employed. During the adjustment phase, existing resources are referred to as resistance resources or capabilities (Patterson 1988: 227).

The outcome of the application of adjustment coping strategies ranges on a continuum from poor adjustment to good adjustment (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 25, Patterson 1988: 227). Good adjustment results in positive physical and mental health for individual family members, optimal role functioning by individual family members, the maintenance of a family system that can complete its life-cycle tasks, and adequacy of family capabilities in relation to the number and type of demands with which they are confronted (Patterson 1988: 227-8).

Changes in the adjustment phase are minimal and the family structure generally remains intact, with only slight changes in patterns of interaction. This level of change is referred to as first-order change (Patterson 1988: 226). There are, however, circumstances in

which the family will be forced to make more substantial changes to its structure and patterns of interaction as mere adjustment processes would be insufficient to relieve it of the stressor and its demands. Such circumstances occur when the stressor involves a structural change in the family system; the nature, number, and duration of demands exhaust the family's existing resources; the number and persistence of prior unresolved strains challenge the family's resources, and the family's competence and resources are inadequate or not mature enough to meet the demands (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 25-6).

In addition, the family may take the opportunity to produce structural changes in its patterns of functioning, as was found in the longitudinal studies of families faced with war-induced stressors (McCubbin *et al* 1975: 477, McCubbin *et al* 1975: 104). Such structural changes are usually initiated to promote growth in the family system or its members by allowing or aiding a demand-capability imbalance. As this imbalance continues and increases, the family moves towards the maladjustment end of the continuum and experiences a crisis, which marks the beginning of the adaptation phase of the FAAR Model. The family is then forced to restructure its organisation and functioning in order to deal with the crisis (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 25). The adaptation phase will be briefly outlined in the following section.

3.2 The family adaptation phase

A family crisis is marked by disorganisation, disequilibrium, disruptiveness, and a demand for structural changes, including amendments to established roles, rules and patterns of interaction (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 26-7, Patterson 1988: 228 & 2002: 237). Initiating and instituting structural changes involves the processes of restructuring and consolidation, which are viewed as distinct levels of family accommodation and occur over time as the family moves toward adaptation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 27).

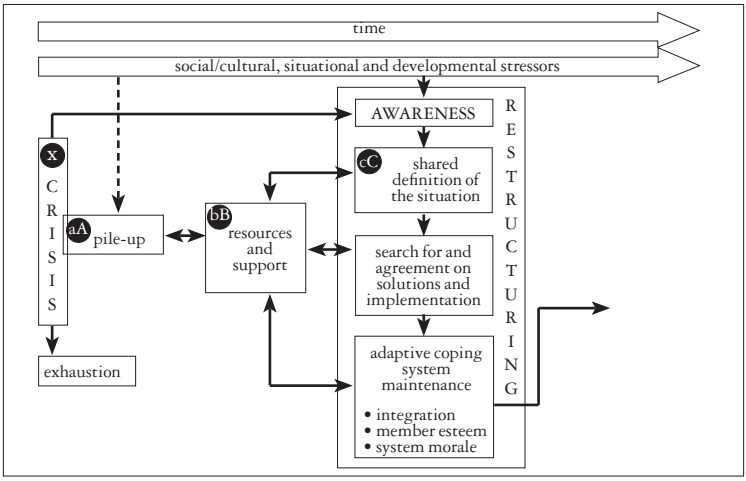
3.2.1 The restructuring process

The restructuring level of family accommodation entails four components: awareness, a shared definition of the situation, agreement

on solutions and implementation, and adaptive coping strategies (cf Figure 3) (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 27). When a family experiences a crisis, one or more of its members realise that the existing structure and patterns of interaction are insufficient to deal with the crisis. Once this awareness has been created, the family members who share it will attempt to develop a shared definition of the situation (cC factor) by identifying what they consider to be the problem. This shared definition will be influenced by the pile-up of demands (aA factor) on the family and the resources (bB factor) it has to meet these demands. During the adaptation phase, resources are referred to as adaptive resources or capabilities (Patterson 1988: 220).

The family's shared definition of the situation then leads to attempts to agree upon and implement solutions to the problem that has been identified. In contrast to the adjustment phase, these solutions will alter the existing structure and patterns of interaction in the family in order to meet the demands made upon it. The adaptation phase is therefore marked by second-order change (Patterson 1988: 230). Families which successfully restructure tend to use the adaptive coping strategy of system maintenance, which works to keep the family functioning as a unit while maintaining esteem and family morale (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 28). In reality, family restructuring does not necessarily guarantee that the hardships accompanying the stressor will be well managed and not all family members may agree with the role changes they are undertaking. However, the family system will then move to the second level of family accommodation: consolidation.

Figure 3: The Restructuring Level of the Adaptation Phase of the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a)

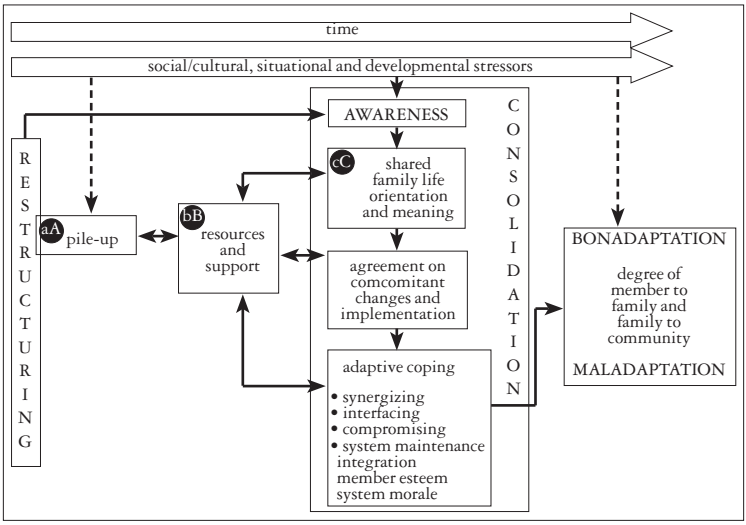


3.2.2 The consolidation process

The consolidation level of accommodation (Figure 4) is marked by efforts to merge the family system into a coherent unit (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 30).

At this level of accommodation, the family usually has to make additional changes in organisation and structure to support the newly instituted patterns of behaviour (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 30, Patterson 1988: 230). These additional changes stem from an awareness among some family members that there is a difference between the newly instituted patterns of behaviour and the established structure and patterns of interaction. The family must now actively develop a shared awareness of how well the newly instituted patterns fit with the established structure and patterns of interaction if they are to develop a shared family life orientation and meaning that justifies the changes. The FAAR Model emphasises three levels of family meanings. These are situational meanings encompassing the family's

Figure 4: The Consolidation Level of the Adaptation Phase of the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a)



primary appraisal of its demands; its secondary appraisal of its capabilities and of the relation between the demands and the capabilities; its identity as a family, and its worldview (or global meanings), which entails the family's schema of how it views both intra-familial relationships and the family in relation to the systems outside it (Patterson 1988: 220-4, Patterson & Garwick 1994: 291-6). The shared awareness, shared life orientation and shared meaning aid the family in identifying and initiating associated changes that are needed to stabilise its new orientation. While family members may not necessarily agree on these additional changes, most families reach compromises through negotiation. However, all members of the family system must be involved in order to facilitate successful negotiation, after which the changes agreed upon are implemented (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 31).

Adaptive coping strategies employed at the consolidation level of family accommodation include synergising, interfacing, compromising and system maintenance (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 31). Synergising requires family members to work together in a co-ordinated, mutual and interdependent manner in order to achieve a shared life orientation. The interfacing adaptive strategy assists the family system in restructuring its fit with the community. A perfect intra-familial and family-to-community fit, where all needs are met, is not possible. As an adaptive coping strategy compromising can assist families to accept an imperfect solution and achieve a consensus on when enough changes have been made. The adaptive coping strategy of system maintenance, which has already been discussed, is especially important at the consolidation level of family accommodation, since neglect of system maintenance may contribute to family exhaustion later in the adaptation process (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 31-2).

The outcome of the restructuring and consolidation processes is family adaptation, which ranges on a continuum from negative maladaptation to positive bonadaptation (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a, Patterson 1988 & 2002). The family's resultant position on the continuum will reflect its ability to achieve internal restructuring (ie member-to-family fit) and external restructuring (ie family-to-community fit) simultaneously at both levels over time (McCubbin *et al* 1975: 476-8, McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 32). While the process leading to adaptation may appear simplistic and linear in nature, families typically go through cycles of adjustment and adaptation. A family can become stuck in a phase and may need to go back and work through a previous phase again. A possible outcome of recycling is that the family may move towards a state of exhaustion. Exhaustion can also result when a family is unable to, or chooses not to resolve a crisis; when the family resources are depleted because there were few to begin with, and/or when the family has been unable to obtain and activate additional resources and has used all its resources to meet the pile-up of demands (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 34).

While this model may have succeeded in demonstrating the complex processes that families work through in order to achieve adaptation, continuing research in the field of family stress theory

highlighted additional variables that should be considered in family adjustment and adaptation. These additional variables of family typologies, levels of vulnerability, and family problem solving and coping gave rise to the Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation, which is discussed in the following section (McCubbin & McCubbin 1988, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 5).

4. The Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation

The Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation (hereafter referred to as the Typology Model) came about as a result of continuing research and theoretical development. This model aimed at gaining an understanding as to why some families are able to cope and even thrive on family stressors and hardships, while other families faced with similar or identical stressors and hardships are unable to cope (McCubbin & McCubbin 1988: 247 & 1989: 7). Research with this model also highlighted the importance of social class and ethnicity as essential aspects to consider in understanding the adjustment and adaptation processes of a family (McCubbin & McCubbin 1988: 252-3). The Typology Model, however, focuses on the family types, strengths, and capabilities that explain why some families are better suited than others to adjusting to minor changes as well as the family types, strengths, and capabilities needed and generated to manage substantial changes (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 7, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 4). The influence of the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Types (Olson 1989 & 1993, Olson & Gorall 2003) is evident in the Typology Model (as well as in the Resiliency Model, which follows on the Typology Model). The Circumplex Model introduced and researched the importance of family types in understanding and predicting family adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 42). Olson (1989: 13 & 1993: 108) originally proposed 16 types of couples and families and later expanded this to 25 types of couple and family relationships (Olson & Gorall 2003: 520). This model arrived at three dimensions of marital and family behaviour: cohesion, flexibility and communication. The two family strength dimensions of

cohesion and flexibility interact to form the 25 types of marital and family relationships while the communication dimension is critical as it influences these two dimensions within couples and families (Olson & Gorall 2003: 515-20).

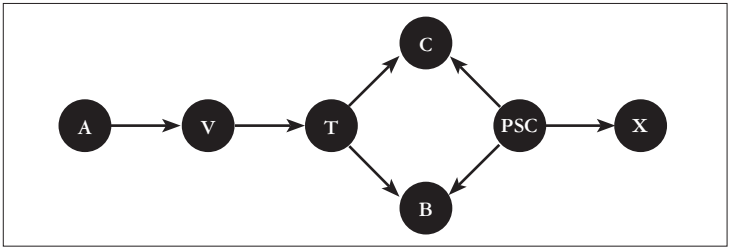
The Typology Model also includes an adjustment phase characterised by first-order change and an adaptation phase marked by second-order change, and retains all the components discussed in the Double ABCX Model and the FAAR Model.

4.1 The adjustment phase

The diagram below, representing the adjustment phase of the Typology Model (Figure 5), summarises the process on which a family system would embark in order to achieve a level of family adjustment, or alternatively the transition into the adaptation phase which would be precipitated by a crisis.

It is evident from Figure 5 that the pre-crisis factors and process of the adjustment phase of the Typology Model have much in common with Hill's ABCX Model and with the adjustment phase of the Double ABCX Model and the FAAR Model. Consequently, this discussion will focus only on those factors that are unique to the adjustment phase of the Typology Model: the family's level of vulnerability (V), family typology (T), and the family's problem-solving and coping repertoire and capabilities (PSC) (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 9-10, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 5).

Figure 5: The adjustment phase of the Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989)



4.1.1 Family vulnerability: Pile-up and family life-cycle stages (V Factor)

Family vulnerability relates to the interpersonal and organisational condition of a family system. It is partially shaped by two aspects, namely, the pile-up of demands accompanying the onset of a stressor, and the family's life-cycle stage with the accompanying demands and variability of resources and strengths (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 9, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 6).

Family life-cycle stages are emphasised in the Typology Model. Stage one, the single stage, is characteristic of individuals who have left their family of origin and are establishing individual identities, roles and lifestyles. In stage two, the couple stage, couples are negotiating and formulating individual and couple goals as well as mutually acceptable lifestyles. Children typically do not feature at this stage. Stage three focuses on pre-school and school-age children between the ages of six and twelve and is concerned with the nurturance, education and socialisation of children in the family system. The adolescent and launching stage, stage four, is characterised by the challenges of having adolescents in the home and preparing them to be launched from the home. The fifth stage is the empty nest and retirement stage. Families in this stage are defined by the absence of children from the home. Parents find themselves moving towards fulfilling couple needs and establishing differentiated relationships with children and grandchildren. Occupational and childrearing tasks are completed as couples move into retirement and the focus shifts to maintaining relationships with extended family and friends (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 6, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 32-3).

These family life-cycle stages are important to consider when determining the family types representing a family's functioning profile. Family types can vary depending on the life-cycle stage of the family system.

4.1.2 Family types: Profiles of family functioning (T Factor)

Family typology provides a profile of family functioning and can be defined as "a set of basic attributes about the family system which characterizes and explains how a family system typically appraises,

operates and/or behaves" (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 9). Family typologies give an indication of the family's predictable and distinct patterns of behaviour and are reinforced by rules and norms. These typologies are also guided by family values and goals and are important in understanding and predicting family behaviour in the face of stressful events (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 9 & 2001: 18). There are four family typologies: regenerative families, versatile (resilient) families, rhythmic families and traditionalistic families (McCubbin *et al* 2001: 112-126, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 41). The various dimensions of these family typologies define the family system and operate at high and low levels to create family types. The life-cycle stage of a family is an important consideration as it can affect the distribution of the family types within the family typologies (McCubbin *et al* 2001: 112-26).

The regenerative family typology is governed by the dimensions of family coherence and hardiness (McCubbin & McCubbin 1988: 250 & 1989: 27, McCubbin *et al* 2001: 112, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 41). Family coherence refers to the family's emphasis on acceptance, loyalty, pride, faith, trust, respect, caring and shared values in the management of tension and strain. It also includes the fundamental coping strategy which families employ in the management of family difficulties (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 28). Family hardiness refers to the family's internal strengths and durability. It is typified by an internal sense of control of life events and hardships, a sense of meaningfulness in life, involvement in activities, and a commitment to learning and to exploring new and challenging experiences (McCubbin *et al* 2001: 112-3).

High and low levels of family coherence and hardiness work together to create four types of family unit: vulnerable, secure, durable, and regenerative families (Table 1) (McCubbin & McCubbin 1988: 251 & 1989: 28-30, McCubbin *et al* 2001: 112, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 41).

Table 1: The regenerative family typology

Regenerative family typology				
Family types	Family coherence		Family hardiness	
	High	Low	High	Low
Vulnerable families		X		X
Secure families		X	X	
Durable families	X			X
Regenerative families	X		X	

The four regenerative family types represent a continuum on which families have differing degrees of regenerative power. A family's degree of regenerative power is symbolic of its ability to maintain a sense of family integrity, which is important in enabling it to endure hardships, stressors and strains (McCubbin *et al* 2001: 112, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 52).

The second family typology — the versatile (resilient) typology — hinges on the dimensions of family bonding and flexibility. Bonding refers to the degree to which the family is emotionally bonded together into a meaningful and integrated family system. Families high on bonding are open to discussing family problems, enjoy doing things together and are eager to stay connected to other family members. Family flexibility refers to the degree to which the family system is able to change its rules, boundaries and roles in order to accommodate changing internal and external pressures. Families high on flexibility tend to have an open communication pattern, a willingness to compromise and shift responsibilities among their members, and a tendency to engage in collaborative decision-making practices (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 30-1, McCubbin *et al* 2001: 116).

High and low levels of family bonding and flexibility interact to create four types of family systems: fragile, bonded, pliant, and versatile families (Table 2) (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 31-2, McCubbin *et al* 2001: 116, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 44).

Table 2: The versatile family typology

Versatile family typology				
Family types	Family bonding		Family flexibility	
	High	Low	High	Low
Fragile families		X		X
Bonded families	X			X
Pliant families		X	X	X
Versatile families	X		X	

The four versatile family types represent a continuum on which families have differing degrees of resiliency. A family's degree of resiliency is representative of its capacity for unity and changeability, which are essential in recovering from the impact of stressors and strains (McCubbin *et al* 1988: 52).

The third family typology — the rhythmic — results from assigning two levels (high and low) to the dimensions of family time and routines and the valuing thereof. This refers to the degree to which the family maintains continuity and stability by means of specific family activities which are repeated on a routine basis. These family activities, behaviours and practices are regularised in order to establish a predictable pattern of family life. Valuing of family time and routines refers to the meaning and value families attach to these routine activities, behaviours and practices which are designed to encourage family predictability and stability (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 32, McCubbin *et al* 2001: 119-20).

The two dimensions of the rhythmic family typology interact to create four types of family systems: unpatterned, intentional, structuralised, and rhythmic families (Table 3) (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 32-3, McCubbin *et al* 2001: 120, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 47).

Table 3: The rhythmic family typology

Rhythmic family typology				
Family types	Family time and routines		Valuing of family time and routines	
	High	Low	High	Low
Unpatterned families		X		X
Intentional families		X	X	
Structuralised families	X			X
Rhythmic families	X		X	

The four rhythmic family types represent a continuum on which families have differing degrees of family routinisation. A family's degree of routinisation is illustrative of its ability to establish and value a family pattern of predictability and stability. This appears to play a vital stabilising role for families under stress (McCubbin *et al* 1988: 52).

The traditionalistic family typology consists of the two dimensions of family celebrations and family traditions. Family celebrations are situations and occasions which the family chooses to emphasise by means of certain family behaviours and practices. Family traditions refers to the adoption and maintenance of family behaviours and practices in order to maintain family beliefs and values and to pass them on from generation to generation (McCubbin *et al* 2001: 123-4, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 49-50).

Two levels are assigned to the dimensions of family celebrations and traditions in order to arrive at four types of family systems: situational, traditionalistic, celebratory, and ritualistic families (Table 4) (McCubbin *et al* 2001: 124, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 49-50).

Table 4: The traditionalistic family typology

Traditionalistic family typology				
Family types	Family celebrations		Family traditions	
	High	Low	High	Low
Situational families		X		X
Traditionalistic families		X	X	
Celebratory families	X			X
Ritualistic families	X		X	

The four traditionalistic types represent a continuum on which families have differing degrees of family ritualism. The degree of ritualism is indicative of a family's level of commitment to maintaining and developing family rituals and practices that link its members with their past and their future (McCubbin *et al* 1988: 52).

The family's typology interacts with its resistance resources (B), its appraisal of the stressor (C) and its problem-solving and coping repertoire (PSC) in order to achieve adaptation.

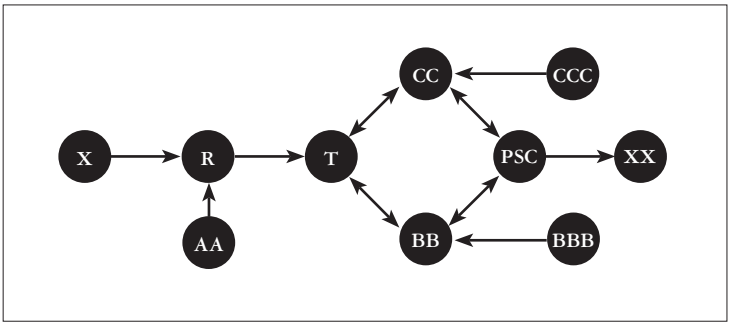
4.1.3 Problem-solving and coping (PSC Factor)

The PSC factor, or a family's problem-solving abilities and coping repertoire, gives an indication of the family's management of a stressful situation or transition by using its abilities and skills to reduce or eradicate the stressor and its accompanying hardships (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 10, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 12). Problem-solving refers to the ability to delineate the stressor into more manageable components, to identify alternative solutions, to take steps to resolve the distinct components, and ultimately to resolve the problem. Coping refers to the family's strategies, patterns and behaviours which are designed to maintain and strengthen the organisation and stability of the family system; maintain the emotional stability and wellbeing of its members; obtain and utilise family and community resources to manage the stressor, and initiate efforts to resolve the family hardships prodice by the stressor (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 10, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 13).

4.2 The adaptation phase

The adaptation phase (Figure 6) focuses on family efforts over time to facilitate recovery from a crisis situation. The family's level of adaptation (XX) or transition back into a crisis situation is determined by the interaction of the elements represented in the diagram below.

Figure 6: The Adjustment Phase of the Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989)



The pile-up of demands (AA) interacts with the family's level of regenerativity (R) and its typology (T). These factors in turn interact with the family's adaptive strengths, capabilities and resources (BB), community resources and supports (BBB), the system's appraisal of the situation (CC — the meaning the family attaches to the total situation), the family's schema (CCC) and its problem-solving and coping repertoire (PSC) (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 14, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 15). Although most of these factors have already been discussed in detail, it is important to highlight the community resources and supports (BBB) factor, which was previously subsumed under the family adaptive resources factor (BB) of the Double ABCX Model. In addition, although the family schema was emphasised at the consolidation level of accommodation of the adaptation phase of the FAAR Model, it is defined and included as another level of family appraisal (CCC) in the Typology Model (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 20).

4.2.1 Community resources and supports (BBB)

Although McCubbin & McCubbin (1989: 20) defined community-based resources as "all of those characteristics, competencies and means of persons, groups, and institutions outside the family that the family may call upon, access, and use to meet their demands", the community resource most emphasised in the study of family adaptation is social support. There are numerous definitions of social support, but the one favoured by McCubbin & McCubbin (1989: 21) and McCubbin *et al* (1988: 19) is Cobb's (1976: 300-1) definition of social support. Cobb (1976: 300-1) defined social support as information exchanged at the interpersonal level which provides emotional support, esteem support and network support. Emotional support helps individuals to feel loved and cared for; esteem support helps them to feel valued, and network support helps them to feel as if they belong to a network of communication based on mutual obligation and understanding. McCubbin *et al* (1988: 19) expanded these three forms of support to include appraisal support and altruistic support. Appraisal support entails information in the form of feedback which allows individuals to ascertain how well they are engaging in life tasks. Altruistic support is information received in the form of good will from others for having given something of oneself. Social support is defined as requiring a qualitative exchange of communication in an atmosphere of trust.

4.2.2 Global appraisals and family schemata (CCC)

At a global level, family members hold sets of beliefs about themselves in relation to one another and about their family in relation to the community and other external systems (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 23, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 22). Such a set of beliefs is referred to as a family schema and consists of five dimensions: shared purpose, collectivity, frameability, relativism, and shared control (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 23, Patterson 1988: 223-4, Patterson & Garwick 1994: 295). Shared purpose refers to the extent to which a family has developed and invested in shared commitments, values and goals that guide its life and activity. A shared identity provides a family with a shared ideology for living. Collectivity refers to the degree to which a family sees itself as something larger than itself and the

degree to which the family members see themselves as part of the family system. Frameability refers to family optimism grounded in reality, as opposed to a pessimistic orientation. An optimistic outlook allows families to view demands as challenges and opportunities for growth. Relativism refers to the extent to which a family views its life circumstances as relative, as opposed to absolute and prescribed, and to the degree to which the family is willing to accept solutions that may not perfectly fit imposed demands. Lastly, shared control entails the extent to which a family is able to balance family and personal control with trust in others. Family schemata are partially formed and shaped by the social contexts within which families exist (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 24, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 22).

In summary, the Typology Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation, though similar to the Double ABCX Model and the FAAR Model, introduced the components of family vulnerability, family typology, family problem-solving and coping, and family schemata into the family adjustment and adaptation phases. It also emphasised the importance of family life-cycle stages in understanding family vulnerability, family typologies and family adaptation, and drew attention to the concept of resilience and the importance of studying resilient families as opposed to focusing exclusively on troubled or stressed families (McCubbin *et al* 1988: 44). Continued research in the field of family stress and resilience led to the extension of the Typology Model. The most recent extension of the earlier models already discussed is the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation.

5. The Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation

Research relating to Hill's ABCX Model, the Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation, the FAAR Model and the Typology Model has tended to be Eurocentric and limited to the response of two-parent families to stressful and crisis situations (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 4). While research with the Typology Model did include ethnicity and social class as important factors to consider in

family adaptation, it was limited to the strengths, resources and community supports employed by ethnic-minority families in comparison to Caucasian families (McCubbin & McCubbin 1988: 252-3). The roles of ethnicity, culture and diversity in family structure have become important concepts in the understanding of family stress and family resilience. The Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (hereafter referred to as the Resiliency Model), in addition to acknowledging these factors, also introduced the family processes and goals of harmony and balance; expanded the family appraisal component of the model, and emphasised the family's relational processes of adjustment and adaptation. This model offers a contextual framework for understanding family resilience as it recognises that the family system exists within the context of its larger social environment of nature, community, society, the nation, and the world (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 5-16).

McCubbin & McCubbin (1993: 25-6) conceptualised family resilience as involving two distinguishable but related processes or phases. The first process, adjustment, involves the influence of protective factors that facilitate the family's ability and efforts to maintain functioning and fulfil developmental tasks in the midst of risk factors. The second process, adaptation, involves the influence of recovery factors in promoting the family's ability to bounce back and adapt in situations of family crisis.

5.1 The adjustment phase

The adjustment phase of the Resiliency Model (Figure 7) is very similar to that of the Typology Model. Obvious additions in the adjustment phase of the Resiliency Model include an emphasis on harmony and balance as important characteristics of family systems, essential in striving for adaptation and resilience (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 14). The circle in Figure 7 highlights these characteristics as well as four major domains of family functioning which are critical for restoring and maintaining such harmony and balance: interpersonal relationships; structure and function; development, wellbeing and spirituality, and community relationships and nature (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 5).

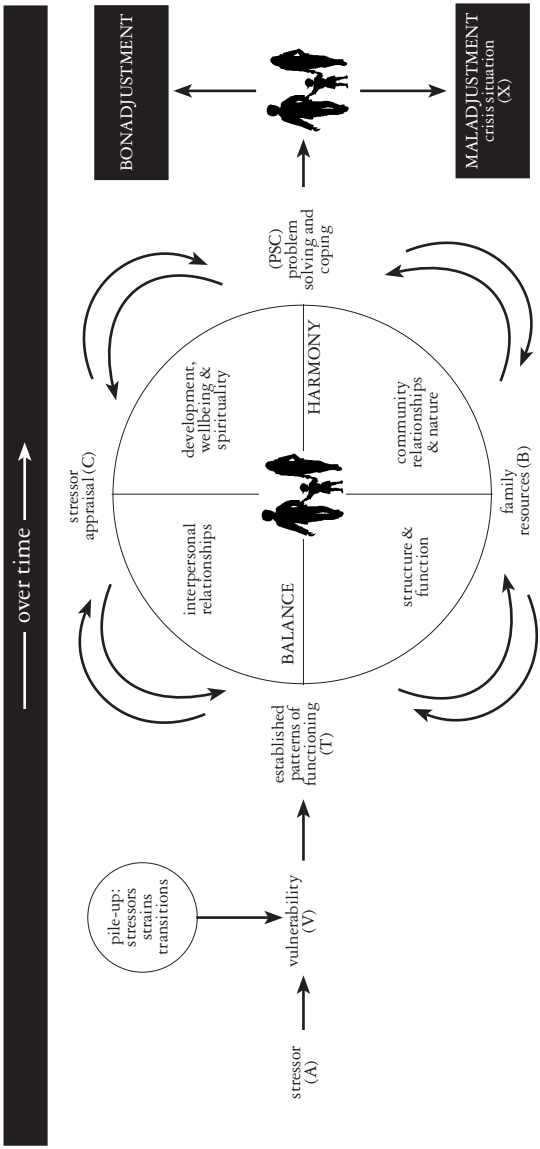


Figure 7: The adjustment phase of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001)

In the adjustment phase, the stressor (A) and its severity interact with family vulnerability (V), which in turn interacts with the family's typology (T). The A, V, and T factors then interact with the family's resistance resources (B). These are the family's capabilities and strengths in terms of stress management and the promotion and maintenance of harmony and balance. They are employed in an effort to avoid crisis, reduce disharmony and imbalance in the family system, and avoid resultant substantial changes or deterioration in family functioning (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 17-9). The family's resistance resources (B) interact with the family's appraisal of the stressor (C). This refers to the family's definition of the seriousness of the stressor and its related hardships; the stressor may be perceived as anything from uncontrollable to challenging and growth-promoting. This appraisal in turn interacts with the family's problem-solving and coping strategies (PSC), including the development of constructive problem-solving communication in order to maintain and restore family harmony and balance. All the aforementioned components (A, V, T B, C, and PSC) are involved in mutual interaction in order to determine the family's response to the stressor and its accompanying hardships (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 31 & 2001: 17).

The family may respond with a state of stress, distress or eustress. A stressor produces tension in a family system and the amount of stress will depend on the severity, intensity and family anticipation of the stressor, the family's resources and ability to deal with the stressor, and the psychological and physical wellbeing of family members at the onset of the stressor (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 20-1). The state of tension produced by the stressor may result in an experience of imbalance and disharmony in the family system. Family distress, which is typically a negative reaction to stress, results when the tension produced by the stressor is not reduced, eradicated, or made more manageable, and the disharmony and imbalance brought about by the stressor are experienced as disorganising and threatening to the family system. Alternatively, eustress (a positive reaction to stress) may be experienced, which means that the family system welcomes the disharmony and imbalance created by the stressor as a

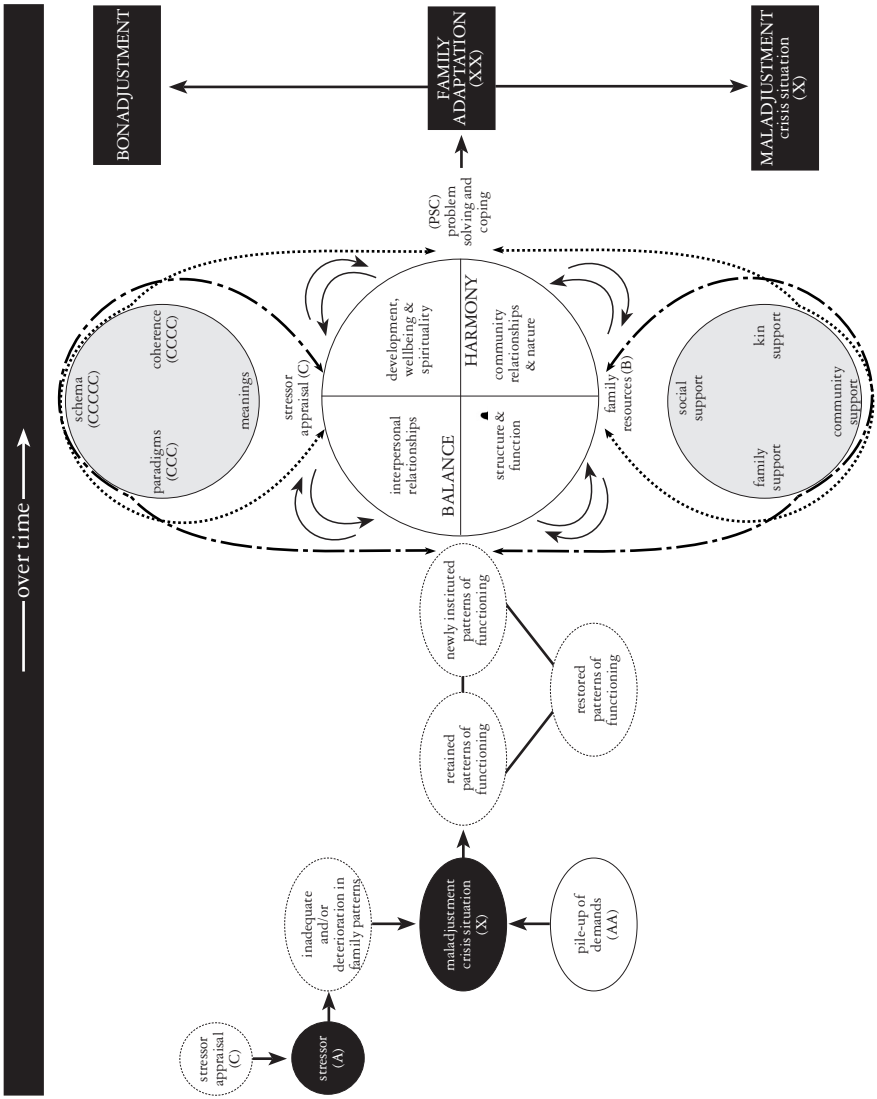
challenge and an opportunity for growth (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 21).

While stress in the family may produce a state of tension that requires management, not all stressors call for substantial changes in family structure and functioning. In instances where only minor adjustments in the family system are required, the outcome is bonadjustment. When the family is faced with a major stressor, minor adjustments may not be sufficient to attain harmony and balance. Major stressors may challenge family patterns severely, resulting in maladjustment and the consequent experience of a crisis, demanding major changes in the family's patterns of functioning in order to restore harmony, balance and stability to the family system (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 31 & 2001: 22). The family's move into a state of crisis typically marks the beginning of the adaptation phase of the Resiliency Model, where families are forced to restructure their patterns of functioning in order to deal with the crisis and restore harmony and balance to the system (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 33 & 2001: 23).

5.2 The adaptation phase

The adaptation phase of this model (Figure 8), as well as those of the earlier models outlined, typically denotes the post-crisis and adaptation-oriented factors and resiliency processes that are essential to the relational process of family adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 3, McCubbin & Patterson 1982: 47, 1983a: 11 & 1983b: 90). Figure 8 clearly illustrates that the family embarks on the process of adaptation as a result of achieving maladjustment in the adjustment phase and thus being faced with a crisis situation (X).

Figure 8: The adaptation phase of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001)



The family's experience of the crisis is exacerbated by the concurrent pile-up of demands (AA). The AA factor interacts with the family's newly instituted patterns of functioning (TT), its modified or revitalised established patterns of functioning, as well as its retained and restored patterns of functioning (T). The AA, TT and T factors in turn interact with the family's own internal resources and capabilities (BB), the network of social support (BBB) and the appraisal processes. The latter consist of five levels: family schemata (CCCCC), family coherence (CCCC), family paradigms (CCC), situational appraisal (CC) and stressor appraisal (C). Lastly, the instituted patterns of functioning, resources, supports, and appraisal processes of the family system influence and are influenced by the family's problem-solving and coping abilities (PSC). These relational processes and interactions take place over time, with the overall goal of achieving harmony, balance and bonadaptation in the family system as well as between the family system, the community and society at large (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 33 & 2001: 24-6).

The post-crisis and adaptation-orientated factors and resiliency processes of the adaptation phase will now be discussed in greater detail. Many of these components have already been outlined in the discussion of the Double ABCX Model, the FAAR Model and the Typology Model. In these instances, the components will be only briefly revisited, as the focus will be on newer additions to the model.

5.2.1 Pile-up of demands (AA Factor)

Pile-up of demands (AA) refers to the accumulative nature of pre- and post-crisis stressors. Whereas McCubbin & Patterson (1982: 29-33 & 1983a: 11-4) originally identified five broad types of stressors and strains, McCubbin & McCubbin (2001: 27) expanded this to include nine categories of stressors and strains that contribute to pile-up and family vulnerability (V). The five broad categories originally identified were: the stressor event and its accompanying hardships, concurrent normative transitions in individual family members and the family as a whole, prior strains resulting from unresolved hardships of stressors which have accumulated over time, coping behaviours and strategies which families employ in an attempt to manage the crisis event, and intra-familial and social ambiguity (McCubbin & McCubbin

2001: 27-8, McCubbin & Patterson 1982, 1983a: 11-4). The sixth category of stressors and strains contributing to pile-up of demands comprises situational demands and contextual difficulties. Society may impose additional demands on the family system which challenge their attempts to adapt to the crisis situation (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 29).

The last three categories of stressors and strains leading to pile-up of demands involve the family's newly instituted patterns of functioning (TT) which have been implemented in an attempt to deal with the crisis. While it is essential that new patterns of functioning are adopted in order to restore harmony and balance to the family system, these new patterns may initially create more disharmony and prolong the crisis situation. This could be due to a number of reasons: newly instituted patterns of functioning typically demand additional changes in family functioning, the new patterns may be in conflict with the family's schema and/or paradigms, or the newly instituted patterns may be incongruent with the established patterns of functioning (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 30-2).

5.2.2 Family patterns of functioning (T and TT Factors)

The family's typology (T) represents established patterns of functioning (T). While most patterns of functioning present in the adjustment phase are carried over into the adaptation phase as they provide stability and harmony, some may have to be changed or eliminated while others are retained and restored (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 31). Changing or eliminating established patterns of functioning is often difficult for the family as these patterns have become familiar. As a result, these patterns may come into conflict with the new patterns of functioning (TT) which the family adopts in an attempt to deal with the crisis situation and restore harmony and balance. Even though these patterns may succeed in increasing harmony and balance in the midst of the crisis situation, not all members will necessarily accept them. In some instances new patterns may threaten or challenge the family's values and beliefs, which may account for their hesitant acceptance (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 31).

The institution of new patterns of functioning is a process that takes place over a period of time. The new patterns are guided by and legitimised by the family's appraisal processes. The family attempts to determine their legitimacy by screening and contrasting the changes with the family's values, beliefs, expectations and rules which are integral to the appraisal processes. The fact that this is a time-orientated process means that the family may still be finalising patterns of functioning while dealing with the crisis situation and that another stressor or crisis may emerge simultaneously. This may contribute to the family's level of vulnerability (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 32).

5.2.3 Family resources (BB Factor) and social support (BBB Factor)

Family resources (BB) refer to the strengths and capabilities available to the family to meet demands in crisis situations (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 32). There are three sources of demands and three possible sources of resources on which a family can draw: the individual family members, the family system, and the community. A resiliency resource is a characteristic or competence of one of these sources of resources that facilitates adaptation.

Although there were initially six categories of personal resources (McCubbin *et al* 1988: 18, Patterson 1988: 216), McCubbin & McCubbin (2001: 33) identified eight categories of personal resources that a family can use in its attempts to restore harmony and balance. The eight categories are as follows: the intelligence of individual members, which enhances their awareness and comprehension of demands and facilitates mastery of them; the knowledge and skills of individual members, which assist the family in performing tasks more efficiently; personality traits such as hardiness, which facilitate coping; intact physical, emotional and spiritual health, which ensures the availability of personal energy for meeting demands; a sense of mastery; self-esteem; a sense of coherence, and the ethnic identity and cultural background of family members, which provide them with unique worldviews and ultimately guide the family's functioning. While the last four resources (a sense of mastery, self-esteem, a sense

of coherence, and ethnic identity) have been emphasised as essential resources for managing demands, these are also the resources most threatened when a crisis occurs, with its accompanying pile-up of demands (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 33-4).

Researchers in family stress and resilience have identified a number of family systems resources, also termed family resiliency resources, which play a critical role in family adaptation. The most prominent are cohesion and adaptability, while others include organisation, communication skills, hardiness, time together, and routines (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 19-20 & 2001: 34, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 19, Patterson 1988: 216-7).

Community or social resources and support (BBB) refer to the people and institutions outside the family that can assist it in meeting its demands. They have already been discussed in detail in section 4.2.1 (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 20-1 & 2001: 35, McCubbin *et al* 1988: 217).

5.2.4 Family appraisal processes

Family appraisal processes are complex and dynamic in nature. The appraisal processes which a family applies in crisis situations consist of five fundamental levels: family schemata (CCCCC), family coherence (CCCC), family paradigms (CCC), situational appraisal (CC) and stressor appraisal (C) (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 36, McCubbin *et al* 1998: 43). The two appraisal processes mainly influenced by culture and ethnicity are family schemata and family paradigms (McCubbin *et al* 1993: 1064). Stressor appraisal (C), which refers to the family's initial, shared definition of the stressor, is essentially part of the adjustment phase of the Resiliency Model. Family adaptation therefore involves the other four levels of family appraisal.

Family schemata (CCCCC) refer to generalised structures of shared convictions, values, beliefs, goals, priorities and expectations that are shaped and adopted by the family over time (McCubbin *et al* 1998: 43-5). A family schema tends to be highly resistant to change and can be viewed as a shared informational framework for evaluating and processing incoming information. As was noted earlier, the family's appraisal processes, and specifically the family schema, play

an important role in legitimising the family's problem-solving and coping behaviours as well as its established, newly instituted, and maintained patterns of functioning. The family schema is also central to the development of family meanings (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 39). Patterson & Garwick (1994: 288) defined family meanings as

> the interpretations, images, and views that have been collectively constructed by family members as they interact with one another; as they share time, space and life experience; and as they talk with each other and dialogue about these experiences.

Family meanings are shared understandings created by the family which have the ability to place the family crisis in a larger context of experiences. In essence, the family schema can be viewed as its blueprint for functioning (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 39-40).

Family coherence (CCCC) is the family appraisal process that accounts for the transformation of the family's potential resources into actual resources to facilitate coping and promotes the health of individual family members and of the family system as a whole. Family coherence is essentially a dispositional worldview that expresses the family's dynamic feeling of confidence that the world is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 42, McCubbin *et al* 1998: 45).

Family paradigms (CCC) refer to shared expectations and rules relating to how the family will function in specific dimensions of family life, such as child-rearing and discipline. It is important to understand the cultural and ethnic context within which the family exists as these factors are often integrated into its paradigmatic patterns of functioning. In terms of the family's typology, family paradigms serve to guide and strengthen the family system's established patterns of functioning. When families are forced to re-evaluate and change those patterns in order to cope with a crisis situation, existing family paradigms may be challenged. However, new paradigms will emerge in order to reinforce and legitimate the new patterns of functioning and to restore family stability and predictability (McCubbin *et al* 1998: 46). Once a family paradigm has been shaped, adopted and used to give meaning to situations and guide family

behaviours, family functioning cannot occur without it (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 42-3, McCubbin *et al* 1998: 46).

Situational appraisal (CC) includes the family's ability to weigh up its capabilities against demands that the family system change its established patterns of functioning. A family's positive appraisal of a crisis situation may increase its level of adaptation (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 46, McCubbin *et al* 1998: 46).

5.2.5 Family problem-solving and coping (PSC Factor)

Resources are essential if a family is to meet the demands created by the crisis. The Resiliency Model views the family system as a resource-exchange network in which problem-solving and coping occur (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 49). In this instance, coping behaviour is defined as a specific effort on the part of an individual family member or the family system as a whole to reduce or manage a demand on the family system and harness resources to manage the situation. Some of these coping behaviours are aligned in clusters of coping patterns, which are more generalised ways of responding to stressful situations. Family coping can refer either to the co-ordinated problem-solving of the entire family, or to complementary efforts of individual family members (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 24-5, 1993: 55 & 2001: 49). In essence, the purpose of family coping is to maintain or restore the balance between demands and resources while simultaneously eradicating stressors and their accompanying hardships. There are in essence four ways in which coping can achieve this purpose (McCubbin & McCubbin 1989: 25, 1993: 56 & 2001: 50). Coping may entail direct action to reduce or eradicate the number and intensity of the demands created by the stressor or crisis; direct action to obtain additional resources not already available to the family; managing the tension associated with ongoing strains, and family appraisal aimed at evaluating and changing the meanings of a situation in order to make it more manageable. Family appraisal coping is directly related to family schema appraisal and may be directed at changing individual or family schemata. It should be noted that these four coping strategies often operate simultaneously and form an essential part of the family system's arsenal in meeting demands and overcoming crises (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 56 & 2001: 50).

5.2.6 The family adaptation process

The family adaptation process is a cyclic process in which a family responds directly to the excessive demands of a stressor and the consequent depletion of its resources, realising that systematic changes are needed to restore functional stability and improve family satisfaction (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 51). The outcome of the family adaptation process can be positive (bonadaptation) or negative (maladaptation). Bonadaptation essentially implies that the family is able to stabilise, achieve harmony and balance, promote the individual development of its members, and achieve a sense of congruence, despite being faced with major changes in the patterns of its functioning (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 25). It should be noted that harmony and balance need to be achieved at both the individual-to-family and the family-to-community levels of functioning (McCubbin & Patterson 1983a: 32, McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 35 & 2001: 26-7). Maladaptation refers to unsuccessful adaptation, where families sacrifice personal growth and development. Their overall sense of wellbeing, trust, and order also become very low (McCubbin & McCubbin 1993: 25). Maladaptation implies that the family system has not achieved a satisfactory level of harmony and balance and that it may have to return to a crisis situation as the cycle is repeated in a renewed effort to promote harmony and balance in its functioning (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001: 51).

In summary, a significant contribution of the Resiliency Model is its recognition of the importance of culture and ethnicity in family change and family adaptation to stress and crises. This model is groundbreaking in its contextual and relational approach. However, despite the fact that it has highlighted critical factors that influence family adaptation, particularly for families from different ethnic backgrounds, the Resiliency Model as a whole is quite difficult to test (DeMarco *et al* 2000). This difficulty does not detract from the fact that the model attempts to relate a realistic representation of the complicated processes in which families are involved when they are adjusting and adapting to stressors and crises, as well as the fact that it is parsimonious enough to facilitate family research and interventions.

6. The Resiliency Model and the South African context

The Resiliency Model emphasised the importance of including the concepts of ethnicity, culture and diversity in family structure in the understanding of family stress and family resilience. Research has emphasised the fact that culture and ethnicity play an essential role in a family's schema and paradigms (McCubbin *et al* 1993: 1064, McCubbin *et al* 1998: 41-67). A number of studies have been conducted in America among ethnically diverse groups faced with normative and non-normative stressors (McCubbin 1995: 67-97, McCubbin *et al* 1998: 287-328, McCubbin *et al* 1995: 3-48). Some of the findings of these studies reinforced the importance of testing the relevance of Western models in different contexts. McCubbin *et al* (1998: 330) argued that instead of employing ethnicity as a demographic classification in research with ethnic groups, ethnicity and culture should be studied as complex independent variables that have a depth of meaning far beyond categorisation and classification. These researchers stated that understanding ethnicity in the family context entails examining how ethnicity is defined, developed, cultivated and treated in the family system.

The acknowledgment that ethnicity, culture and diversity in family structure are important to an understanding of family stress and family resilience has opened the door for employing the Resiliency Model in the South African context, and it has been applied in a number of studies. Published South African research successfully employing it as a conceptual basis include studies of resilience among families where a parent has accepted a voluntary teacher's retrenchment package (Der Kinderen & Greeff 2003: 86-94), the prevalence of resilience in migrant families (Greeff 2007: 189-200), resilience in families in which a parent has died (Greeff & Human 2004: 27-42), and variables associated with resilience in divorced families (Greeff & Van der Merwe 2004: 59-75). Family resilience is a novel concept in South African research and this is demonstrated by the fact that the above studies are fairly recent and tend to be exploratory in nature. However, the country provides fertile soil for studying ethnicity and culture as complex independent variables in relation to family resilience.

7. Conclusion

A family resilience framework is valuable in the context of research and intervention as it can be applied to a wide range of crises and persistent life challenges (Walsh 2003a: 1). One of the advantages of using this framework is the fact that it focuses on strengths under stress and assesses functioning in context; it does not assume that a single model will fit all families. In addition, the optimal functioning and wellbeing of family members are seen to vary over time, depending on the challenges that arise and the life-cycle of the family (Walsh 2003b: 405). Using a family resilience framework in an intervention context could lead to a reduction in dysfunction and enhance family functioning and individual wellbeing.

The value of the Resiliency Model also lies in the fact that its developers have taken it beyond the theoretical level by empirically testing its components and developing related measuring instruments to evaluate various resiliency components within the family context (McCubbin & McCubbin 2001). The availability of measuring instruments facilitates quantitative investigations using the model, but does not preclude qualitative investigations in which the model can be used to facilitate interpretation of the qualitative data. In addition, the intervention value of the model has also been demonstrated by McCubbin & McCubbin (1993).

In addition to the operationalisation of the Resiliency Model, its developers have included contextual factors such as ethnicity and culture and have attempted to explore their impact on the process of resilience. The inclusion of ethnicity and culture as important factors in family resilience has also shown that the concept is a relational one that occurs within a family system and within an ethnic and cultural context (McCubbin *et al* 1998). The emphasis on culture and ethnicity makes this model more appealing to the South African context; however, the fact that research on ethnically diverse groups has been conducted abroad does not mean that the model is automatically relevant to the local context. It is essential that Western models of conceptualisation and intervention be considered cautiously for the South African context. The author would like to urge that this model

be tested for its relevance to the South African context. The Resiliency Model has much to offer, not only in terms of its established conceptual basis, but also as a research and intervention tool.

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