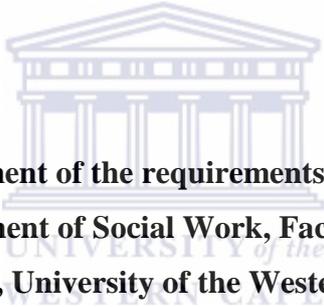


**An exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution**

**Azola Ralo**

**3048287**



**Full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MA (Child and Family Studies) in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape**

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**Supervisor: Dr C. J. Erasmus**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation, “AN EXPLORATION OF HOW SINGLE PARENTING IN A DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY INFLUENCES A LEARNER’S DECISION TO ENROL AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION” is my own work and that all resources that were used during the research study, are indicated by means of a complete reference and acknowledgement.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

MS AZOLA RALO



## Dedication

In loving memory of my late uncle Khayaletu Kralo, “you’d be so proud Mgiqwa”!



## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported me during the course of this degree:

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## ABSTRACT

Family structure is related to educational attainment; it is evident that individuals from two-parent homes complete on average more years of schooling and are more likely to graduate from high school, attend University and complete University as compared to peers raised in single-parent families. Parental characteristics such as educational level, income and parents' aspirations for their children are variables said to influence schooling outcomes of South African learners. Children from disadvantaged families are less likely to graduate from high school and attend an institution of higher learning. The aim of this study was to explore and describe how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. An explorative and descriptive research design grounded in a qualitative research approach was utilised. Research participants were purposively selected from two senior secondary schools in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. Three sets of data, namely (a) grade 12 learners raised by single parents (b) parents of these learners, and (c) principals and grade 12 Life Orientation teachers were collected for greater insight of this situation. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and field notes were used to collect the data. Tech's eight steps of data analysis were used. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent from learners, parents, teachers and informed assent from learners younger than 18 years of age were adhered to. The greatest influences to enrolling into a higher education institution and the type of institution were family structure and the learner's socio-economic status. Learners feel responsible for taking care of their parents and siblings; therefore feel obligated to work after high school. Those that have the desire to study further are concerned about how they will finance their studies.

The Department of Education (DoE) needs to conduct a needs assessment and provide schools with the resources they need. This includes teachers and administrative staff. The

resources schools have influence school outcomes. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to do an analysis of what the barriers to enrolling into university and college are at the various schools. When they have identified these barriers they need to tailor-make their information sessions with high school learners so that they have all the necessary information before they assume enrolling at higher education institutions is inconceivable. Schools need to provide the necessary information about university and college; including available funding to learners and their parents from earlier grades. This will be of use to those who genuinely want to study further but are concerned about finances.



## KEY WORDS

Aspirations; Ecological systems theory; Single parenting; Parental involvement; Higher education; Disadvantaged community



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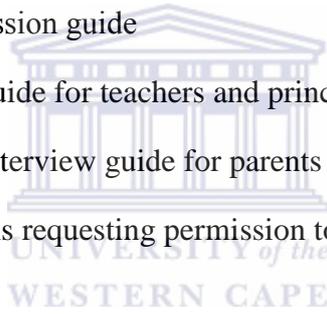
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Background and rationale

Family plays a crucial role in the socialisation of children, offering support in being motivated or goal-orientated (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Haivas, Hofmans & Pepermans, 2012; Hungerford & Cox, 2006). Schooling outcomes are influenced by parents' aspirations for themselves and their children (Anderson, 2003) and, in a supportive role, family can enhance the pursuit of the goals and aspirations of youth or, family can inhibit this process (Davids & Roman, 2013). Karkkainen, Raty and Kasanen (2009) are of the opinion that achievement in school is often viewed as an indicator of resilience. Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1998) cited in Karkkainen et al. (2009) define educational resilience as the capacity of students to attain academic and social success in school despite being subject to personal and environmental adversities. Musick and Meier (2010) argue that growing up without both parents is associated with a host of poor child outcomes such as greater poverty and lower levels of educational and occupational attainment.

Ambeken, Joseph and Agwanyang (2012) suggest that parental socio-economic characteristics to a greater extent determine a student's performance in school and their adjustment to life. They state that the poor examination performances of students in recent times could be attributed to the challenging life patterns in some families, as well as economic hardship which has made most families unable to meet their responsibilities of ensuring a healthy and literate family. Hall and Woolard (2013) state that young children in South Africa grow up in an extremely unequal society where poverty threatens the early development of most children. Cancian and Reed (2009) observe that poverty may be

difficult to overcome when there is only one parent, especially as a majority of single mothers work outside their homes.

Mather (2010) argues that most single-parent families have limited financial resources to cover children's education, childcare and healthcare costs. She states that single mothers face serious economic challenges which may explain the growing number of mothers living with cohabitating partners, parents or other relatives. A large number of lower-income single mothers have become disconnected from education and work; and are at risk of remaining jobless and poor, with little hope of escaping the vicious cycle of poverty (Mather, 2010). According to Coles (2015) there has been an increase in single-father households.

Research on single fathers has mirrored the increase in single fathering evolving over the years in quantity and quality; they are now expected to play a more active role rather than just financially supporting their children (Taylor, Parker, Morin, Cohn & Wang, 2013). Coles (2015) states that single fathers are generally less well-off than married fathers, however they are better off than single mothers financially. The prevalence of single fatherhood is closely linked to educational level (Livingston, 2013); the more educated a father is, the less likely he is to head a single father household. According to Coles (2015) more often than not, single father's involvement with children increases when they are a single parent. He states that this involvement is quantitatively similar to that of single mothers but perhaps differs in traditionally gendered ways.

Single parents are less involved in their children's life and provide less supervision; these are both aspects of parenting that are related to educational achievement (Raley, Frisco & Wildsmith, 2005). They further argue that regardless of whether it is money or time, single parents have fewer resources to provide for their children than two-parent households.

Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) are of the opinion that regardless of parents' economic disadvantages, they can participate in their child's education by meeting with school personnel, attending school events and participating in parent-teacher organisations.

Family background, regarding family type, size, socio-economic status and education, is the foundation for children's development as it plays a pivotal role in children's education levels and social integration (Osunloye, 2008; Ushie et al., 2012. Ambeken, et al. (2012) suggests that family background can have a negative influence on the gross performance of a child. They state that family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and at school. Better-educated parents are able to contribute to their children's learning through their day-to-day interactions with their children and involving themselves in their children's schoolwork. Parents' perceptions of their child's potential regarding education influence the child's views of their own achievement (Karkkainen et al., 2009).

Parental attitudes towards college finance may also be driven by the parents' own experiences as children which were affected by their own parents' socio-economic background, race and personal preferences. Whilst a number of parents are motivated and have good intentions for their children, not all of them feel they are adequately informed or equipped to assist in post-school planning (Frigo et al., 2007). Parents play a pivotal role in socialisation and identity-formation of their children; therefore it is not surprising that parents have a considerable influence on the educational and career choices that their children make (Frigo et al., 2007).

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) which considers child development within the context of the complex system of relationships that form their environment

(Lewthwaite, McMillan, & Renaud, 2011), formed the theoretical framework for the present study. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), development and socialisation are influenced by the different width rounds or circles of the environment with which a person is in active inter-relation (Harkonen, 2007). Strayhorn (2010) is of the opinion that the interaction between individuals and their environmental contexts will effectively shape human growth and development.

In the structure conceived by Bronfenbrenner (1979), to illustrate the ecological systems theory as a set of nested structures; the innermost system is the micro-system; this system affects the individual directly; it can be the family, classroom and their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The second immediate layer is the meso-system which focuses on the connections between two or more systems such as the home, playmate settings and school (Krishnan, 2010). The exo-system is the larger social system in which the child does not function directly, such as the child's mother's workplace (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). The macro-system is the farthest layer in the child's environment; it is this layer that comprises cultural values, customs and laws (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). Chrono-system is an individual's passage through time as well as their position through history (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Through the system's interconnectedness, children are bound to be influenced by their environment; this theory places emphasis on family, describing it as a filter through which society influences child development (Bee & Boyd, 2007).

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The problem which underpins the current study is that a student's background and family manifest themselves and are embedded in the student's expectations about higher education (Acker-Ball, 2007). Although Acker-Ball (2007) states that factors such as parental education

levels and access to resources inhibit learners from enrolling at higher education institutions, Temple (2009) is of the opinion that, with sufficient support and access to college information, students have the opportunity to go beyond social concerns. Crosnoe, Mistry, Glen and Elder (2002) indicate that there is an early linkage between early disadvantage and later educational attainment of learners, which can be partially explained by the attitudes and behaviours of parents. They argue that disadvantaged parents are more pessimistic about the chances that their adolescents will be able to enrol at a higher education institution. They further argue that it is this pessimism that reduces the adolescents' motivation. Karkkainen, et al. (2009) argue that parents of resilient children perceive their child's future as superior and are more optimistic about their child's future than other parents, and expect them to succeed. The youth from fragile families, whom he defines as single-parent, step-parent, cohabitation parent and non-conventional living arrangements homes, have lower expectations of attending higher education institutions and much lower grades than those from intact families (Heard, 2007). According to Xolo (2007), parents are not aware of the crucial role that they play in their disadvantaged children. For these reasons, the present study is conducted on how a learner's decision to enrol at a higher institution of learning is affected by being raised by a single parent in a disadvantaged community.

Utilising Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory will assist in answering the research question and provide a better understanding of how a learner's context may influence their decision making. All the systems in this theory have important factors that are entrenched in them that ultimately influence, form and shape a learner's aspirations.

#### **1.4 Research question**

The following research question was formulated:

---

How does single parenting in a disadvantaged community influence a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution?

## **1.5 Aim and objectives**

---

The research question has subsequently resulted in the formulation of the aim and objectives of the study.

### **1.5.1 Aim of the study**

The aim was to explore and describe how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution.

### **1.5.2 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study were to:

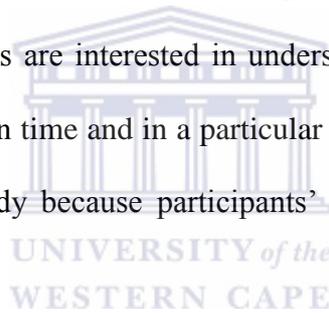
- explore and describe how being raised by a single parent influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution
- explore how residing in a low socio-economic status community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution.

## **1.6 Research methodology**

An exploratory research design was utilised in the study. This type of design is the first stage in a sequence of studies focusing on the 'what' question (Neuman, 2006) and is often employed when the researcher has minimal pre-existing information about an issue (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel & Page, 2015). They further state that its purpose is to gain new insights, ideas and knowledge. The present study also applied a descriptive design which is utilised to describe a phenomenon in detail (Schmidt & Brown, 2015). They further

document that the descriptive design provides a picture of a situation as it occurs naturally, without manipulation of any of the variables, enabling the researcher to identify and document the different characteristics of phenomena.

A qualitative research methodology was utilised for the present study. Understanding and describing rather than explaining human behaviour is the primary goal of studies using this approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that the meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interactions with their world (Merriam, 2002). She furthermore states that qualitative researchers take the stance of reality not being fixed, single, agreed-upon or a measurable phenomenon; instead, they view the world as having numerous constructions and interpretations of reality. Merriam (2002) argues that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding people's interpretation of their reality at a particular point in time and in a particular context. This research approach is best suitable for the present study because participants' reality of their situations will be explored.



### **1.7 Population and sampling**

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals that is a well-defined collection of individuals with similar characteristics with which the research problem is concerned (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011: 223). Two senior secondary schools in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape formed the population for this study. A sample is a subset of the population and sampling is the process of selecting participants for a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). The sampling strategy that was utilised in this study was purposive sampling. Learners known to be raised in single family households in the matric class of these high schools were approached and asked to voluntarily participate in the study.

Purposive sampling was utilized for the selection of learners and their parents and the learner's Life Orientation teachers and their principals. Koerber and McMichael (2008) argue that purposive sampling means the researcher is seeking participants who possess certain qualities and traits. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) indicate that using data from different sources can assist a researcher in checking their findings.

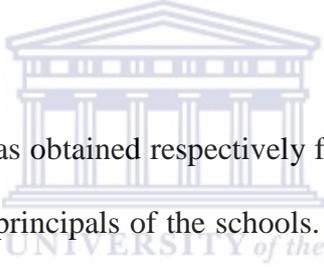
## **1.8 Data collection**

Three data collection tools were utilised, namely, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and taking of field notes. Data collection took place by means of semi-structured interviews with the aid of an interview guide where predetermined questions guided the interviews (De Vos, et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews have a degree of pre-determined order, are conversational and have an informal tone that is useful for investigating complex behaviours, opinions and emotions (Longhurst, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are useful in exploratory studies because they provide further information about the research area (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Parents of these learners were interviewed in their homes where they felt most comfortable. The life orientation teachers were interviewed in their classrooms and the principals in their offices. Creswell (2007) is of the opinion that the location of the interview should be as natural and comfortable as possible for the participant. The interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the participants, field notes were taken and transcribed verbatim as soon as they were expanded (Mack et al., 2005).

A focus group is an informal discussion among a group of selected individuals about a particular topic (Wilkinson, 2004). Focus groups are undertaken with small groups of participants, ideally people between six and 12 participants. Mack et al. (2005) argue that focus groups are a qualitative data collection method effective in helping researchers learn the social norms of a community or subgroup as well as the range of perspectives that exist

within that particular community or subgroup. They further argue that focus groups are very effective in retrieving broad views on a specific topic as opposed to getting a group consensus. Two focus groups at each high school, consisting of eight participants (learners) were conducted at the schools.

Prior to the formal data collection process a pilot study was conducted. A pilot study is a methodological preface to a larger study, is used to determine the feasibility of a study (Foster, 2013), to test logistics and to gather information prior to the larger study in order to improve the interview guide quality and the efficiency of conducting the research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Learners and their parents were asked to volunteer for this pilot study. These participants did not form part of the bigger study.

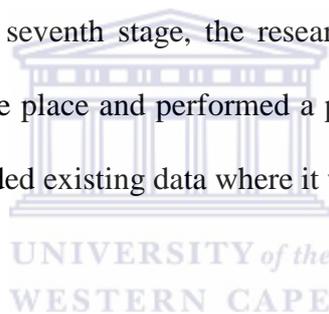


Permission to conduct research was obtained respectively from the Eastern Cape Department of Education as well as from the principals of the schools. The researcher sought permission from the biological parents of the children participating as well as consent to interview the adolescents. Participants were informed about the study and its purpose and significance. The researcher explained all ethical considerations to the participants.

## **1.9 Data analysis**

To analyse data, Tesch's eight steps of data analysis were used (Creswell, 2009). In the first step, the researcher read all transcriptions thoroughly whilst jotting down some ideas that came to mind giving them a sense of the whole data. In the second step the researcher selected one document, for example an interview that was the most interesting one and then questioned what it was about particularly the underlying meaning whilst writing thoughts in the margin. When this task was completed for several participants, for step three the

researcher made a list of topics and then clustered similar topics together. These topics were put into columns possibly arranged as major topics, unique topics and leftovers. In the fourth step the researcher took the list and went back to the data and abbreviated the topics and coded them and then wrote the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. The researcher tried this preliminary organizing scheme to see if new categories and codes would emerge. During the fifth step the researcher found the most descriptive wording for their topic and then turned them into categories. The researcher further looked for ways of reducing their total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other. The researcher drew lines between categories to show interrelationships. In the sixth step the researcher made the final decision on the abbreviation for each category and then alphabetized these codes. In the seventh stage, the researcher assembled the data material belonging to each category in one place and performed a preliminary analysis. In the eighth and final step the researcher recoded existing data where it was necessary.



### **1.10 Trustworthiness**

Sim and Sharp (1998) state that triangulation is a research strategy that aims to enhance the process of empirical research by using multiple approaches which will enhance the quality of the data gathered and, particularly its validity and reliability. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) argue that using data from different sources can assist a researcher in checking their findings. A way to do this is combining data collected from one-on-one interviews and data collected from focus groups; if the data from both point to the same conclusion, the researcher can be confident in their results. To ensure triangulation in this study semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussions and taking of field notes were used as forms of data collection. Alongside triangulation is prolonged engagement and referential adequacy (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Prolonged engagement which is ensuring that the researcher stays

in the field until data saturation has occurred, adds to the credibility of one's research (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Ensuring dependability in research also contributes to trustworthiness. Dependability is the ability to produce similar results if the study were to be conducted again with similar participants in a similar context.

Conformity is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). They argue that to assess conformability the researcher will have to leave an audit trail to determine if conclusions, interpretations and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if these are supported by the inquiry. Conducting this trail involves reviewing raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, material relating to intentions and dispositions and instrument development information (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). The extent to which findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents is termed transferability (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). A qualitative researcher is not interested in generalizations, therefore their obligation for demonstrating transferability rests on those who wish to apply it to the receiving context (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). A way to ensure transferability in qualitative data is thick description; the researcher collecting sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with sufficient detail and precision allowing for judgements about transferability to be made by the reader (Babbie & Mouton, 2004).

### **1.11 Ethical consideration**

This research was guided by the following principles: (1) privacy; (2) anonymity; (3) confidentiality; (4) truthfulness; and (5) voluntary participation (Neuman, 1997). Participants have the right to anonymity as they are not obliged to give identification details in order to

participate. Confidentiality relates to the protection of the data collected (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Participants have the right to confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, the participants had the right to choose whether or not to participate and had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Participants who were interviewed were requested to sign a consent form, while those taking part in the focus group discussions signed a confidentiality-binding form. For learners under the age of 18, informed assent was obtained by asking them to sign an informed assent form that states that they are voluntarily participating in the study. Every researcher should be ethically sound and treat participants with respect and dignity (Neuman, 2006) and protect them from physical or psychological harm. Rubin and Babbie (2005) stipulate that it is a fundamental ethical rule of social research that it must bring no harm to its subjects; therefore the researcher ensured to the best of her ability that the learners, teachers and the parents were not harmed. Participants who needed intervention after the interview were referred for debriefing. Researcher also sought permission from the Senate Higher Degrees of the University of the Western Cape as well as the Eastern Cape Education Department for permission to conduct the study in the schools.

### **1.12 Significance of the study**

The present study provides insight into the factors that influence a learner who is raised by a single parent in a disadvantaged community when they are deciding whether to enrol into an institution of higher learning. Crosnoe et al. (2002) argue that education is a primary means to adult success and that learners from disadvantaged communities cannot leave the cycle of poverty if they are unable to get educated and expose themselves to better opportunities. Children from disadvantaged families are less likely to graduate from high school and attend an institution of higher learning. Pong, Donkers & Hampden-Thompson (2003) are of the opinion that lower-income families possess fewer educational materials at home and they cannot afford enrichment outside their school. The study is intended to provide in-depth

knowledge on the effects that economic deprivation and family structure have on their decision to enrol at a higher education institution. There are fewer resources, particularly monetary in single-parent households which may be a contributing factor to their lower achievement in comparison to children from two-parent homes (Pong et al., 2003). The study broadens our knowledge of the impact of parental involvement in their academic life and the crucial role that schools play, particularly when learners have parents who never went to university or other institutions of higher learning. Anderson (2003) argues that the level of investment parents, teachers and caregivers have in a child's education influences their outcome; this will provide the necessary knowledge to the DoE, teachers and parents to invest more in these learner's academics.

### 1.13 Definition of terms

**Aspirations:** Aspirations are hopes that are held about the future concerning education and jobs (Kintrea, St Clair & Houston, 2011).

**Ecological systems theory:** This system is composed of socially organised subsystems that assist support and guide human growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). They range from the micro-system which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment such as school and family, to the macro-system which refers to the constitutional patterns of culture such as the economy, customs and bodies of language (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

**Single parenting:** Single parenting can be defined as a parent who lives with dependent children, either alone or in a larger household, without a spouse or a partner (Feltey, 2003).

**Higher Education:** Higher education means all learning programmes which lead to qualifications which meet the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-

Framework (HEQSF), which is a sub-framework of the National Qualifications framework as contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995).

### **TVET College**

Technical Vocational Education and Training courses are vocational or occupational by nature meaning that the student receives education and training with a view towards a specific range of jobs or employment possibilities. Under certain conditions, some students may qualify for admission to a University of Technology to continue their studies at a higher level in the same field of study as they were studying at the TVET College (Department of Higher Education and Training, Technical Vocational Education and Training site)

**Parental involvement:** Parental involvement is the integration of the home and school (Smith, 2006).

**Disadvantaged community:** Most communities have common ties such as shared experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and access to services (Poland & Mare, 2005). The term ‘disadvantaged’ can be used as a noun where it describes a quality that is inherent to a group; however it can be utilised to describe a process in which mainstream society acts in a way that disadvantages a particular group by denying them access to the same tools found useful to the majority of the society such as autonomy, employment, capital, health and education (Mayer, 2003).

## **1.14 Overview of chapters**

### Chapter 1

An introduction and background of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner’s decision to enrol at a higher education institution is provided. The chapter also includes the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research

methodology, significance of the study and the relevant terms used in the research are defined.

## Chapter 2

Chapter 2 encapsulates Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, which is the theory that is utilised in the study.

## Chapter 3

Literature pertaining to how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution is discussed. Literature on South Africa's education system, schools in disadvantaged communities, parenting, single parenting and aspirations is presented and discussed.

## Chapter 4

This chapter provides clear details of the research methodology utilised in the study. The covered areas include the study design and approach, study population, data collection methods, data analysis, data verification, limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

## Chapter 5

The results obtained from the data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and taking field notes are presented. This chapter also captures an in-depth discussion of the findings which are integrated with appropriate literature to compare, contrast and/or justify the results.

## Chapter 6

Chapter 6 presents the conclusion of the study and provide recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This study was conducted according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. This theory holds that an individual's development is reflective of five environmental systems namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and the chronosystem. This systems theory posits that children develop in a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of surrounding environments. In this chapter the researcher will discuss the theory and its origin in depth whilst attempting to identify why Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was the most applicable theoretical framework for this study.



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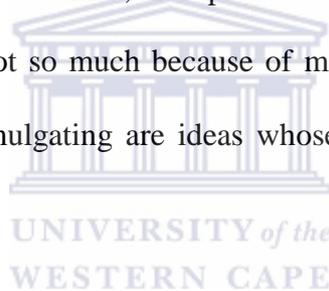
#### 2.2 Origin of the theory

The term ecology was coined in 1873 by Ernest Haeckel, a German zoologist and evolutionist (Tudge, Gray & Hogan, 1997). These authors defined ecology as the study of organism-environment interrelatedness. "The ecology of human development lies at a point of convergence among the disciplines of the biological, psychological and social sciences as they bear on the evolution of the individual in society" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:13). Bronfenbrenner's work is based on analysis and integration of results from empirical investigations conducted over a number of decades by researchers from diverse disciplines (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This began with a study carried out in Berlin in 1870 on the effects of neighbourhoods on the development of children's concepts (Schwabe & Bartholomai, 1870 cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm, first introduced in the 1970's (Bronfenbrenner 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979), represented a reaction to the restricted scope of most research that was then being conducted by developmental

psychologists. According to Bronfenbrenner (1994) the following quote “It can be said that much of developmental psychology is the science of the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner 1977; 513) conveyed the nature of both the restriction and reaction which was the state of developmental science at that time.

Within a decade, investigations informed by an ecological perspective were not scarce; by 1986 Bronfenbrenner was able to write:

Studies of children and adults in real-life settings, with real-life implications, are now commonplace in the research literature on human development, both in the United States and as this volume testifies, Europe as well. This scientific development is taking place, I believe, not so much because of my writings, but rather because the notions I have been promulgating are ideas whose time has come (Bronfenbrenner 1986; 287).



Bronfenbrenner began to explicitly articulate his model for understanding human development as the “ecology of human development” or “development in context” (Derksen, 2010; 329). Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical perspective was new in the way in which it conceptualized the developing person, the environment and the interaction between the two (Derksen, 2010).

### **2.3 Influences on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner (1979) acknowledges the influence of many scholars such as Kurt Lewin, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget (Derksen, 2010). He suggests that the significance of his contribution is the manner in which he conceptualised these ideas in a systematic form

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1988). Bronfenbrenner was greatly influenced by his father who was a neuro-pathologist with both a medical degree and a PhD in zoology (Derksen, 2010). Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicates that as a way of alerting his unobservant eyes to the way nature worked, his father pointed out the interdependence between living organisms and their surroundings. His mother also had an influence as he recounts his memories of his early childhood in Russia; his mother would speak respectfully of 'great psychologists' (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This section encapsulates how cross-cultural contexts, Lewin, Vygotsky and Piaget influenced Bronfenbrenner's thinking and his work

### 2.3.1 Cross-cultural contexts

According to Derksen (2010) it is later in life that Bronfenbrenner (1979) credits his work in cross-cultural contexts such as small rural communities in Eastern and Western Europe, United States, Canada, Israel, U.S.S.R and the People's Republic of China. Bronfenbrenner examined lives in these various cultural contexts where he witnessed different environments producing differences in human nature where the product and the process of making human beings varied by place and time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The work in these various cultural contexts drew his attention to the ways in which public policies created particular living conditions which ultimately influenced human development. Bronfenbrenner argues that it is at the conjunction among the disciplines of biological, psychological and social sciences that the ecology of human development lays; as they bear on the evolution of the individual in society (Derksen, 2010).

### 2.3.2 Lev Vygotsky

Vygotsky developed the socio-cultural theory which focused on the child as a product of social interaction, particularly with adults such as parents and teachers (Al-Jawarneh, 2010).

This theory also focuses on dyadic interactions such a child being taught by a parent on how to perform some culturally-specific action rather than the child learning on his own. The social world mediates a child's cognitive development and Al-Jawarneh, (2010) furthermore argues that cognitive development occurs as a child's thinking is modelled by society in the form of parents, teachers, and peers. Vygotsky (1978) posited that children construct their own knowledge because he believed that knowledge is not transferred passively but rather personally constructed (Langford, 2005).

Vygotsky (1978) emphasised that development cannot be separated from its social context because the context is what is needed for learners to learn, a context where they can interact with each other and use the new tools. For learning to be conducive, the environment must be authentic and should contain the type of people who would use these necessary tools such as concepts language and symbols in a natural way (Al-Jawarneh, 2010). Vygotsky views interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies; he suggests that teachers use cooperative learning exercises where less competent children develop with help from more skilful peers within the zone of proximal development (McLeod, 2012). Similar to Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner (1994) highlighted the importance of the interaction among factors in a child's maturing biological, peer, family and community environment as well as the societal contexts in development (Harris & Graham, 2014). Both Vygotsky and Piaget agree that children are active learners who actively construct knowledge (Al- Jawarneh, 2010).

### 2.3.3 Kurt Lewin

According to Lewin (1946) the person and his environment have to be considered as one constellation of interdependent factors in order to understand or predict behaviour. He further states that the notion of the field refers to all aspects of individuals in a relationship with their

surroundings and conditions; that apparently influence the particular behaviours and developments of concern at a particular point in time. Kurt Lewin (1951) with his Field Theory had a significant impact on the formation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and conceptualized a model of differentiation that systematically linked to aggregate functioning. Lewin viewed differentiation as development within an individual's life space, a movement along a distinguished path reflecting structural relations within the person as well as in his psychological environment (Kuhn, 2008).

Bronfenbrenner transformed Lewin's human behaviour formula to suit straight development description needs (Harkonen, 2007). Harkonen (2007) states that Lewin's classical field theory of behaviour formula is as follows  $B = f(PE)$ , where B is the result (f) of interaction between person (P) and environment (E). According to Harkonen (2007) in a book by Saarinen et al. (1994) the same thing is presented in the following way: underlining the meaning of interaction is based on an understanding that an individual's behaviour is consequence of the interaction between the person and the environment. It is the question of an influence that is effective in both ways: person influences environment and environment influences person. Bronfenbrenner (1989) remade Lewin's formula of development in the following way:  $D = f(PE)$ , where developing (D) is the result (f) of interaction between person (P) and environment (E) (Harkonen, 2007).

#### **2.4 The Ecological Systems Theory**

“The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 3). The micro-meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono systems are the five layers arranged within this structure; from the closest to the individual to the furthest (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1994) emphasizes the continuous impacts these systems have on an individual's development and according to

Bronfenbrenner (1979) what is fundamental to these nested systems is the interconnectedness between them (Derksen, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner (1994) argues that what happens between these systems can be as influential to development as what happens within them (Derksen, 2010). An example utilised to illustrate this is that of a child's ability to learn to read; the latter ability will depend upon not only on the lessons the child learns in school but also on the nature of the ties between the child's home and school. Bronfenbrenner (1994) furthermore argues that socialization and development are influenced by the different circles of the environment with which a person is in active inter-relation (Harkonen, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1979) alludes to three significant assumptions, the first is that the person is an active player that is exerting influence on his or her environment; secondly the environment is compelling the person to adapt to its conditions and restrictions and thirdly the environment is understood to consist of different size entities that are placed one inside another, of their reciprocal relationships (Harkonen, 2007).

The Ecological Systems Theory (Figure 1) specifies five types of nested environmental systems with bi-directional influences within and between the systems; they are called the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-and the chrono-system.

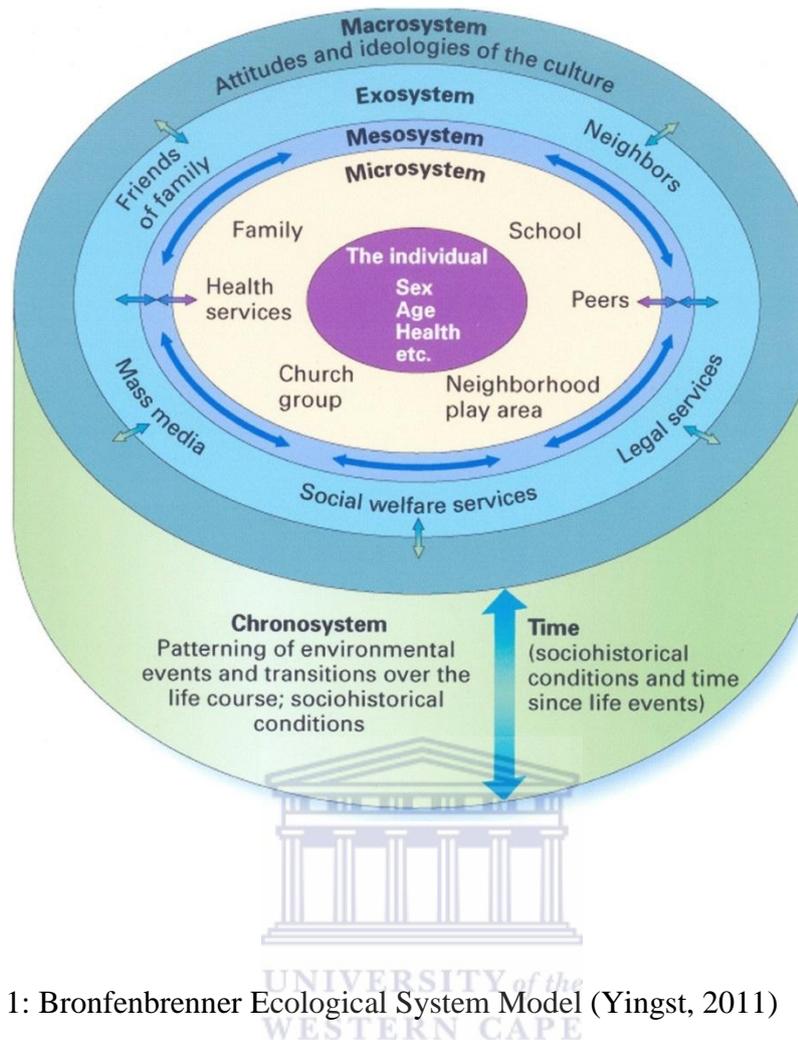


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner Ecological System Model (Yingst, 2011)

#### 2.4.1 Micro-system

The most inner system is the micro-system which impacts the individual directly, and can be the family, classroom and their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Harkonen (2007) indicates that the home is not the only micro-system; the school class can also be a micro-system for the child. He further states that the idea behind micro-systems is not geography but the person's degree of participation in any system at all; all environments in which the developing person is an active participant.

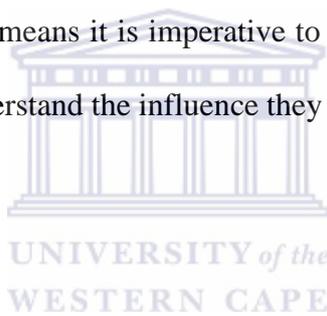
In microsystems such as the home, classroom and youth groups, children learn the expectations, rules of behaviour change, language and routines associated with the different micro-systems and the classroom and the home are the most common examples of childhood

micro-systems (Coleman, 2013). Children learn new life skills and how to get along with their peers by participating in group activities across different micro-systems (Coleman, 2013). It is in the microsystems where children observe how individuals interact and treat each other and learn to apply basic human values such as honesty and respect. Coleman (2013) indicates that within these immediate social systems children are educated and socialized as they interact with and learn from peers and adults. Other micro-systems important to children include after- school programs, religious institutions and youth organizations (Coleman, 2013). Coleman (2013) is of the opinion that children's development and education are supported best when there are frequent and strong linkages among their micro-systems.

Shaffer (2009) emphasizes that the interactions between any two individuals in a child's micro-system is likely to affect them. At this level relationships have an impact both away from the child and toward the child; for example the child's parents may affect his beliefs and behaviour and the child may affect the behaviour and beliefs of the parent (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). Bennet (2008) argues that family is one of the most influential contextual affordances and indicates that educational and career background of family members may serve to predict educational and vocational goals through vicarious learning experiences (Bennett, 2008). She further argues that having family role models with higher educational achievement may provide vicarious learning experiences for individuals and be predictive of higher self-efficacy and in turn higher educational and vocational goals (Bennet, 2008). There are some unsupportive links in the micro-system such as peers and friends that devalue academics. Steinberg, Dornbusch and Brown (1992) are of the opinion that these peers will sometimes undermine the scholastic achievement of the learner despite the efforts and encouragement by the parents and teachers. Although these bi-directional influences are strongest in the micro-

system, interactions at outer levels can still impact the inner structures (Paquette & Ryan, 2009).

Applying it to this research study, learners interact in their micro-systems daily. They learn academic content, life skills, language and demeanour at school; it is also in the classroom where their aspirations and goals are formed or crushed. Teachers play a crucial role in transferring knowledge to learners; their teaching techniques, skills and their demeanour ultimately influences how learners receive the knowledge. Learners also interact with their peers at school and are influenced both positively and negatively by them; these peers either function as their confidence-boosters or quite the opposite. The home is mostly where the learners' values, faith and morals are instilled; it is also where their aspirations are formed, shaped or broken. This therefore means it is imperative to comprehend the micro-systems of these learners when trying to understand the influence they have on their decision-making.



#### 2.4.2 Meso-system

The meso-system which focuses on the connections between two or more systems such as the home, playmate settings and school forms the second immediate layer (Krishnan, 2010). The meso-system is the interaction between the micro-systems and according to Bronfenbrenner (1979) this step requires one to look further than the single setting. Furthermore the meso-system refers to the number and quality of linkages between children's micro-systems (Coleman, 2013). An example of this is the interaction between the child's teacher and his parents. To further explain this, Krishnan (2010) states that what happens in a micro-system such as the home in which the child lives can influence what happens in the school or playground; what happens in a school or playground can influence interactions at home.

Bronfenbrenner believes that in this system development is likely optimized by strong, supportive links between the micro-systems (Shaffer, 2009). The example Shaffer (2009)

uses is that of youngsters who have established secure and harmonious relationships with their parents; he argues that these youngsters are more likely to be socially competent and more accepted by peers and are able to enjoy supportive friendships in childhood and adolescence. A parent's and teacher's involvement in the child's education, if mutual, will result in meso-system functioning (Krishnan, 2010). Shaffer (2008) places emphasis on the importance of how much parents value scholastic activities that children get from school. They are of the opinion that a child's ability to master their school work is not solely dependent on the teachers' ability to teach and the quality of the school, but also dependent on the parent's involvement and interaction with the school as well as the value they place on the child's academics.

Sincero (2012) is of the opinion that a child's experience may be related to their parent's experience; for example if a child is neglected by his parents he may have low chance of developing a positive attitude towards his teachers, this child may feel awkward around his peers which may resort to the withdrawal from them. Krishnan (2010) indicates that the connection between larger structures such as the church or community can also be expected to have distal process at work because they help the family to provide the necessary support a child needs; for example, counselling services available to the family in times of need can influence the function of the meso-system.

The meso-system is functioning when parents and teachers collaborate in sending children consistent messages about their behaviour and also making an effort to collaborate in reinforcing similar learning experiences in the classroom and at home (Coleman, 2013). Parents, teachers and other school personnel should collaborate in assessing the physical, cognitive and social needs of children and that schools should collaborate with community agencies to provide children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs (Coleman, 2013).

As explained above, the meso-system is the interaction between the micro-systems. In relation to the study, this speaks to parent involvement which is seen as a strong predictor of academic success. An example of a successful functioning of a meso-system is when the school and the home collaborate. It is therefore important to understand the functioning of the learner's meso-system.

### 2.4.3 Exo-system

The larger social system in which the child does not function directly is the exo-system (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). Exo-systems that are commonly known to affect the development of the child are their parents' workplace, which may positively or negatively impact his system, family social networks and neighbourhood community contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). An example is a parent's work schedule's influence on the development of the child where a parent cannot get time off to attend a parent-teacher meeting; the parent will have limited interaction with the teachers (Krishnan, 2010).

To ensure a conducive functioning of the exo-system for the developing child, school administrators as well as teacher and parent groups should work together to plan and implement policies that ensure that children receive quality education (Coleman, 2013). School boards should develop educational budgets and policies that take into account the lives of diverse families. Coleman (2013) also argues that communities should support the wellbeing of children through social, health, sanitation, recreation and protective services; this also includes ongoing cultural and artistic events that enrich human lives and reinforce a sense of community identity.

As explained above, the exo-system is the larger system of which the learner does not directly function in, but is affected by. In relation to this study, as mentioned above parent involvement is imperative for learner success; however there are barriers to parent involvement such as a complex work schedule of the learner's parent. To achieve parent involvement, the barriers to it need to be comprehended, to comprehend them it is imperative to understand the learner's exo-system.

#### 2.4.4 Macro-system

The macro-system is the farthest layer in the child's environment; it is this layer that comprises of cultural values, customs and laws (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). This is the ideological system that shapes the broad social context and culture in which the other systems exist and the child develops (Andrews, 2012). Bronfenbrenner (2005) describes the macro-system as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture"; each culture establishes values and beliefs that govern the priorities of all the previously noted ecological systems (Coleman, 2013). Krishnan (2010) states that the macro-system setting is the actual culture of an individual; the cultural contexts involve the socio-economic status of the person and or his family, his ethnicity or race and living in a still developing or a third world country. Krishnan (2010) is of the opinion that being born into a poor family makes a person work harder. An example of this is if it is the belief of the culture that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. This in turn, affects the structures in which the parents function. Andrews (2012) suggests that it may be the macro-system that places an emphasis on merit and achievement resulting to the child feeling pressured to achieve.

In relation to this study it is the macro-system that can assist us comprehend the basis from which the learner's aspirations are formed and shaped. As stated above the macro-system is their customs, laws and their cultural context which includes their socio-economic status, their ethnicity or race and whether they are living in a developing country or not.

#### 2.4.5 Chrono-system

Chrono-system is an individual's passage through time as well as their position through history (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The chrono-system encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment that the person lives in; changes such as that of a family structure, socio-economic status or employment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These are changes in the individual or the environment that occurs over time and influences the direction the development takes (Shaffer, 2008).

This system includes the transitions and shifts in one's life span; a classic example of this is how divorce as a major life transition may affect not only the couple's relationship but also their children's behaviour (Sincero, 2012). Shaffer (2008) is of the opinion that the impact the environment has on the child's development is also dependent on another chronological variable; the age of the child. Hetherington and Clingermpel (1992) argue that even though divorce is very difficult for children of all ages, adolescents are less likely than younger children to experience the strong blow of self-blame of the divorce. Hughes (2005) is of the opinion that divorce is one of the major causes of single parenting. Ginther and Pollack (2003) argues that family structure is related to educational attainment; individuals from two-parent homes complete, on average more years of schooling and are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college and complete college as compared to peers raised in single-parent families. Coleman (2013) documents that Bronfenbrenner added this social system to

acknowledge that like physical ecologies, human ecologies change over time; more precisely in every generation there are events and people that alter the course of history. He states just like new technology influences the way we behave and work, new educational research reshapes the way children are taught in the classroom (Coleman, 2013).

In relation to this study, it is important to understand a learner's chrono-system because of the impact it may have on the learner's aspirations. It is stipulated above that this system speaks of how changes in family structure, socio-economic status or even employment can influence the individual. The latter may also change over time due to various factors. This study is looking closely at family structure; single parenting in particular and it is also looking at the socio-economic status of these parents and how this ultimately influences the learner. Therefore understanding the chrono-system becomes important.



## **2.5 Conclusion**

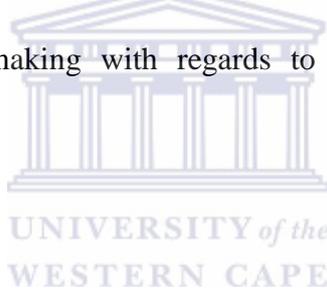
This chapter discussed Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in depth. It provided the reader with the origin of the theory as well as a few of the scholars that influenced. The micro, meso-, macro-, exo and chrono-systems were individually explored and explained in conjunction with explaining their relation to the study; providing the reader with a better understanding as to why this theory was most suitable for this study. The next chapter aims to explore research previously done around how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature on how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. It commences by discussing South Africa's education system and schools in disadvantaged communities to provide the reader with the context within which learners reside. Single parenting and parent involvement are discussed to provide an understanding of the home context of these learners. The aspirations of children raised in single parent homes, as well as those of their parents are discussed to provide a holistic view of the contexts the learner is embedded in that ultimately influence a learners' decision-making with regards to enrolling at a higher education institution.



#### 3.2 Education in disadvantaged schools

Former president, Thabo Mbeki advocated that South Africa consists of 'two nations' or 'two economies' (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2013), and described the 'first economy' as well integrated into the global economy which looks similar to a developed country economy. The 'second economy' he describes as being excluded from meaningful economic activity and characterized by high levels of poverty and unemployment. Fleisch (2008) utilizes this metaphor as he tries to illustrate the state of the South African education system as having two 'systems'. The well-functioning system consists of mainly historically white and Indian schools which are well resourced, serve middle-class children of all race groups and perform at a level similar to that of middle class children around the world (Fleisch, 2008). He further states that significant proportions of learners who make it into university

are produced by this well-functioning system. The much larger second system includes poorer children who are further disadvantaged through attending schools with dysfunctional management and class practices (Fleish, 2008).

The concept of 'disadvantaged' refers to denied access to the tools needed for self-sufficiency (Mayer, 2003). The unavailability of resources such as employment and capital are barriers to self-sufficiency; the inaccessibility or limited accessibility of resources such as adequate health facilities and good schools to a group or community; the complete disregard or under-appreciation of a group or community by the rest of society are also barriers to self-sufficiency (Mayer, 2003). Historically disadvantaged schools, located in poverty-stricken areas, mostly townships, rural and farm areas; characterised by poor socio-economic conditions and poor educational infrastructure and resources, often face enormous challenges relating to acquiring resources to ensure effective education delivery (Xaba & Malindi, 2010). Furthermore these schools are characterised by their unkempt premises, rundown buildings, damaged and adequate furniture, substandard toilet and sanitation facilities and physical danger areas (Kamper, 2008). Schools in disadvantaged areas have distinctive features and they confront challenges that the education system was not designed to handle (Hess, 2007).

### 3.2.1 Distinctive features of schools in disadvantaged communities

The elements that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2012) takes into account when categorizing disadvantaged schools or low-performing schools are learner outcomes (grades, qualification levels and growth improvement); physical and human capital (finances, facilities, staff and the school leadership), learner intake characteristics (socio-economic, migrant, specific groups, language barriers and special needs); school context (violence); geographic areas or regions and historical or traditional issues such as supporting specific ethnic groups are considered as disadvantaged.

Distinctive features of schools in disadvantaged areas according to Lupton (2004) are that learners that go to these schools have additional learning needs and need additional learning support and resources. A school having a large proportion of disadvantaged learners can have adverse effects on the processes of the schools resulting in specific education challenges (OECD, 2012) which result in low performance affecting the education system as a whole. Learning needs of the lowest attaining learners are difficult to meet even when there is additional learning support that is provided because it generates additional demands on the mainstream staff (Lupton, 2004).

Unity, Osagiobare and Edith (2013) argue that many children raised in poverty enter school a step behind their well-off peers therefore the cognitive stimulation parents ought to provide in the early childhood years is crucial. They further argue that although effects of poverty are not automatic and or fixed, they often set in motion a vicious cycle of low expectations. Disadvantaged schools need to stimulate a supportive climate and environment for learning because learners at these schools are at risk of difficult environments for learning therefore positive teacher-learner and peer relationships need to be prioritized (OECD, 2012). Effective learning strategies that are tailor-made to suit the learner constituency at these schools need to be utilized and these strategies need to be monitored and evaluated frequently as well as ensuring a culture of high expectations and success is constantly made relevant (OECD, 2012). Mitchell (2004) is of the opinion that some previously disadvantaged schools continue to decline due to how the school moves further away from a learning environment to attempting to survive on less resources exposing the learners to greater disadvantage.

Material poverty is also a feature mentioned by Lupton (2004). Enormous challenges are faced by previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa; relating to resource attainment to ensure effective education delivery (Xaba & Malindi, 2010). From the schools Lupton (2004) interviewed, adjustments had to be made to deal with material poverty. She further states that

a significant amount of resources went into ensuring poverty did not interfere with the core curriculum especially since none of the schools expected financial contributions from parents and pupils for equipment and materials. Township and rural schools are not conducive environments for learners and resources are inadequate and unequally distributed therefore the culture of teaching and learning may decline (Sedibe, 2011). Colclough, Samarrai, Rose, and Tembo (2003) assert that the availability of adequate learning materials is an extremely important condition for the achievement of good quality education. Disadvantaged schools not only have to adjust to material poverty of their learner intake and context but also that of their own (OECD, 2012).

Another feature of these schools is their distinctive emotional climate (Lupton, 2004). Unity, et al. (2013) is of the opinion that children raised in poverty rarely choose to behave differently, but they are faced daily with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront. Lupton (2004) found that from the schools she studied, they had an emotionally-charged environment. She states that the learners were anxious, vulnerable, unhappy and traumatized a lot more than learners whose parents were more affluent in advantaged schools. The OECD (2012) is of the opinion that each disadvantaged school is unique in the circumstances it confronts, the way it is challenged and its capacity for improvement and transformation. Most classrooms in previously disadvantaged schools are over-crowded and have underqualified teachers (Sedibe, 2011).

#### 3.2.1.1 Learner outcomes

High poverty schools receive the lowest grades and these schools usually have learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Henkel, 2015). He further documents that learners who come from poor circumstances often make academic growth each year, however they often begin school behind their more affluent peers and have more obstacles to overcome. Lupton (2004) documents that there is a close relationship between poverty and attainment,

such that the more socially disadvantaged the community served by a school, the more likely it is that the school will produce low learner outcomes. Patton (2014) is of the opinion that children who grow up in poverty may perform less well because they have parents who are more stressed, less able to afford education activities and resources and less well-placed to assist them with their school work. White (2009) argues that it is imperative for educators to challenge assumptions and beliefs about structural causes of poverty. He states that how we think, feel and communicate about poverty makes a difference in how learners feel about themselves and their community.

#### 3.2.1.2 Physical and human capital

Disadvantaged schools have high rates of teachers leaving their schools which affect the schools negatively as its human capital decreases (Borman & Dowling, 2008). According to Ladd (2010) the most dominant factor predicting teachers leaving their schools is their perception of school leadership. He states that teachers who view their school's leader positively are less likely to plan to leave the school. Teachers who leave high poverty schools are not fleeing their learners but rather the poor working conditions (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Kamper (2008) documents that some of the most serious poverty related problems low income schools face are centred on physical capital which is school resources, school facilities and the school finances.

#### 3.2.1.3 Learner intake characteristics

Disadvantaged schools are predominantly located in disadvantaged communities therefore retrieve their intake from there (Lupton, 2004). He states that schools that have high level intakes from high poverty areas usually have learners that have additional learning needs. The OECD (2012) documents that disadvantage and immigrant status are closely linked; they document that immigrants are often employed in low paying jobs and have limited borrowing

opportunities therefore have fewer housing choices. Immigrant learners often attend the same schools and these schools are often socio-economically deprived (OECD, 2012). These learners arrive at these schools and they have to overcome barriers such as language.

### 3.2.2 Educators at schools in disadvantaged communities

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2005) documents that in developing countries there is always a need to deal with the rapid expansion of access to education by means of getting substantially more teachers; this is often achieved by lowering the minimum requirements for teachers to join the profession . Poorly-resourced schools have teachers with poor qualifications while better-resourced schools are able to attract good quality teachers with higher qualifications (Visser, Juan & Feza, 2015). Teachers play a central role in determining the quality of education received by learners (UNESCO, 2005). High quality teachers that are measured by the interaction of the average years of teacher experience and the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees have a positive effect on learner test scores; however high poverty schools do not have the same benefit because of their undersupply of well-educated experienced teachers (Borg, Borg & Stranahan, 2012). The most consistently salient factors in predicting college decision making are those related to academic preparation (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004).

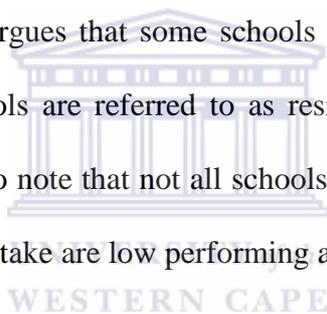
Louie (2007) state that there are a number of reasons as to why learners do not enrol into college and that schools are often criticized for not preparing learners for the transition into college. According to Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein and Hurd (2009) learners must be academically prepared for college by grade 12. They further state that the opportunities to academically prepare for college as a learner's progress through high school is narrow; therefore if learners do not start with college preparation courses in grade 9, they will be less likely to enrol in college. The availability of guidance counsellors and college

preparation activities is essential to the success of the learners in making their way to college (Rooney, 2008).

Learners who do not have family members, who attended college, often look towards the school as their main support (Temple, 2009). They also state that teachers, guidance counsellors and administrators need to motivate learners to complete college applications and financial aid forms. In addition to all obstacles learners may face at school and at home, learners are expected to complete a number of other steps alone for college, such as taking college entrance exams, searching for colleges, applying for financial aid, and submitting college applications. (Tierney et al., 2009). Tierney, et al. (2009) further argues that learners only become proactive about the latter in their senior year; they suggest that these should be considered in early years of high school and then only utilise the final year to make decisions. The expectations held by the teachers and administrators of the school in conjunction with academic preparedness can influence a learner's choice to enrol into college (Louie, 2007). Educators who talk and support the idea of going to college create an expectation for learners to go to college after high school (Kosine, 2007). Most educators support the notion that the expectations teachers hold for their learners' performance will ultimately affect the learners' performance in the classroom and educational aspirations (Kosine, 2007). Kosine (2007) documents that in a national survey conducted by Markow, Fauth and Gravitch (2001), they found that high-income learners were more likely than low-income learners to believe that their teachers and parents expect excellent work from them. The leaders at the schools are usually the drivers of effective initiatives (OECD, 2012).

OECD (2012) is of the opinion that principals need to set high expectations for all learners and teachers to succeed. It is difficult for schools in disadvantaged communities to achieve a high quality education particularly because of their context and the day to day challenges they face. However low quality is not an inevitable consequence of high levels of disadvantage,

but it is more likely even where good management is in place (Lupton, 2004). Numerous studies in Britain and abroad have demonstrated that a disadvantaged context affects practice with staff in high poverty schools due to how the staffs are constantly engaged in daily ‘firefighting’, dealing with crises that arise in order to maintain an ordered learning environment resulting to minimal time, space and energy for reflection and improvement (Lupton, 2005). The OECD (2012) is furthermore of the opinion that schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged learners are at greater risk of suffering from social and economic problems that can hinder learning. It is the latter that results to higher levels of unemployment and lower income in their communities and families of the learners; resulting in communities having high crime rates, more health problems and higher proportions of single parents. Mitchell (2004) argues that some schools have managed to achieve success against the odds and these schools are referred to as resilient schools. The OECD (2012) emphasizes that it is imperative to note that not all schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods or with a disadvantaged learner intake are low performing and offer a poor education.



Rooney (2008) documents that making it to college for these learners is not just about themselves; in a number of instances it represented an intergenerational accomplishment. He states that learners whose parents instilled the expectation for them to go to college were likely to go to college; therefore going to college is a way of accomplishing for their parents. Adolescents from single parent families report lower parental educational expectations and less monitoring of school work and are less likely to attain more than a high school education (Baharudin, Hong, Lim & Zulkeyfly, 2010).

### 3.3 Single parenting

Parenting quality is affected by income and family structure (Berger, 2007). Children from low- income and single-parent households are exposed to substandard parenting because they tend to receive parenting that is of lower quality than that received by children in higher income, two-parent households (Berger, 2007). Individual parents have different parenting strengths and preferences with regards to parenting practices; therefore parents may excel or lack in different parenting domains.

Time and resource constraints may lead parents to decrease their investment in some parenting- related activities (Berger, 2007). Berger (2007) argues that the more time a parent spends working, the less time they are able to devote to parenting. He does however, also argue that parents working may bring children increased resources in their homes. Spencer (2004) is of the opinion that adverse educational outcomes are associated with material disadvantage. Learners from intact families have a consistent advantage over those from single-parent families (Heard, 2007). Single parents may face increased stress associated with having sole responsibility for both working and parenting (Berger, 2007). He further states that working parents, particularly single mothers may have limited time and energy to commit to good parenting. Family structure may have both direct and indirect effects on parenting behaviours through three mechanisms namely; financial resources, the amount of time caregivers are able to devote to parenting and willingness of caregivers to invest in their children (Berger, 2007).

Spencer (2004) states that single parent households are more common in disadvantaged groups and that one of the predictive factors of economic mobility in America is family structure. Wilcox (2014) states that children from low-income households from both single-parent households and two-parent households' families are more likely to succeed if they come from a community with numerous two-parent households. Single-mother families have

limited financial resources available to cover children's education, child care and health care costs (Mather, 2010). The most common explanation for family structure differences in education outcome is socio-economic status or economic deprivation (Wu, Schimele, Hou, Ouelle, 2012). Randy and Carr (2009) document that low wages among single parents in America is very much a common phenomenon; they state that in 2009, 39% of employed single mothers were in low-wage employment. Musick and Meier (2010) stipulate that the lack of college enrolment in learners raised by single mothers can be attributed to low income. Elliot, Sherraden, Johnson, Johnson, Peterson (2007) stipulates that young people, especially minority-income children perceive attending college as a genuinely desirable however rather elusive goal. He further stipulates that research has indicated that college expectations are more likely to change depending on children's social and economic circumstances.

Mather (2010) highlights that single parenting is not necessarily the disadvantage; however the socio-economic status of the single parent is the disadvantage for children. In a study he conducted in America he found that low-income single mothers are likely to be less educated and unemployed. It was discovered that three fifths of low-income single mothers have not attended college, compared with two-fifths of single mothers in higher-income families. This study also established that low-income single mothers are more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their higher-income counterparts. Mather (2010) is of the opinion that the combination of these characteristics puts lower-income single mother families at high risk of negative outcomes compared to their higher-income counterparts. Acker-Ball (2007) asserts that a learner's background and family manifest themselves and are embedded in the learner's expectations about college.

Children from fragile families are less likely to enrol into college and complete their chosen course (Wu et al. 2012). A reason offered by Temple (2009) as to why learners do not enrol

into higher education institutions is lack of motivation. If learners do not get the strong support and encouragement that is necessary for them from their parents, they may not develop long term goals or a clear idea about the importance of education (Brown, 2004). Heard (2007) indicates that there is a relationship between family structure and education expectations and furthermore states that youth from fragile families, whom he defines as single-parent, step parent, cohabitation parent and non-conventional living arrangements homes have lower expectations of attending college and much lower grades than those from intact families. According to Wu et al. (2012) the differences between family structures can be attributed to the differences in their household socio-economics, parental involvement and learner behaviour.

Brown (2004) is of the opinion that children from fragile families have lower school engagement than those in intact families and this is due to the low parent involvement in fragile families; which in turn influences the children's achievement- orientated behaviour. He further asserts that educational aspirations are positively influenced by parental encouragement. Musick and Meier (2010) are of the opinion that the lack of parental involvement by parents in single-parent households may affect children's school outcomes via reduced help with homework. Ramadikela (2012) stipulates that a parent's socio-economic status is seen as a major determinant of their level of involvement in their children's education.

### **3.4 Parental involvement**

Parental involvement is seen as an integration of the home and school (Patrikakou, 2008). National programs include parent involvement as focal points for learner success; teachers need to encourage parents to become more involved with their children's education (Ackerbball, 2007). Regardless of a child's socio-economic background, each child needs to have the

opportunity for sound educational experiences that enable them to realise their full potential (Laminack, 2000 cited in Nojaja, 2009). Parental involvement in a child's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraji-Blatchford, Taggart, 2004). Without parental support in education a child may experience great difficulty in his or her academic achievement and later on in life; therefore academic success for learners is related to higher levels of involvement by parents (Ramadikela, 2012). Padgett (2006) documents that parents have a great responsibility for the education of their children.

According to Peters, Seeds, Goldstein & Coleman (2008) research has found that single parents along with parents whom do not stay with their children are less likely to feel involved in their children's education. They further state that single parents are also less likely than others to say that they felt very confident in talking to teachers at their child's school. Parents who are involved develop greater appreciation of their role (Ramadikela, 2012). Anderson & Minke (2010) are of the opinion that parents make an initial decision to be involved in their children's education according to their beliefs such as role construction and sense of efficacy. Role-construction are the parents' ideas about what they should do in relation to their children's schooling and a parent's sense of efficacy is based on Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy which refers to the parent's beliefs that their involvement in their children's schooling will positively affect their children's learning and school success. Parents with high role-construction support a high level of involvement in their children's education (Anderson & Minke, 2008). They further state that parents with a high sense of efficacy for parent involvement believe that they can enact behaviours that will result in positive outcomes.

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) cited in Anderson & Minke (2010) are of the opinion that parents choose to be involved in activities in which they are skilled in such as a parent

volunteering as a speaker on career day. Parent choices may be constrained by employment demands such as job schedule, flexibility in taking time off; as well as family demands such as childcare and competing activities that limit a parent's amount of energy. They further argue that parents with work schedules that inhibit that from participating during school might choose to be involved at home instead; however their original model asserted that when role- construction and efficacy is high, parents will be involved regardless of the level of competing demands (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995 cited in Anderson & Minke, 2010).

Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein (2005) state that efforts to improve learner outcomes are more effective when the family is actively involved. Some parents state that they get discouraged from participation in school because the child feels embarrassed by them (Leon, 2004). He states that some parents mentioned that because they trust their older children more, they do not feel much of a need to be involved; therefore admitted to not making an effort to be very involved. Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2005) further argue that parental involvement is positively related to high school learners' achievement, time spent on homework, favourable attitudes toward school and it reduces levels of high school dropout. When parents are involved the learners report more effort, concentration and attention (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005).

An understanding of the purpose, goals and meanings of academic performance is created when parents get involved in their child's academic life and it also communicates expectations about involvement and provides strategies that learners can effectively use (Hill, Tyson & Bromell, 2009). Parents from a high socio-economic community have been found to create a more school supportive child-rearing environment (Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005); they function as role models for their children and are more inclined to follow their children's progress and to assist them with homework therefore having a positive impact on

their achievement. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) argue that family learning can provide a range of benefits for parents and children including improvements in reading, writing and numeracy as well as greater parental confidence in helping their child at home. Ramadikela (2012) is of the opinion that there are many benefits to parent involvement.

#### 3.4.1 Benefits of parental involvement

The benefits of parental involvement include higher marks, better scores in reading and mathematics and the reduction of special education placements and grade retention and lower dropouts (Ramadikela, 2012). He further states that it promotes positive attitude and behaviour; whilst increasing their attendance as well as influencing their cognitive and social development. When schools implement partnership programs to engage more parents, more parents become involved in useful ways and more learners benefit than just those whose families who become involved (Epstein, 2007).

Learners are more interested in learning and they experience higher perceived competence (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005). They further state that when parents show an interest in their child's education by getting involved, the learner adopts a mastery goal orientation to learning where they are more likely to seek challenging tasks which persist through academic challenges and experience satisfactions in their school work. When parents become involved with the child's reading activities, learners demonstrate greater self-efficacy as readers and become motivated to read and voluntarily participate in literacy activities (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). Patrikakou (2008) argues that parent involvement remains a strong predictor of academic achievement even for high school learners; therefore it is imperative to discredit the popular myth that a parents' influence over their child withers as they enter adolescence. She further asserts that quite often both parents and school personnel misinterpret the adolescents' desire for autonomy as a developmental barrier to family involvement; however studies have indicated that high school learners believe they can do

better at school if they know that their families are interested in their school work and expect them to succeed.

Parental involvement contributes to learner motivation and performance and can be enacted by almost all families across cultures, educational backgrounds and family socio-economic circumstances (Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel & Green, 2004). According to Pintrich (2004) a parent may offer many extrinsic and motivational factors but one important part is context and the manner in which the motivation is given and received. He further states that underlying self-efficacy must always be present because if a child believes they can do well, then they will do well.

Through parental involvement the importance of education is conveyed to the child (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). They go on to state that learners become motivated when they observe their parents take an active interest in school. When parents are involved it conveys the message that the parents are committed to the importance of a good education and their attempts to stay involved is proof of this commitment. Parents are not always able to be involved in their children's academics, they feel that the schools must inform them about their curricula as well as provide them with ways to assist their children (Patrikakou, 2008). A number of parents believe that parent involvement in their children's school would increase if they had more information and they understood their role in their child's education better.

#### 3.4.2 Schools involving parents

It is the duty of educators in middle level and high school to develop goal-linked partnership programs that reach all families whilst helping learners succeed (Epstein, 2007). She further states that educators at all levels are aware that successful learners have families who stay informed and involved in their children's education; although this is a known fact some

teachers still report that they only contact the family when learners are in trouble. According to Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy and Weiss (2007), to be successful in school and life, adolescents need trusting caring relationships. Some parents assume that as their children grow older, they require more autonomy and less adult guidance; as a result parents purposefully decrease their involvement in school-related activities (Simon, 2004). Kreider et al. (2007) states that although they desire autonomy, independence and time with their peers they continue to rely on the guidance from parents and other adults.

Epstein (2007) is of the opinion that all parents value education; however they feel that they need more information about adolescent development, middle level and high school programs and options, graduation requirements, college and career planning and community programs for adolescents. She further states that these mothers would like to assist their adolescents develop their talents, meet high school requirements and plan for the future. Various reasons contribute to the decline of school and parent partnerships over time (Simon, 2004). He further states that some parents may be reluctant to be involved in school-related activities because of the complex environment high school can be; the complicated curriculum inhibiting them from being involved as their child progresses through high school. The issue with the latter is that it is sometimes misconstrued as the parent being disinterested and unwilling or unable to support their learners. Simon (2004) argues that a number of factors may influence parents' lack of involvement in their adolescents' academic life such as conditions at home and at school.

Parents' wishes for more useful information and teachers' hope for successful learners require more effective partnership programs (Epstein, 2007). It is reported in national studies that many high school graduates lack reading skills necessary to perform well in a university setting (Kreider et al., 2007). They further state that when parents attend meetings at school that provide basic information about college entrance processes, financial aid, and course

placements the parents begin to imagine their children as college learners as a result feeling more comfortable in the school environment. The latter may also increase parents' familiarity with college preparation requirements and engage them in navigating the school and college application system and the youth whose parents possess these qualities are more likely to finish high school and attend college (Kreider et al., 2007).

According to Epstein (2007) family and community involvement plans and programs result in more parents from all backgrounds becoming involved with their adolescents in discussions and decisions about school and making plans for post-secondary education and training. Parents suggest that schools need to make them feel more welcomed; they need to consider their educational level, language, culture and their home situation; they need to take the parents' interests and needs into consideration when planning activities; recognize that even if parents cannot be present at school, helping their children at home is also a valuable contribution (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). They also emphasize that involvement programs work better when strategies respect the needs of the families it is aimed at. The attitudes and aspirations of parents and of children themselves predict later educational achievement (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). They state that international evidence suggests that parents with high aspirations are also more involved in their children's education.

### **3.5 Aspirations**

Aspirations are what a person hopes will happen in the future and an indicator of this could be a learner's desire to continue with education after matric (Gorard, See & Davies, 2012). A learner's aspirations can be influenced by factors outside of the learner's control or understanding (Acker-ball, 2007). He further states that factors that contribute to a learner's educational aspirations and ability to persist are often prevalent in their home environment. Schools play a crucial role in maintaining ambitions among their learners and the support

they provide becomes vital when a learner's family resources are limited (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). According to Kintrea, St Clair and Houston (2011) aspirations are both short-term and long-term and young people may aspire to be different things simultaneously. They go on to state that the full range of possibilities for educational outcomes and jobs are often hidden or unimagined, particularly when there is little experience in families of higher education and professional jobs. There is a definite need for young people to receive informed and detailed help in order for them to take pathways that are likely to lead to fulfilment of the longer term ambitions. Although there is compelling evidence of disadvantaged young people having low aspirations there is other research that conflicts this by highlighting their ambitious nature (Walliman, 2011).

Gutman and Akerman (2008) are of the opinion that socially disadvantaged groups such as teenage parents tend to have low aspirations for themselves and for their children. They state that parents from the latter groups also tend to have higher aspirations for their children. Aspirations are best formed in the early years of a child's life and involvement in positive activities may also provide important socialising experiences that encourage high aspirations (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). They further state that it is during this time that parents need to overcome barriers to high aspirations.

The barriers a child faces in their environment and through life experiences tend to cause a decline in their aspirations because of their mature response to growth, understanding of the world particularly of what is possible and the limitations imposed by previous choices and achievements (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Barriers to high aspirations may be attitudinal and practical. Chenoweth and Galliher (2004) argue that low self-esteem is a factor because a number of seniors see themselves as unable to fit into the college scene, or lacking in intelligence or adequate grades for acceptance and success. Communities with limited social networks contribute to the limited aspirations of disadvantaged young people (Cuthbert &

Hatch, 2009). Cuthbert and Hatch (2009) are of the opinion that parental influence in shaping the aspirations of young people is mediated by socio-economic status including their level of education and attitudes towards school.

Gorard, et al. (2012) state that an indicator of motivation may be a learner's belief that schooling is important for their future; and motivation itself is the reason why an individual makes a decision and their strength of purpose in carrying these decisions. They further state that attitude in this particular context is the learner's feelings about education and an indicator of this may be the learner's expression of liking or disliking school. Gutman and Akerman (2008) emphasize that attitude is very important; young people who believe they have the ability to achieve and also attribute their success to hard work as opposed to fate and luck tend to have higher aspirations than their peers. The knowledge, skills and dispositions learners learn prior to college admissions influence their behaviour, attitudes and aspirations (Acker-ball, 2007). Identified influences in the decision to pursue higher education include the learner's academic ability, their hopes and goals for themselves in the future and their expectations for the future (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004).

### 3.5.1 Parental aspirations for their children

Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) document that most researchers characterize parental expectations as realistic beliefs or judgements that parents have about their children's future achievement as reflected in their grades, highest level of schooling attained or college attendance; whereas parental aspirations refer to the desires, wishes or goals a learner's parents have formed regarding their children's future attainment. They further state that these aspirations reflect the value parents place on education and this is based on the parents' personal goals as well as community norms and its role in promoting professional and personal success.

Those who have parents that have high aspirations have better outcomes even when taking into account individual and family factors, they do however argue that this is not a universal effect particularly because there are some groups with high aspirations that do not lead to higher achievement (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Seaman, Turner, Hill, Stafford, Walker (2006) report, that in their study of parenting in a disadvantaged community, they found that parents had high aspirations for their children based on realistic assessments of their children's strengths. However the capacity to fulfil such hopes, especially educational ones, relied on knowledge and resources that many parents did not have.

Jacob (2010) states that although holding a universal goal of high standards for all is vital, education does not solely occur in the context of the school; therefore it is important to have an understanding of the beliefs held by parents, particularly to address the low percentage of learners obtaining a college degree. To measure parent aspirations researchers inquire about the parent's 'wants' and 'hopes' for their children (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Jacob (2010) is of the opinion that socio-economic status is a significant predictor of parents' educational aspirations and expectations for their children. She further states that the parents who are of lower socio-economic status as well as parents who have completed fewer schooling years expect their children to turn out the same as them. Hill & Taylor (2004) argue that factors such as socio-economic status and ethnicity are associated with achievement outcomes. They further argue that ethnic minority and learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are at an increased risk for lower academic performance resulting to fewer schooling years completed and have lower career aspirations. A parent's beliefs play an important role for parental aspirations and expectations in conjunction with their actions toward preparing their child for college (Jacob, 2010).

Rooney (2008) is of the opinion that parents and/or grandparents are the primary influence for learners in the development of an aspiration to attend college. Jacob (2010) argues that the

degree to which parents believe intelligence can be altered may impact parental aspirations and expectations for their children. Wentzel (1998) cited in Jacob (2010) hypothesize that parents that view intelligence as a stable state and an unchangeable trait, may hold low aspirations for their children, resulting to them taking on the view of it being hopeless to have high education goals for their children because achievement is limited by IQ.

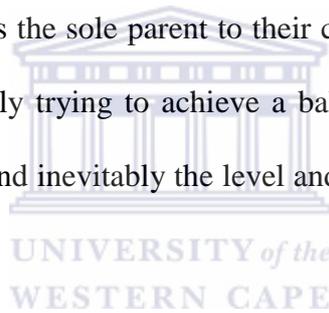
Family factors have been identified as influences in the decision to enrol in higher education which includes family as a resource provider, family members as role models and family as a source of encouragement for higher education (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). They further state that parents' education and expectations have emerged as major factors in the college and decision-making process. Jacob (2010) is of the opinion that if a parent does not expect their child to go to college, they are less likely to encourage their child to work harder on their coursework and prepare for college entrance exams as well as being part of the financial planning aspect.

### 3.5.2 Single parents' aspirations for their children

Amato (2000) cited in Ricciuti, (2004) is of the opinion that the majority of single parents are female and that they generally tend to have a low socio-economic status, younger, less educated and more likely to experience racial discrimination than those in two-parent families. The opinions of family and friends in relation to how children are brought up affects mother's aspirations to find work (Vella, 2007). In a study cited by Gingerbread (2012), they state that a number of parents said they wanted to work in order to provide a positive role model for their children as well as for society. Single parents felt strongly that they wanted to show their children the value of being employed as well as to show the rest of the world that single parents do have a work ethic (Gingerbread, 2012). Research is indicative of single parents having a tendency to be less supportive of their children's schooling through

supervision and monitoring and having less expectations of their children's school achievement.

Biblarz & Raftery (1999) cited in Ricciuti, (2004) state that no adverse effects of single parenthood on children's years of schooling completed once maternal employment and occupational status was taken into place; this conclusion was reached using data from four large nation surveys covering a 30-year period. What is suggested by these findings is that single parents have limited economic and social resources which may be part of the reason children from such families do not do so well than those from two-parent families (Ricciuti, 2004). When Gingerbread (2012) reviewed the employment aspirations of single parents they found that these parents consistently expressed their employment aspirations in relations to how it fit with their caring role as the sole parent to their children. They further documented that single parents were ultimately trying to achieve a balance they were comfortable with between working and parenting and inevitably the level and type of work they felt they could aspire to.



Ricciuti (2004) argues that there are further variations of single-parent families because no adverse cognitive or schooling effects were found of single-parenthood even without controls for economic resources. He emphasises that it remains unclear whether single-parenthood experiences should be perceived as a general threat to children's development and schooling apart from the influence of variables such as low levels of family income and parent education. Studies therefore need to focus on the possible interactions between single parenthood and other family risk factors such as living in poverty or having limited educational resources; therefore probable effects of single parenthood may vary depending on other family or household characteristics.

### 3.5.3 Children from single parent households' aspirations

Garg, Melanson and Levin (2007) state that adolescents from single-parent families report lower educational aspirations than those from two-parent families and have more of a negative attitude towards school. Mau and Biko (2004) cited in Garg et al. (2007) state that educational and occupational aspirations of high school learners are one of the most significant predictors of eventual education and vocational attainment. There is a significant linkage between parental expectation and a child's academic achievement (Baharudin, et al., 2010). They further argue that parent's educational aspirations play a critical role in how adolescents come to view school as well as their occupational future. Teachman and Paasch (2002) in Garg et al, (2007) are of the opinion that those with fewer resources may see university as beyond their reach regardless of their abilities resulting to a reduction in their ambition; whereas adolescents who come from wealthier families are more likely to see post-secondary education as an achievable goal. Yan and Lin (2005) emphasize that children from high aspiration families tend to be more successful regardless of socio-economic backgrounds. They further state that in a parent's eyes a prospective education qualification is the key to greater opportunities such as further education, scholarships and better jobs. Parents generally believe that children with good education have the ability to elevate the family's quality of life; Baharudin, et al. (2010) argues that this belief could lead mothers to set higher educational aspirations for their adolescent children.

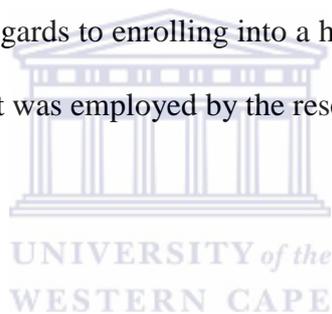
Garg et al., (2007) argue that other studies have indicated that some single-parent families adjust and compensate for their lack of material and financial resources by becoming more involved with their children's education. Children that display love and care, have parents who set limits in household behaviour, encourage the uptake of challenges and are available for help in academic and personal affairs (Gonzalez- Dehass, Willems & Holbein, 2005). Spera (2006) is of the opinion that a parent's behaviour is shaped by their goals and

expectations; parenting goals are a set of principles about what to aim for and what to avoid when raising children. Having academically-orientated peers help with academic achievement and aspirations; children from single-parent families have been found to be more likely to depend on peers for companionship and care than those from two-parent families (Garg et al, 2007). Previous research does suggest that parent academic involvement may improve school achievement through its impact on school behaviour problems such as aggression and social problems and it may affect career aspirations directly or indirectly through its influence on school achievement (Hill et al., 2009).

Finn (2006) argues that learners gain education educational aspirations, cultural and social capital from their counsellors, teachers, parents and community members. Temple (2009) is of the opinion that education can provide an opportunity for individuals to better themselves individually, educationally and socio-economically. In Temple's (2009) opinion, providing learners with enough knowledge about college does not guarantee a learner will enrol into a higher education institution due to the various factors they take into consideration when contemplating post-high school education. Access to higher education is shaped by various elements namely learner's academic achievement, family background and high school culture and competitiveness (Perna, 2006). There are a number of obstacles that learners are faced with particularly related to socio-economic status which hinder the enrolment into the college process (Louie, 2007). The stronger the link between the goal to enrol into a higher education institution and complete the chosen course and other valued goals such as social mobility and professional employment, the greater the likelihood of the intent to attend and complete college.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented literature on how single-parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. It also provided the reader with the opportunity to engage with literature written about South Africa's education system and schools in disadvantaged communities to provide the context that these learners are studying in. Single-parenting and parent involvement was discussed providing the reader with a broader knowledge of the home context of these learners and how it affects their decision to study further than high school. The aspirations of children raised in single-parent homes as well as those of their parents were discussed, providing the reader with a holistic idea of the contexts the learner is embedded in and the factors that ultimately influence the learners' decision-making with regards to enrolling into a higher education institution. In the next chapter the methodology that was employed by the researcher will be discussed.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

This study was directed by the following research question “How does single parenting in a disadvantaged community influence a learner’s decision to enrol at a higher education institution?” This current chapter gives a full detail on the methods employed during the execution of this study. The chapter begins with a discussion on the research design and the reasons for utilising a qualitative method, followed by a description of the participants, the sampling method used, the procedures that were followed during data collection, the particulars of the interview schedule, the methods used to analyse the qualitative data, ethical considerations, and procedures employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the results.

#### 4.2 Methodology

Methodology refers to ways of obtaining, organising and analysing data (Polit & Hungler, 2004). Methodology is furthermore a coherent group of methods that complement one another and have the ability to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question (Henning, 2004). Design, setting, sampling, methodological limitations and data collection and analysis in a study all form part of methodology (Burns & Grove, 2003).

#### 4.3 Research Setting

The research took place in the Eastern Cape, in a town called Grahamstown. According to Lemon (2004) Grahamstown is relatively small in size making it possible to view the whole city at once from the Settlers Monument. Grahamstown functions as an educational and cultural centre relying heavily on its university, Rhodes University and schools for employment. The town is experiencing population growth without parallel economic growth,

with ensuing unemployment and widespread poverty which is common to many small and medium sized towns in the Eastern Cape (Lemon, 2004). A few private schools and well-resourced desegregated state schools exist side by side with a majority of poorly resourced state schools; the latter are mainly township schools that are not desegregated and continue to be attended by exclusively Black learners (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

Hendricks (2011) asserts that the size of the Eastern Cape and its historic infrastructural backlogs and the degree of the inequality that is within the province makes it more intricate to attain equitable education. Public schools are divided into 5 Quintiles, with Quintile 5 schools being the best located schools in terms of parental finances and infrastructure. Both School A and B are Quintile 3 schools because of the abject poverty of their learners and their community. Quintile 1-3 schools are no fee paying schools and receive more funding and a feeding scheme allocation. School A is situated in Lavender Valley, an area where primarily Coloured people reside; a large number of Black isiXhosa speakers residing in this area, are able to speak and understand Afrikaans. School A started as a school that was attended by predominantly Coloured learners, however as the years went by a large number of Black, isiXhosa speakers enrolled at the school. School B is situated in Extension 7, where predominantly Black isiXhosa speakers reside. School B only has Black learners attending their school. Both schools draw their learners' mostly from local townships, informal settlements and neighbouring farms and small towns.

#### **4.4 Research approach**

A qualitative research approach, which allows the researcher to capture real-life experiences of the participants whilst taking their context into consideration, was utilised in this study (Cohen, Manian & Morrison, 2007). They further argue that by utilising this approach the researcher is able to see and comprehend the world from the participants' perspectives. This

research approach was chosen for its ability to allow and produce in-depth data collection (Babbie, 2013). The main concern of this approach is to understand social action in terms of its specific context as opposed to attempting to generalize to some theoretical population (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). An advantage of qualitative methods in exploratory research is the use of open-ended questions and probing which gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses (Mack et al., 2005). The open-ended questions utilised for this research also allowed for opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery in the lives of the research participants (De Vos et al., 2005).

#### **4.5 Research design**

A combination of an exploratory and descriptive research design was employed. An exploratory research design is utilised when little is known about a phenomenon or event (Salkind, 2010) or when relatively little is written about it (Neuman, 2003). Grove, Burns & Gray (2013) state that researchers that utilise an exploratory and descriptive research design identify a specific lack of knowledge that can be addressed only through seeking the viewpoints of the people most affected. Salkind (2010) indicates that a descriptive research design attempts to describe a group of people or an event or products and situations. Salkind (2010) further states that it is one of the first steps in understanding social problems and issues; it describes who is experiencing the problem, how widespread the problem is and how long the problem has existed.

#### **4.6 Population and sampling**

This segment describes the population of study as well as the sampling method utilized in this research study.

##### **4.6.1 Population**

A large population of individuals that are a well-defined collection of individuals with similar characteristics with which the research problem is concerned is a population (De Vos et al., 2011) from which a sample is selected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Grade 12 learners, their parents, Life Orientation educators and the principals from two senior secondary schools in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape formed the population of this study. Participants in a qualitative study should be individuals who have experience and are able to relate to the phenomenon the researcher wishes to explore (Creswell, 2007). School A had 107 grade 12 learners in total and School B had 67 grade 12 learners in total. School A had 10 Life Orientation teachers in total and school B had 3 Life Orientation teachers in total; each school had one Life Orientation for their Grade 12 classes. Both schools had one principal each.

#### 4.6.2 Sampling

A sample is a subset of the population and sampling is the process of selecting participants for a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Naoum (2007) asserts that samples are always smaller than the population and should always be representative of the population. Purposive sampling, where the researcher is seeking participants who possess certain qualities and traits (Koerber & McMichael, 2008) was utilised as sampling strategy for this study. This type of sampling allowed for a deliberate choosing of participants that was representative of their population for their particular investigation (Greenstein, 2003) and which can shed light on the research problem (Creswell, 2007).

When utilising purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants in the research context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The purposive sample for this study was drawn according to the following selection criteria:

- Schools to be selected had to be a quintile 3 school in a disadvantaged community, catering for disadvantaged learners.

- Learners had to be in grade 12 and enrolled at the two selected schools in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape. A further criterion was that learners had to be brought up by single parents. These participants were chosen with the assumption that they are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being investigated and studied and could therefore provide rich data (Denscombe, 2010).
- Parents were selected on the basis that, their child had to have met the above criteria. A further prerequisite was that their child had to have taken part in a focus group discussion of this particular study.
- The Life Orientation educators for grade 12 learners at both schools were selected to partake. Both schools had two Life Orientation educators. Life Orientation is a compulsory subject to be taken by all learners (Van Deventer, 2009) and one of the content areas in Life Orientation to be covered is ‘orientation to the world of work’ (Panday, 2007) which is to equip learners with the ability to make informed decisions about studying further and their career choices.
- Both schools principals were included in the study as effective principals are responsible for establishing a school-wide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students (Wallace Foundation, 2013). The Wallace Foundation (2013) also document that having high expectations for all learners is pivotal for closing the achievement gap between advantaged and the disadvantaged.

#### **4.7 Data collection**

Data collection is the acquisition of knowledge about a particular subject through collection of information, in a systematic way (Hox & Boeije, 2005), from either a primary or secondary source, whether it is people, objects or phenomena including the setting in which they occur (Chaleunvong, 2011). Hox and Boeije (2005) argue that collecting information

from primary sources means retrieving raw data from the participants themselves through the use of questionnaires, interviews or discussions. In this study primary sources were utilised because semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather thick first hand data from participants. The researcher and the participants directly engaged face-to-face which created an environment for the participants to provide their responses without any restrictions. Maynard (1994) argue that the researcher and the participants should have a reciprocal and non-hierarchical relationship; the researcher made sure of this and it resulted in the retrieval of thick data from the participants.

#### 4.7.1 Research methods and instruments

Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes were used as methods of data collection in this study.

##### 4.7.1.1 Focus group discussions

Morgan (1997) cited in Perecman and Curran (2006) defines focus group discussions as a technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Focus group discussions are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern on the cultural groups or subgroups represented (Mack et al., 2005). Participants in a focus group are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relates to the topic of the focus group (de Vos et al., 2011). Furthermore the researcher creates a tolerant environment in the focus group that encourages participation to share perceptions, points of view and experiences without pressuring participants (de Vos et al., 2011). The main advantage of focus group discussions is the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time; the latter is however based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct focus groups (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Careful planning with respect to participants, the

environment and questions to be asked is crucial to conducting effective focus groups discussions (de Vos et al, 2011). A discussion guide was created which comprised of eleven open-ended questions.

#### *4.7.1.2 Semi-structured interviews*

When utilising the qualitative research approach the researcher is able to have face-to-face interaction with the respondents thus gaining in-depth insight into the phenomenon (Maree, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were conducted where the researcher asked predetermined questions that were pursued in a conversational style of interview (O’Leary, 2004). Babbie & Mouton (2004) indicate that interviews are frequently used for exploratory studies because they lead to insight and comprehension rather than the collection of detailed, accurate and replicable data. Gill et al. (2008) describe them as having key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allowing the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail; this is also referred to as probing. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of their ability to allow in-depth data collection (Babbie, 2013).

Even though semi-structured interviews are flexible they do require rigorous preparation (Laforest, 2009). Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle (2010) assert that semi-structured interviews are carefully planned before being carried out; therefore the development of an interview guide. Mathers, Fox & Hunn (2002) are of the opinion that although the questions are predetermined they allow the interviewee flexibility. A semi-structured interview guide for parents, teachers and principals were created which consisted of 11 open ended question for parents and 13 questions for teachers and principals.

#### *4.7.1.3 Field notes*

During the semi-structured interviews the researcher took notes of the responses and observations made. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) indicates that observational data may

be of use for recording non-verbal behaviour whilst the interviews are being conducted. Observation entails watching the behaviour such as the facial expressions as well as body language shown by the participants in order to collect specific information. Nieuwenhuis (2007) asserts that observing participants during interviews adds to the understanding of the phenomenon being studied. According to Mack et al. (2005) a researcher may document observations about the interview content, the participant and the context. They further state that it is wise to take back-up notes in case the recording device malfunctions.

During the focus group discussions the researcher had an assistant facilitator who took down notes whilst she facilitated the discussions. De Vos et al. (2011) argue that the purpose of this is so that what the researcher and assistant facilitator see, hear, experience and think in the course of collecting or reflecting on the data obtained during the study, is documented. After the discussions the researcher would write down all notes she felt she needed to make records of; thereafter the researcher and the research assistant discussed the session and compared their notes. According to De Vos et al. (2011) after a focus group discussion session both parties can then discuss their notes and have a debriefing session.

#### 4.7.2 Pilot study

The researcher formally approached the Eastern Cape Department of Education to ask for permission to approach the schools. Permission was also granted from the school principals. Prior to the formal data collection a pilot study was conducted which is a methodological preface to a larger study that is used to determine the feasibility of a study (Foster, 2013). Bryman and Bell (2003) are of the opinion that it tests logistics whilst gathering information prior to the larger study in order to improve the interview guide quality and the efficiency of conducting research. Participants used in the pilot did not form part of the bigger study.

A pilot study should be conducted with participants that have similar characteristics as those that will participate in the actual study (Turner, 2010). The participants of the pilot study were purposively selected. A focus group was conducted with grade 12 learners at one of the schools; these learners had to be raised by single parents, two parents of these learners were interviewed and one grade 12 teacher was interviewed. According to Kvale (2007) a pilot study assists the research in determining if there are flaws, limitations or other weakness within the interview design; therefore allowing the researcher to make necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study.

After the pilot study the researcher modified questions so that they are more refined for the actual study. The semi structured interview guide for teachers was not altered as it was clear and yielded intended data. In the semi structured interview guide for parents a few questions were altered and removed because they yielded very similar answers to others and some were added where gaps were identified. Only one question was altered in the focus group discussion guide because it became apparent that it was presumptuous. The pilot study assisted the researcher with the refinement of research questions that were utilised in the larger study (Turner, 2010).

#### 4.7.3 Data collection

The focus group discussion guide was administered with learners that were selected to take part in the focus group discussions. There were two semi-structured interview guides; one to interview teachers and principals and the second one to interview parents who met the sampling criteria. Creswell (2007) is of the opinion that the location of the interview should be as natural and comfortable as possible for the participant. Focus group discussions took place in one of the classrooms. The parents of the learners were interviewed in their

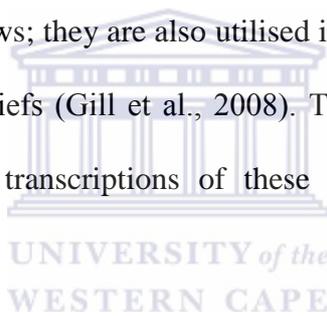
respective homes. The principals were interviewed in their respective offices and the teachers in their classrooms.

#### *4.7.3.1 Focus group discussions*

Two focus group discussions were conducted at both schools. Babbie & Mouton (2004) are of the opinion that a researcher should try to have between three and five groups because more groups seldom provide new insights. They further state that a focus group should have enough participants so that the focus group does not fall flat if some members were to become silent. All four focus groups had eight participants in them.

At the schools the participants that met the criteria to take part in the focus group were purposively selected. The researcher explained what the study was about and provided learners with the necessary consent forms to take to their parents to sign, ensuring that they consent to them taking part in the study (See Appendix C). On the day of the focus groups the learners' consent and assent was obtained; they all submitted their consent forms. Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they would like to participate or not (Mack et al, 2005). Before the discussion began, the researcher read and explained the information sheet (See Appendix B) to the participants which alluded to the nature of the study, what will be asked of the participants, confidentiality, risks, benefits of the study, voluntary participation and also dealt with any queries that they had. When all participants submitted their consent forms and had received all the information they needed pertaining to the study, they signed a focus group confidentiality binding form (See Appendix E). The latter form was read to the participants and it was explained that nothing discussed in their focus group discussion could be discussed outside of that class.

A focus group discussion has one researcher whom is the moderator and leads the discussion by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions and a second researcher whom was the note-taker; these discussions are usually audiotaped (Mack et al., 2005). The researcher had a research assistant at all focus group discussions that could take notes; all of the focus group discussions were audiotaped. Before the focus group discussion commenced, the moderator asked the participants for permission to audiotape the discussions and then proceeded to give them the focus group confidentiality binding form that they had to sign acknowledging that they give consent to take part of the focus group and to be audiotaped (See Appendix E). During the focus group discussions the researcher posed questions to the participants and they responded in no particular order, generating rich data. Focus groups are utilised to generate collective views; they are also utilised in generating rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Gill et al., 2008). The focus group discussions lasted between 30 - 50 minutes and transcriptions of these discussions took place after the discussions were held.



#### *4.7.3.2 Semi-structured interviews*

Semi structured interviews are designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic (Mack, et al., 2005). After completion of the focus group discussions, the researcher went home with the learners in order to interview their parents. The purpose of the research was explained to the parents through the discussion of the Information Sheet (See Appendix B). The researcher needs to create an environment of openness and trust; an environment where the participant is able to express themselves authentically (Kelly, 2006). The parents consented to being interviewed in their home.

Whether a participant volunteered or not, social research should never cause any harm to them (Babbie & Mouton, 2004); as result the researcher was always careful with the way questions were asked, particularly those that may have been interpreted as sensitive. Every

researcher should be ethically sound and treat participants with respect and dignity (Neuman, 2006). The researcher answered any questions the parents had and then proceeded to provide them with the consent form to sign (See Appendix D). Using the interview guide the researcher had compiled, she interviewed the parents which lasted about 40 minutes. Nine of the ten parents agreed to be audiotaped, the researcher took notes during all interviews and all recordings were transcribed verbatim.

At the beginning of all the interviews the researcher read and explained the information sheet (See Appendix B). The researcher answered any questions the participants may have had and then proceeded to give them the consent form to sign (See Appendix D). Using the interview guide the researcher interviewed the teachers and principals in their respective offices and classrooms, during their preferred times. Gill et al., (2008) is of the opinion that participants should be asked questions they can easily answer and then followed by more difficult or sensitive questions. The researcher ensured that this was the case because it assists with putting participants at ease and it helps build their confidence and rapport which subsequently generates rich data (Gill et al., 2008).

The researcher's interview techniques are motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic (Mack et al., 2005). When the researcher wanted to know more about something in particular she probed which is useful when a researcher would like more depth without biasing later answers (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). The interviews with the principal and the teachers lasted 50 minutes, the researcher wrote down notes during all the interviews; and they were all transcribed verbatim.

#### **4.8 Data analysis**

According to Mouton (2003) breaking up of data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships is what data analysis entails. The researcher transcribed the interviews

verbatim to enable content analysis. The researcher is Xhosa-speaking and speaks English as well, some of the interviews were in Xhosa and so they were translated into English. The transcribed data was analysed utilising Tech's eight steps of data analysis as proposed by De Vos et al. (2004):

- 1) All tape recordings were listened to by the researcher. All transcripts were read by the researcher to get a sense of them as a whole and then ideas were jotted down as they came to mind.
- 2) The researcher then selected one interview at a time. Whilst going through each interview, she asked herself about the underlying meaning of the information and then proceeded to write the thoughts and ideas that came to mind in the margin.
- 3) After having completed the above step with a number of transcripts, the researcher listed the identified topics and grouped similar topics into major topics, unique topics and leftovers. This process was then repeated with all the transcripts and themes that emerged were then clustered into 'Themes', 'Sub-themes' and 'Categories'.
- 4) The topics were abbreviated, coded and written next to the appropriate segments of the text whilst checking of new ideas emerged. Codes were then allocated to similar topics. This exercise was then repeated with all the transcripts by coding all the topics.
- 5) The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the topics and converted them into categories. The aim was to reduce the total list of categories by grouping topics together that relate to each other. Lines drawn between the categories indicated interrelationship of categories.
- 6) A final decision was then made on the abbreviation of each category and the codes were arranged alphabetically.

- 7) A preliminary analysis of data belonging to each category was done by assembling categories in one place. The data in each category was grouped together (De Vos et al., 2005).
- 8) Data was checked to see if re-coding was necessary and the process of analysis was then finalised.

#### **4.9 Data verification and trustworthiness**

According to Morse et al. (2002) the process of checking, confirming, making sure and being certain is termed verification. Verification is a strategy used most often by qualitative researchers working within a naturalistic tradition to demonstrate the rigor of their work (Ballinger, 2008). She further states that verification is the product of checking of one or more aspects of the research process to ensure that they are true representations of what actually occurred; this often occurs once raw data has been gathered.

Morse et al. (2002) argue that it is verification strategies that help the researcher identify when to continue, stop or modify the research process in order to achieve reliability and validity and ensure rigour. They further state that the first strategy is methodological coherence; it ensures that there is congruence between the research question and the components of the method. The second one is the appropriateness of the sample; the sample should consist of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic. To ensure that the participants were most representative and knowledgeable about the phenomena being researched, the researcher employed the purposive sampling method, which ensures that the researcher selects people who are knowledgeable about the experience of the topic under discussion. According to Morse et al. (2002) the collecting and analysing of data concurrently forms a mutual interaction between what is known and what needs to be known; this is the third strategy. The literature review clearly states what is known about this

topic; the researcher formulated a semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussion guide to find out what is unknown. The fourth aspect is thinking theoretically; Morse et al. (2002) argue that ideas emerging from data reconfirmed in new data give rise to new ideas that in turn must be verified in data already collected. The researcher went back to the participants to ensure that their responses were interpreted correctly.

#### 4.9.1 Trustworthiness

Lincoln & Guba (1985) posit that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluate its worth. Bertram (2010) argues that when a reader is attempting to ascertain if the findings of a qualitative study reflect real lived experiences of the experiences or not, the reader will employ strategies to ensure trustworthiness. According to Williams & Morrow (2009) the integrity of the data and the balance between subjectivity and reflexivity and clear communication of findings are all necessary for trustworthiness to be achieved. In qualitative research trustworthiness is determined by credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Kumar, 2011). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) principles of trustworthiness were applied to ensure the validity of the study.

- **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the ability of the researcher to convince the reader about the findings of the research so that the reader could believe that what is claimed comes from the participants themselves (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Shento, 2004). Furthermore credibility refers to the accurate presentation of a particular context or event as described by the researcher giving assurance that the researcher's conclusions stems from the data (Kobus et al., 2009). To ensure credibility, the researcher utilised verbatim quotes in the discussion of the findings to provide the exact words as spoken by the respondents. The use of verbatim quotes also ensured that there was no bias from the side of the researcher. Audiotapes as well as field notes were used to ensure the effective capturing of data (Mack et al., 2005). Peer

examination included discussions of the research process and findings with other impartial colleagues who are knowledgeable about the qualitative methodologies (De Vos et al., 2005). In this study, the researcher provided her supervisor with her findings so that she could read them.

- **Dependability**

Trochim & Donelley (2007) indicate that dependability is associated with reliability; it is concerned with whether a researcher would obtain the same results if they could observe the same study again. Dependability is assured by the notion of triangulation and the making of persistent observations in the field which would inevitably lead to consistent results (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Sim & Sharp (1998) triangulation aims to enhance the process of empirical research by using multiple approaches; the strength of one will compensate for the weakness of the other therefore improving the quality of the data, particularly the reliability. They further state that a type of triangulation is 'methodological triangulation'; this is the use of more than one method of data collection to study a particular social phenomenon. To ensure this the researcher utilised semi-structured interviews, focus groups, field notes and observations as well as different participants.

- **Conformability**

Conformability can be seen as a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not the researcher's bias, motivation or interest (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). Conformability is the ability of the researcher to use reflexivity in identifying her own personal and social positioning and power issues in research (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004). The researcher tried at all times throughout the study not to show bias; this was particularly during the interviews and focus group discussions; the researcher refrained from asking leading questions. The audiotape played a crucial part during the transcription of data

because it allowed for the researcher to play it repeatedly while transcribing the raw data, which added to the accuracy of the findings. The use of the participant's verbatim responses to report findings, without adding or omitting anything assisted the researcher from being biased.

According to Pandey & Patnaik (2014) steps must be taken by the researcher to ensure that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants and participants rather than the preferences of the researcher. To achieve the latter, the researcher consulted the participants regarding information they provided and made certain that the data analysis and coding of the data had their intended meanings rather than the researcher's biased interpretations.

- **Transferability**

Shento (2004) asserts that the transferability of findings in the study is the researcher's ability to explain and provide a full and clear picture of the study so that the reader could make his or her own justification on situations similar to the phenomenon studied. A way to ensure transferability in qualitative data is thick description; the researcher collecting sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with sufficient detail and precision allowing for judgements about transferability to be made by the reader (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Transferability was ensured by qualitative research methods; namely semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions which provided a thick description of the participants' lived experience. The researcher also provided information about the setting and context of the participants so that the reader would have an idea of under what circumstances these lived experiences occurred.

#### **4.9.2 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a process that challenges the researcher to explicitly examine how his/her own research agenda and assumptions, subject locations, personal beliefs and motions enter into their research (Hsiung, 2008). The main objective of doing reflexivity in qualitative research is to acknowledge and interrogate the role of the researcher in research design, data collection, and analysis and knowledge production. Before the researcher went into the field, she started a journal that stated all her preconceived ideas about what she anticipated to find. This aspect was most valuable during the focus group discussions mainly because most of the learner's responses were not what the researcher was expecting; this made the researcher even more aware and cautious so that she did not fall into the trap of posing leading questions. In this same journal the researcher also reflected her feelings during the course of the data collection process. This process allowed for the researcher to be constantly aware of her preconceived ideas and what her feelings were and how she expected the participants to respond during the process so that she would not allow them to interfere with the process. The researcher also documented all frustrations she experienced; by writing them down she came up with solutions more efficiently so as to not impede the data collection process. This process was most helpful when one learner shared information that placed her mother in a very negative light. The researcher was aware of the emotions elicited by the learner's responses however she did not let that affect the interview she had with the learner's parent.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical procedures that should be followed by social science researchers is what governs education research and this is done because participants have to be respected as human beings (Cohen et al., 2011). Ethical procedures are put in place to protect participants from any harm whether it is physically, emotionally or psychologically (Salkind, 2012; Walliman, 2011;

Babbie, 2007; Shank & Brown, 2007; Brenner, 2006; Mouton, 2006). When a researcher conducts their research they have an obligation to their participants, an obligation to protect their rights to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. According to Heffernan (2005) the researcher needs to ensure that the participant understands the voluntary nature of their participation by informing them and being certain that they may withdraw from the study at any point.

- **Informed consent**

Grinnell & Unrau (2008) argue that giving people the opportunity to choose what shall or shall not happen is indicative of respect for others. Obtaining informed consent from participants implies that all possible or adequate information pertaining to the study such as the extent of the participant's involvement, the procedures to be followed to conduct this study, the disadvantages or dangers and advantages to which the participants may be exposed and the credibility of the researcher has been shared with the participants (Royse, 2004; Williams, Tutty & Grinnell, 1995 cited in De Vos et al., 2011). To ensure informed consent the researcher read and explained the information sheet (See Appendix B) and the consent form (See Appendix C & D) which covered all the above. The researcher subsequently answered any other questions the participants had before any of the interviews began.

- **Right to withdraw at any stage of the study and voluntary participation**

The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to. Their right to withdraw was explained to them before the interview commenced (Holloway, 2005). This right is clearly outlined in the consent form (See appendix C & D).

- **Voluntary participation**

It is imperative to emphasize the voluntary nature of taking part in interviews (Mack et al., 2005). Participants were informed that their taking part is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any point where they feel uneasy; this was also documented on the consent form

that they signed. Mack et al. (2005) argue that the researcher should emphasize that they would like for participants to respond to all questions as fully and honestly as possible, however only to the extent that they feel comfortable doing so. Neuman (2003) in De Vos et al. (2005) substantiates that nobody should be coerced into participating in a research project as their participation must always be voluntary.

- **Avoidance of harm**

According to Babbie (2007) ensuring that no harm is caused towards a participant is a fundamental ethical rule in research. He further states that before conducting a study the researcher needs to weigh the risks against the importance and possible benefits of the specific project (Babbie, 2007). When the researcher was filling in the information sheet (See Appendix B) she assessed her research for any risks and did not identify any; the researcher did however indicate that the parents may find sharing their experiences stressful and emotional and so if this was noted during an interview, those participants would have been offered a debriefing session. According to De Vos et al. (2011), harm to respondents in social sciences is commonly understood to be emotional; harm however physical harm cannot be ruled out completely.

- **Anonymity**

Participants have the right to anonymity as they are not obliged to give identification details in order to participate. According to Babbie & Mouton (2004) the clearest concern in the protection of the subjects' interest and wellbeing is the protection of their identity and anonymity is one technique to ensure that. Anonymity of the participants was guaranteed because they were not required to provide identifying details and their real names were not utilised during the interviews. In the focus group discussions, participants were assigned numbers and so if the researcher wanted to probe they used the number and if another

participant wanted to add to someone's comment they also used the numbers assigned to the other participants.

- **Confidentiality**

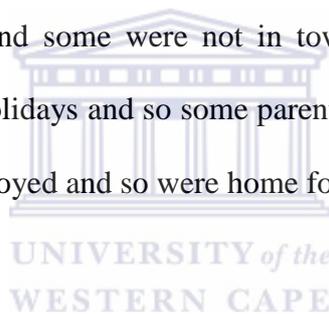
Confidentiality and anonymity are often confused; confidentiality is promising to keep a participant's responses from being utilised in another way either than what was stated to participants. (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). To ensure confidentiality the researcher can limit the people that have access to the data collected; the researcher did this by being the only person besides her supervisor who had access to the data. The researcher and her supervisor are the only people who have access to the laptop where the data is stored, this being the audiotapes and the transcribed data; the laptop is password protected and the transcribed data is stored and locked in a cupboard. The researcher explained to participants as to who would have access to the data. De Vos, et al. (2011) assert that confidentiality can be viewed as a continuation of privacy that refers to agreements between persons that limit other's access to private information. The researcher also explained that although they are promising to keep what occurs in the focus group confidential, they cannot guarantee that the other participants will not break confidentiality as suggested by Mack et al. (2005).

#### **4.11 Limitations of the study**

There were a few limitations in conducting this research

- The dates the researcher went to the schools were during assessment week, therefore learners were busy with tests and teachers were busy with reports. This made it difficult for the Life Orientation teachers and the Principals to fit the researcher in for interviews. It also made it difficult for the researcher to get her sample together all at the same time; however it all eventually worked out.

- There was a language barrier with the Afrikaans first language speaker parents. Most of these parents spoke English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. The researcher and her assistants were fluent in English and isiXhosa. The researcher did try to find a research assistant fluent in Afrikaans but to no avail. To overcome this problem the researcher ensured she had good probes so that the participants could answer effectively. Due to the fact that the parents spoke English, Afrikaans and Xhosa; the researcher used English and Xhosa interchangeably with an attempt to be clearer to the participants.
- The researcher had difficulty in finding parents that were available for interviews. Some parents work, therefore they arrive home late; some parents work out of town and some were not in town for the duration of the study. Fortunately it was holidays and so some parents came home for Easter and some parents were unemployed and so were home for most of the time.



#### **4.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter the methodology applied in conducting this research study was outlined. The study had a qualitative approach with an exploratory and descriptive design. A description and justification of the methods of data collection, the research setting and context, population and sampling, trustworthiness and ethics adhered to during this process, was provided. In the next chapter the results of the study, including the themes and sub-themes will be described.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The aim and subsequent objectives of this study were to explore and describe how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution as well as explore how residing in a low socio-economic status community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. To sufficiently meet the aim and subsequent objectives the researcher applied a qualitative research approach where the motivation for selection and application of said research approach was given in Chapter 4. Data was collected data by means of focus groups from learners, semi-structured interviews from their parents, Life Orientation teachers and principals.

In this chapter the themes and sub-themes as derived from data analysis as well as the relevant demographic data of the participants will be presented. The common practice in qualitative research where sufficient data, in the form of participants' remarks to "adequately and convincingly support the findings of the study" (Merriam, 2002:21), were followed and are presented here. Data is described according to themes and sub-themes which were agreed upon after consensus discussions with supervisor. The findings are contrasted and compared with existing literature control (Creswell, 1998).

## 5.2 Demographic information of participants

The demographic information presented in this chapter is based on participants who were recruited from two senior secondary schools in the Eastern Cape by means of purposive sampling. Table 5.1 summarises the demographic details of these participants.

Table 5.1: Demographic details of the participants

		School A	School B
<b>LEARNERS</b>		16	16
Race		Coloured	Black
Language		Afrikaans & English	isiXhosa & English
Age :	Younger than 18	9	8
	Older than 18	7	8
<b>TEACHERS</b>		1	1
Race		Coloured	Black
Gender		Female	Female
Language		Afrikaans & English	isiXhosa & English
<b>PRINCIPAL</b>		1	1
Race		White	Coloured
Gender		Female	Female
Language		Afrikaans & English	Afrikaans & English

### 5.2.1 Gender

The demographic data has also illustrated that the majority of the participants were female because female learners were more open to participating. Most of the learners made reference to a mother and only a few made references to a father; this is probably because there are more single mothers than there are single fathers in South Africa (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Parents were interviewed based on availability and only one of the parents who were

available for an interview was a father. All of the educators that were interviewed were female.

### 5.3 Presentation of the findings

To report on the findings, the researcher presents quotations from the interviews. The content of the quotations guides the reader towards the results inferred from the data and establishes the credibility of the themes, by ensuring that the illustrative quotations reflect the participants' meanings and feelings. The researcher utilised data collected from field notes and data derived through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher also utilized data from her reflective journal when she was engaging with the responses from the participants. The processes of data collection resulted in four themes supported by sub-themes; these are presented in Table 5.2.

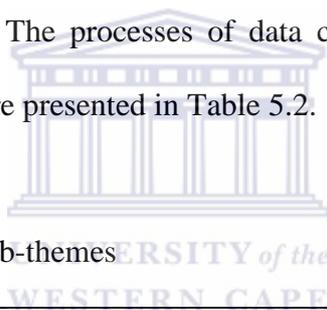


Table 5.2: Themes and sub-themes

Major theme	Sub-themes
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Single parenting In a disadvantaged community</p>	Relationship between a child and their single parent
	Single parents and their decision-making pertaining to their child
	Parent involvement in children's academic life and future plans
	Parent perceptions of education and the desire for their children to enrol at higher education institutions
	Parent aspirations for themselves and aspirations for their children
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Residing in a disadvantaged community</p>	The influence of the learner's socioeconomic on their academics
	How their community influences their goals

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 3:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Schools In disadvantaged communities</p>	Relationship between learners and their teachers
	The limited training teachers at schools in disadvantaged communities receive for their context
	Efforts made by teachers to involve parents in their children's academic life
	Transfer of knowledge to learners about higher education institutions
	The aspirations Life Orientation teachers and the principals have for their learners
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 4:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aspirations and goals of learners</p>	Learners' goals after matric and their intention to enrol at higher education institutions
	Reasoning behind goal selection and the influence finances had on them
	Aspirations the learners have and their aspirations to their teacher's knowledge

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### 5.3.1 Theme 1: Single parenting in a disadvantaged community

South Africa has a long history of children that do not reside with their biological parents as a result of poverty, labour migration, educational opportunities or cultural practices (Meintjies & Hall, 2013). Single parenting is associated with economic stress (Ward et al., 2015). They further state that poverty affects parenting in a number of ways, largely through increasing the stress of parenting. As documented in the White Paper on Families in South Africa (2012), more than 40% of all households in South Africa are headed by a single parent and the unemployment rate among urban single parents is high. It is further documented that single parents are overwhelmingly female and are between the ages of 25 and 34 (Holborn & Eddy, 2011).

The United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA) (2009) documents that the pattern of a number of single-parent homes being headed by females have implications for family poverty given that female-headed households have been shown to be generally disadvantaged in terms of access to vital socio-economic resources such as land, credit, education and health care. Ellis and Adams (2009) argue that the inequalities that afflict women in society are magnified among female-headed households. Table 5.2.1 encapsulates theme one and its sub-themes.

Table 5.2.1: Theme 1

Major Theme	Sub-themes
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 1:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Single parenting in a disadvantaged community</p>	Relationship between a child and their single parent
	Single parents and their decision-making pertaining to their child
	Parent involvement in children’s academic life and future plans
	Parent perceptions of education and the desire for their children to enrol at higher education institutions
	Parent aspirations for themselves and for their children

*5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: The relationship between the child and their parent*

As acknowledged by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model, human development is influenced by a range of systems that vary in proximity to the individual. This theory is useful in understanding how circumstances outside the family can affect the child-rearing within the family system. Parents are in very close proximity to their children; therefore have great influence on them. In Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory the micro-system is the inner-most system, which directly affects the individual such as family, the classroom or their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents play a pivotal role in socialization and identity formation of their children (Frigo et al., 2007). One of the parents stated that his relationship

with his child is that of siblings, he demonstrated an understanding of the impact his actions and demeanour has on his children:

*“The relationship I have with my child is that of siblings, I’m like his older brother. Ever since their mother passed away, I realised I have to ensure that they understand that we have to help each other with the chores. The transformation in household chores was very difficult however I did realise that I did not have to be bossy when addressing my children. It doesn’t help to be bossy instead it incites fear from the children and I didn’t want them to fear me. I stay with them here, I do everything with them. The reason I say we are like siblings is because we speak and are open to each other however things I feel he is not ready to hear or see I hide. When there are things I would like to do, I do not need to go do them in the streets, instead I make sure he understands and do them here at home rather. There have been situations where I have done things out there and my children then find out from the streets and it then hurts them, hence I think this approach is better. I understand that I have to be a shoulder for my children since they lost their mother, they only have me now. They will die my children no matter what. I take a lot of time observing my child, I don’t just assume he is cheeky I first asses what could possibly be the problem. I try to see if there is a pattern of behaviour and check when it started so that I understand that something happened in his life.” (Parent 4)*

In the micro-system, relationships that the child is in have an impact both away from the child and toward the child; for example the child’s parents may affect his beliefs and behaviour and the child may affect the behaviour and beliefs of the parent. Reciprocal socialization is a mutual process that accounts for both child and parent influencing each other and their own development (Sussman, Steinmetz & Peterson, 1999). They state that this reciprocity does not necessarily affect the child the same way it affects the parent because of the variability of an individual’s strength and the specific behaviour exchange.

The way the above parent describes his relationship with his children shows that he grasps that he is pivotal in the socialization and identity-formation of his children, therefore his

interaction and approach with them is very important. This parent explains how he understands that his behaviour affects his children. He has also demonstrated that his son's behaviour could affect him hence he is not quick to judge but instead takes time to assess what could be the cause of his behaviour change.

Furthermore parents have stated that they have a good relationship with their children which is open and understanding. Mulkey et al. (1992) and Kim (2004) in Barajas (2011) argue that factors such as the quality of parent and child relationships, parental expectations and family size are strong predictors of future academic success.

*“It’s good. We don’t fight, he is a good child, he goes to church and is still at school.” (Parent 7)*

*“We have a very good relationship. It’s an open one, a very open. He tells me everything.” (Parent 8)*

*“We are very close, we understand each other” (Parent 9)*

Bjarnason, Thornlindsson, Sigfusdottir and Welch (2005) are of the opinion that parent-child communication is a central aspect of both parental monitoring and parental support; and impaired communication is associated with internalizing and externalizing problems among children in general (Morena et al., 2009).

Arnasson and Arsaell (2011) found that the association between gender and impaired communication with both mothers and fathers increase with age. They further state that this association significantly varies between countries, indicating a cultural as well as a development process at work. This therefore means children in general have more difficulties talking to their parents as they grow older, but this tendency is significantly more pronounced

in some countries. One of the mothers finds it difficult to talk to her son about certain things because of the gender difference.

*“Our relationship is really good, we get along because I make time to listen to him. Although the fact that he is a boy makes it hard for him to talk to me about certain things...” (Parent 2)*

Another parent did indicate that she had an issue with her child due to peer pressure.

*“We get along very well, we have bonded a lot and we understand each other. There was a time when I struggled with him because he was affected by peer pressure a lot, but I sat him down and tried to make him see how he was sinking” (Parent, 5)*

One of the parents has a difficult relationship because of her inability to provide the things her daughter wants. Single parents are at a disadvantage because they are unable to share their responsibilities (Hall, Woolard, Lake & Smith, 2012); they have to support their family financially whilst living up to the demands of parenting and household chores. Hall et al. (2012) further state that this leaves single parents with less energy, increased economic hardship and parenting distress; making it more difficult for them to monitor, stimulate and care for their children.

*“You are asking me a difficult question that I did not expect. My relationship with my child is very difficult. Because I’m alone, being alone means there are a lot of things I cannot handle. Sometimes I cannot attend school functions. There is a lot man, in fact you are going to a very sensitive area, a painful area.” (Parent 1)*

During this interview in particular, the researcher experienced a wave of emotions because of the mother’s words, body language and despondent looking facial expression during her responses. The reflective journal allowed for the researcher to note her feelings so that she could stay aware of them, ensuring that the interview was not affected in any way. This

process also allowed for the researcher to remain sensitive, objective and genuine during this interview.

Kreider et al. (2007) is of the opinion to be successful in school and life, adolescents need trusting caring relationships. They further argue that although they desire autonomy, independence and time with their peers they continue to rely on the guidance from parents and other adults. The parent is unable to provide certain things and she attributes this to being a single parent. As a single parent there are things she cannot provide for her child and there are instances where she is unable to show up for her child and this has resulted in her having a difficult relationship with her daughter which is a rather sensitive area. In the next section, single parents and their decision-making pertaining to their child will be discussed.

#### *5.3.1.2 Sub- theme 1.2: Single parents and their decision-making pertaining to their child*

Single parents may face increased stress associated with having sole responsibility for both working and parenting (Berger, 2007). The influence a father has is both direct and indirect (Holborn & Eddy, 2011); the indirect influence includes support for the mother as well as influencing all major decisions regarding health, well-being and education of children. One of the parents finds it difficult that she wishes the child's father was still alive.

*“It not easy, it really isn't. Sometimes I wish her dad was still alive so he can help me. I feel with a father figure it would help a lot because men are more firm. As woman, children tend to not take you as seriously as they would a father figure. Children fear their dads and become really close with their mothers more than their dads” (Parent 6)*

A lot of the parents perceived the question as related to resources, therefore a number of them referred to the process of decision-making with regards to providing their children with money and resources. According to Berger (2007) in two-parent households, parents are more

likely to have great access to time and money as well as the greatest willingness to invest their resources in their children whereas in single-parent households the parent has higher levels of stress and fewer resources to invest in caregiving. Regardless of whether it is money or time, single parents have fewer resources to provide for their children than two parent households (Raley et al., 2005). Berger (2007) states that due to low income some parents may forgo a number of resources that may be of benefit to their children. He further states that parents vary in specific activities that they choose to limit; some may forgo outings and activities, some may invest in them and some may cut down on purchasing household resources affecting the home interior.

*“Sometimes there are things he wants and I cannot give him and so in that case I would ask him to please appreciate what I do have and what I am able to give him. When I make decisions and when he wants something I prioritize; I first check what is urgent and what can wait.” (Parent 5)*

A number of the parents are struggling financially and so when it comes to decisions about providing for their children they have to prioritize certain things and also make certain sacrifices. These parents are also open with their children about their finances.

*I don't have a lot of money, but I try my best to give him what he wants because I'm not educated, but I sacrifice the little that I have. I also make sure he understands the decisions I make so if he wants something and I can't give it to him I will explain why and then tell him I can next month. We understand each other and he understands my financial situation; unlike other children he is patient and understanding. You know what I'm grateful to God that even though I'm a single parent I have a house and I can buy myself groceries and I can send my child to school. God is on my side and he gives me strength to wake up in the morning and to work for my children.” (Parent 9)*

*“It's very complicated because I'm unemployed and I only get social grant of my two grandchildren. That means we all survive on R600 and something a month. Out of that money I need to buy food, clothing and school stuff. At times when as little as R100 is*

*left will consult them on what to do with it, and we have to make a choice between electricity, bread and other things and if we want it all it will mean we will get little of each. It's not easy but through everything God is my provider; he gives me everything for me and my children and grandchildren, without him we are nothing. I don't have much, I cannot give them everything they want but they are satisfied with the little I can give them. I tell them one is one day, the wheel will be rolling, but when that happens and I'm not there I want them to remember what I taught them, and this is what our mother stood for.” (Parent 10)*

Molher (2004) indicates that one of the benefits of single parenting is that there is no one to undermine your authority. She states that decision-making is a big responsibility whether you are married or single. She further states that when you are single you understand just how enormous your charge is and you take it very seriously because there is no one else around to defer to. Parents whom prefer to make decisions alone utilise the directive style and according to Daft and Marcic (2009) this decision making style is utilised by people who have structure and expect immediate results. They state that the directive decision maker takes charge and expects those “under” them, in this case the child to carry out their decisions immediately. Parents whom prefer to make decisions with the assistance from those around them utilise the analytic style. Daft and Marcic (2009) state that this type of decision maker prefers to gather and analyse large amounts of data before making a decision, although this may be time consuming. One of the parents prefers to take decisions alone, whilst others make use of the help around them.

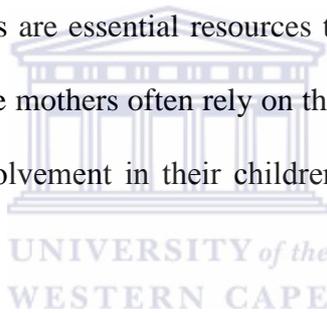
*“When I make the decisions I make them alone, I do not consult anyone.”(Parent 8)*

McCreary and Dancy (2004) are of the opinion that single mothers are more likely to rely on the help of their family members than single fathers. Battle and Coates (2004) state that woman have more support networks and are more open to seeking assistance from their

extended family networks than men. A number of the parents get assistance or guidance when making decisions pertaining to their child. Some of the parents will consult an elder they feel will best guide them. Some of the parents seek assistance from their older children.

*“...I, have to be certain it is the correct decision and that it will be the best decision I could have made. You know we are Xhosa and have our customs, so sometimes when I have to make a decision I consult my elders; as you can see I’m young so I will go to someone older than me and seek advice. I also have male friends that I can consult about certain things pertaining to my son, so I will ask them for their views and weigh them because as a person you do not just take any advice you get from people and then choose what I deem the best decision.” (Parent 2)*

According to Bassani (2008) the relationships and networks that women develop in their families and in their communities are essential resources that they can draw on. McCreary and Dancy (2004) state that single mothers often rely on the help from their family members. In the next section, parental involvement in their children’s academic life and their future plan will be discussed.



### *5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Parent involvement in their children’s academic life and future plans*

The meso-system, the second-most inner circle in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory, is characterised by the interaction between the child’s micro-systems such as the child’s family and school. A parent’s and teacher’s involvement in the child’s education, if mutual, will result in meso-system functioning (Krishnan, 2010). Without parental support in education a child may experience great difficulty in their academic achievement and later on in life; therefore academic success for learners is related to higher levels of involvement by parents (Ramadikela, 2012). Parent involvement in children’s education has been found to be a strong predictor of academic achievement and positive behaviour (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009).

Parental involvement in a child's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood (Sylva et al., 2004). In the White Paper on Families (2012) it is documented that there is a positive influence on academic performance when parents and other familial caregivers are involved in a meaningful way. They also state that learners who have family members that are actively involved are more likely to achieve higher grades to have better school attendance and to be better motivated.

*“A lot, I could say it was nice when they were still in grade 3 and 4, that is around the time his mother died. His mother used to help him with homework, she got them used to being helped with homework as a result when she passed on I had to step in. The subjects he is doing are complicated for me though. I can help him with general homework such as writing a story, having to read a novel or work that requires general knowledge. Learners are not too committed to reading novels; I try encouraging him to read. I sometimes read to him so that he is encouraged to read more because one day it will benefit him. I enjoy reading. I don't want to lie though the subjects are challenging because there have been situations where he has come back with homework I helped him with and it was incorrect.” (Parent 4)*

Anderson and Minke (2010) are of the opinion that parents make an initial decision to be involved in their child's education based on their beliefs about concepts such as role-construction and sense of efficacy. Role-construction is described as the parent's ideas about what they should do in relation to their children's schooling and a parent's sense of efficacy is explained in Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy; as the parent's beliefs that their involvement in their children's schooling will positively affect their children's learning and school success. Anderson and Minke (2010) argue that parents with high role-construction are very involved in their children's education.

*“I appreciate the school. I sometimes call the secretary to ask anything I need to know because she is very informed. Other parents do not care and then they blame the school*

*for because they don't make an effort. I don't see any issues with that school because a parent you need to make an effort and play your role as well. It's like a pot with three legs, the teacher, parent and child; these three components need to work together for the child's success.” (Parent 9)*

Research studies have indicated that socio-economic status is strongly correlated with a parents' educational ambition for their children (Chohan & Khan, 2010). They further state that interacting with a child and subsequently sharing their activities is affected by the level of parent's education and income; in families with low socio-economic status majority of the illiterate parents do not have understanding of the requirements of their children's education. Learners are supposed to complete their homework at home; their parents or other family members may be involved in the process of assisting or guiding the child (Chohan & Khan, 2010). They also state that they either assist the child with the assigned tasks by the teacher or they facilitate the child in relation to difficulties in syllabus which in turn has significant effects in learners' achievement. One of the parents stated that she does help her child with homework especially because she felt her English skills are better than his.

*“When my child has homework I help him and also check it because today's children are not fluent in English, we know more than them. I always make sure his work is perfect.” (Parent 9)*

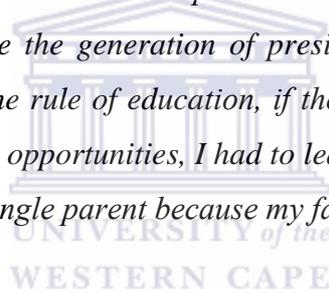
Holborn and Eddy (2011) state that it is common sense that children with parents who provide emotional and practical support such as assistance with homework, subject choices and later career guidance to be better at school and when entering the job market. Some parents assist their children where they feel they can. A number of the parents felt that they are unable to assist their child with their homework because they are uneducated.

*“She is much clever than me, I do not know anything even though I dropped out at standard 9 at school. I do help if there are activities that I do understand but a lot of*

*the time she does her own work because she enjoys studying. So there are activities where I feel I can help her with.” (Parent 1)*

The greatest barrier to parental involvement is illiteracy and some parents are discouraged to be involved in the education of their children because of their lack of knowledge (Mudzielwana, 2014). Even though literature is stating that some parents get discouraged to be involved, others still make the means to assist their children where they can. *Parent 10* is an example of a resilient and optimistic parent who even against her odds attempts to assist her child where she can.

*“I want to help her but I cannot because the things they are learning are not things I know. The homework they do these days is beyond me but sometimes they will ask me for meanings of words and then I will explain to them. I’m not doing it for me; I’m doing it for them. They are the generation of president, mayor, counsellor they can have it all if they stick to the rule of education, if they don’t have education they have nothing. We never had such opportunities, I had to leave school and go work to help my mother; my mother was a single parent because my father passed away...” (Parent 10)*



Some of the parents are unable to assist their child with homework because they do not live in the same town. Mudzielwana (2014) states that parents are unable to be involved in their child’s academic life for various reasons; some are unable to because of time constraints, others are unable to because they have no capacity to assist their children with reading activities and some parents work far from home and so are only able to come home once a month.

*“Uhm, I can’t now because I do not work here I work in the Northern, that’s one of the problems I have. It hurts me that I can’t, it really does. I can’t help him with his homework, I do sometimes tell him when he has homework that I can help him with he can call or text me; but it’s difficult for me now that I am far away from him. I left him in 2013.”(Parent 3)*

Teachers reported that parents are not that involved particularly because they do not understand the school work. They also attributed their lack of involvement to the fact that they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. One teachers did however state that some parents come to meetings because they perceive grade 12 to be of great importance. Chohan and Khan (2010) indicate that the interactions among parents and their children are influenced by the socio-economic and cultural factors of that particular society in which they survive in. They state that in a situation where the majority of the parents are illiterate and economically depressed the responsibilities of the school and the teacher increase.

*“Parents cannot be too involved because they are uneducated. They do come to meetings, particularly in grade 12 because of the importance of the grade. There is a guy from Gadra finishing school that invites parents and talks to them about their children’s future plans. Parents also come in for explanations of reports.”(Teacher 2)*

Disadvantaged parents tend to be less involved in their children’s schooling for a number of economic and social reasons therefore disadvantaged schools need to prioritize links with parents and communities and should also improve communication strategies to align schools and parental efforts (OECD, 2012). Even though literature states the latter, parents become involved regardless. Parents make means to be involved the best way they know how. Although they are aware they cannot assist their children with the content of their homework, they do still provide guidance and assistance utilising the skills and knowledge they do possess. Some provide definitions of words, some of them attend school meetings or call the school, some constantly ensure that their child has completed their homework and others will assist with content they feel comfortable with such as language literature. Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) are of the opinion that regardless of the economic disadvantage of parents they can participate in their child’s education by meeting with school personnel, attending

school events and participating in parent teacher organizations. Benefits will accumulate because parents communicating with teachers and other parents give the parent insight into how the school works and they facilitate the flow of information between the school and the home and inevitably promoting school related discussions with their children (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007).

One of the principals stated that it is the parents of the academically-performing that come to meetings. The other principal stated that there is a discrepancy between what the parents say they will do and what they actually do.

*“I had a parent meeting with the grade 12 classes and believe you me many of them did not turn up. Those 20 or 22 that passed with bachelors at the end of grade 11, they are the ones I have a mentor for; every one of them turned up with their parent. Dr Ashley Westaway is teaching the parents how to work with their child this year and how to be involved in their academics this year including applications. He is also doing this so that parents understand the difference between a pass and a quality pass.”*  
(Principal 1)

The learners were also asked about how involved their parents are in their academic life. A number of them said their parents are not involved mainly because they are unable to.

*“Firstly my mother is not involved in my academics. Everything I get at school I have to do on my own or I have to get help from people who are more knowledgeable so that they can lead me in the right path in my school work and get good grades. My mother is old school and is not into these modern things. She doesn’t know most of my school things and doesn’t even know most of my teachers; I normally tell her about them.”*  
(Participant 8, FGI)

A number of the learners feel rather supported by their parents.

*“Basically my mother is fully involved when it comes to my academics. She is the one that buys me school uniform and stationery. She is always there to ask if I am coping*

*with school work and she asks how the work is going. My mother always boosts me to higher level when it comes to my academics.”(Participant 1, FG 2)*

Some of the learners state that although their parents are unable to help them with the content they try in areas where they can such as providing definitions or with essays and reading.

*“My dad always encourages me to work hard especially when he sees me working late on assignments and other homework at night; he always tells me working hard at school will get me far. He helps me where he can but a lot of the time he can’t because of the content, but he can help with general things such as what a word means and literature.”(Participant 6, FG 3)*

*“My mother tries to be part of my academic life especially since I have a child. She sometime comes to school when there is a need. She has arthritis but still baby sits for me so that I am able to attend afternoon classes. She isn’t able to help me with school work because she stopped school in grade 2, but she does organise people to assist me with school work.”(Participant 4, FG 4)*

Park (2008) documents that single parents tend to be less involved in their children’s education as indicated by less supervision and monitoring of the child’s school work. They also document that the overall relationship between a child and their parent is likely to affect the child’s well-being and thus ultimately the education outcomes of the child. This study has made it evident that parents do want to be involved in their children’s academics however the form of their involvement and the level of their involvement vary due to a number of structural barriers. Single parents assist their children to the best of their abilities. Research has also found that single parents along with parents whom do not stay with their children are less likely to feel very involved in their children’s education (Peters et al., 2008).

Preston and Lester (2014) documents that parents living in situations of economic hardship, may not have the resources to meet their children’s needs. They further document that these harsh circumstances increase parental distress, which in turn has the ability to diminish a

parent's capability to constantly support their child whilst remaining involved in parenting. One of the learners stated her uncertainty about whether her mom cares or not because she does not involve herself in her academic life.

*I don't know if my parent cares or not, but a lot of the time she doesn't involve herself in my school work. My mother and I do not get along and so I stay with my cousins. My mother works and she gets paid, when I want something for school and ask her she complains and then I just stop asking her. A lot of the things I need for school I get from my grandparents. In terms of help with school work I have to find someone for myself to assist me with school work; my cousin went to school he went to Rhodes University and so he helps me with my school work. My mother makes no effort to assist me with school work. She even told me that she doubts that I will pass my matric" (Participant 5, FG 4)*

A number of studies have found that there is a link between the quality of a parent's relationship and outcomes for the child (Amato, 2005).

As part of parent involvement, parents were asked if they have any plans for their children post grade 12. The Minnesota Parent Center (2010) documents that parents can assist their children focus on what needs to happen so that they can have the adult life of their dreams. They further indicate that parents should help their children by giving them something to aim for; by assisting them with setting concrete goals either about university, technical college or career choices. One of the parents said she has big plans for her child, however she still feels that what he wants to do is still up to him. Another parent felt she cannot choose what her daughter wants to do because she may end up unhappy if she does something she does not want to do.

*"As a parent you cannot force your child, but you must rather be there for them and be supportive. I have saved money in a 32 day account for when he wants to start university. I also am a member of a few stokvels. He said when he finishes matric he*

*wants to work for 2 to 3 years and after that he wants to go to university, that's his plan.” (Parent 9)*

*“It is not my decision as to what she must do. I may tell her to become a nurse and meanwhile she wants to be a lawyer. Imagine if she does the nursing and then remains unhappy. She must decide what she wants to do after matric.” (Parent 10)*

Some of the parents did however make it clear that they want their children to go to university.

*“I want her to go to tertiary; in fact I'm going to ask her to apply now, in June. I don't know what she wants to do, but she knows what she wants to do.” (Parent 6)*

Another parent said she does not have any plans because money is a problem.

*“I don't have any plans at the moment, because I do not know what he is going to do after matric. I do not have any plans because money is a problem.” (Parent 7)*

According to Holborn and Eddy (2011) children with parents who provide emotional and practical support such as helping with homework, subject choices and career guidance are likely to perform better at school and when entering the job market. Some parents are neither permissive nor too restrictive; they resist imposing their behavioural restrictions on their children therefore allowing them to make their own decisions (Mueller, 2011). Learners were also asked if their parents had plans for them after grade 12. Some learners think their parents have plans for them but do not want to share them because they do not want to force them into doing anything.

*“My mother does have plans for me but she doesn't want to tell me. She wants me to do my own thing and she will support me a 100%. She doesn't want to force me into anything.” (Participant 3, FG 1)*

One of the learners feels his mother does not have plans but rather has a vision, and will support him in anything he would like to do.

*“I don’t think my mother has a plan for me but she has a vision. When I was in grade 11 she would always tell me she doesn’t want to die and lay on her stomach in her grave wondering what Jerome is doing. She says she doesn’t want to turn around in her grave. I don’t think she has a plan but she always tells me I must just always make sure I have a house.” (Participant 5, FG1)*

Another learner stated that she does not know if her mother has plans for her, she does not know if she even cares.

*“I would be lying if I would say she does care, she knows I don’t have another parent but she doesn’t make any effort for me to have anything. All I depend on is my grant of which it ends this year because I turn 18; which makes me uncertain about what will happen to me next year.” (Participant 5, FG4)*

Quite a number of learners state that their parents need for them to work next year to help with their home situations; however they would also love for them to study further.

*“My mom wants me to go work next year, however they would also like for me to go to university. Since my dad is not involved in my life she will support me in everything I want to be.” (Participant 6, FG 4)*

Some learners feel that their parents want them to study next year, no matter what because they do not want them to struggle like they did. One of the learners reported that his parent wants him to study however, not too far from home.

*“My father wants me to study because one day we spoke and he told me if I ever pass my matric he doesn’t care if he doesn’t have money, he will make a loan for me to study. I must not worry about my mother that isn’t involved.” (Participant 2, FG 4)*

*“My mother wants me to apply for a bursary and study at NMMU because it’s the nearest University that offers a B-tech in Medics.” (Participant 8, FG 2)*

*“My mother wants me to go to varsity, but what she wants to see is for me to have great job. She doesn’t want me to be unemployed like her; she doesn’t want me to struggle like she did.” (Participant 8, FG4)*

Parental characteristics such as educational level, income and parents’ aspirations for their children are variables said to influence schooling outcomes of South African learners (Anderson, 2003). Van der Berg (2008) is of the opinion that a parent’s education, particularly the mother, influences the support parents give to their children, improving the quality and success of education in the next generation. One of the learners says that her mother wants her to go to university because she went.

*“My mom wants me to go to university because she also went to university.”  
(Participant 7, FG3)*

South Africa has a staggeringly high unemployment rate; in 2009 the unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds in sub-Saharan Africa was 12% (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). One of the learners said their dad wants to send them to the military because of the unemployment rates in South Africa.

*“My father plans to send me straight to the military base straight after school because of the high unemployment rate in South Africa.” (Participant 6, FG2)*

After having assessed the parents’ plans for their children, it was only fitting to assess if they were aware of their children’s performance at school, strengths and weakness. The section for strengths and weaknesses was not just academic but it referred to the learner’s strengths and weaknesses inside and outside the classroom. A number of the parents knew how their children were doing at school particularly because they were responsible for fetching their children’s report. The amount of time single mothers spend at work in order to support their children causes the quality of child care to be compromised (Roman, 2011). The exo-system is the larger social system in which the child does not function directly, such as the child’s

mother's workplace (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). Policies and decisions that are at a wider level can indirectly impact the child; for example a parent's work schedule can influence the development of the child (Krishnan, 2010). He further states that in situations where a parent cannot get time off to attend a teacher-parent meeting it will mean the parent will have limited interaction with teachers causing the child to miss out on the reported benefits of parent involvement.

One of the parents was unable to collect her daughter's report because she went to work and so was unable to fetch the report at her daughter's school; she did however report that she knows she passed.

*"He is doing well particularly now that I can see he is determined to succeed this year. His determination is visible in this term's report." (Parent 5)*

A number of them also knew what their children's strengths and weaknesses were. One of the parents indicated that she had not seen her child's report because she does not live in town; she had however heard that her son had passed the term.

*"I can't say, although I have not seen his work, I heard that he passed. I arrived last night from the Northern Cape and so have not yet seen his report..." (Parent 2)*

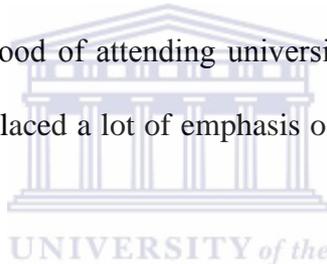
One of the parents felt it was difficult to state what his son is good at because he feels at this age they explore a lot of things and love a lot of things and frequently change them.

*"It's not easy to see what he is good at because at the age he is at he is involved in a lot, enjoys a lot and then soon after that loses interest and then you just don't know. He has tried out some sport, as for school I really am not sure. I know he loves drawing and counting, his maths marks are not too bad. He struggles with accounting, but I don't understand why is accounting marks would not be as good as his math mark because I imagined the two being closely related. I encourage him to speak up in class, answer questions and ask questions." (Parent 4)*

Parent perceptions on education and the desire for their children to enrol at higher education institutions will be discussed in the next section.

*5.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Parent perceptions of education and the desire for their children to enrol at higher education institutions*

Karkkainen et al. (2009) are of the opinion that parents' views of their children's education ability such as perception of the child's potential for education influences the children's views of their own achievement. Brown (2004) also asserts that parental involvement has an indirect effect on children's educational attainment through shaping their school engagement and educational aspirations. Prior research demonstrates that parental involvement is associated with children's likelihood of attending university (Sandefur, Meier & Campbell, 2006). A number of the parents placed a lot of emphasis on how far education can take their children.



*"I talk to him and make sure he understands it's difficult without education, proper education, you will go nowhere." (Parent 7)*

*"Yes I do. I did not go to university but I think going there will give you a better future. Even Mandela says education is important because it is because of education that he became president." (Parent 9)*

*I would like each and every child to fulfil their dreams and to go back to school and fulfil their dreams because if you do not have education then you are nothing in this world. (Parent 10)*

Van der Berg (2008) asserts that the demand for education depends on a number of things such as the financial and opportunity costs of education and its perceived benefits. A number of parents indicated that they would love for their child to study further than matric. The financial costs of schooling are often high, making it difficult for poor parents to afford

schooling for their children (Van der Berg, 2008). One of the parents has already put plans into motion with regards to finances.

*“Yes a lot! When I look at educated children I then have high hopes for my child. I really would love for her to go to university; however I do not afford paying for her. I would like her to go so she can get educated and educate others with any knowledge she can get at university.” (Parent 1)*

Riccuti (2004) states that single-mother families are more likely to be limited than two-parent families with regards to economic, social and parent resources.

*“Yes, she must go to tertiary, I’m part of a stokvel to ensure that I can use that money to pay for her tertiary fees. I try for her. Rhodes University helps us, I’m a cleaner at their residences and so my children get 75% off their tuition and so it’s all in her reach. My other daughter studied there and she is graduating this year. If she decides to go to another institution then she gets 25% discount. It’s not easy to get into Rhodes, I understand and so I would understand if she goes to another institution” (Parent 3)*

Parents were also asked what it is that they do to motivate their children to ensure that they do enrol into higher education institution. Children from poor neighbourhoods are often poorly motivated to do well at school; this may have much to do with a perception that education will not bring them its full benefits (Van der Berg, 2008). Socio-economic status is a significant predictor of a parent’s educational aspirations and expectations for their child (Jacob, 2010). She further states that the parents who are of lower socio-economic status as well as parents who have completed fewer schooling years expect their children to turn out the same as them. This is not always the case; one of the parents struggles financially but she still wants her child to go to university.

*“I haven’t done anything. Well I have looked for a job so I can be able to pay to get her through university; however it’s difficult to get a job. I really would like for her to go to university. Perhaps the government could help me and provide her with a bursary” (Parent 1)*

Parental involvement is believed to convey the significance of education to the child (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). They further state that learners become motivated when they observe their parents take an active interest in their academics. Parental involvement conveys commitment and the importance of a good education; and their attempts to stay involved in their child's academics is proof of this commitment. Some of the parents motivate them by getting involved in their academics. This includes sitting down and discussing their report and trying to make them understand the implications of their marks. Some of the parents use themselves since they went to university and others use their eldest children as examples.

*“I get involved with his school work and monitor his school books. I ensure he isn't too involved in social activities that are going to deter him from his books. Fortunately for him he has a role model here at home, his sister is a perfect example because she went applied to university and accepted. We sat down yesterday after getting his report and I congratulated him for passing and then we also spoke about the marks that I was not too happy about. I explained to him that those low marks are what is standing between you and getting into university. You are limiting your choices, so improve and work as hard as you can so you can have choices. I emphasized agriculture because it is what I would like him to apply for now in June.” (Parent 4)*

*“I encourage her and use her siblings as an example. I have 4 other children and they all went to university, she is the youngest and we are waiting on her. I tell her how important school is. When you are finished with school there is so much you can do.” (Parent 3)*

It is evident that some parents understand that the more involved they are in their children's academics, the greater the chances for their children's academic success. Pintrich (2004) is of the opinion that parents offering motivation to their children is very beneficial to their children, however the manner in which this motivation is given and received is very important. He states that an underlying self-efficacy must always be present; the learner must believe he/she can do well, and will. Children get motivation through being praised and

appreciated by their parents and this result to better performance (Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad, Khan & Hukamdad, 2010). In the next section parent aspirations for themselves and their aspirations for their children will be discussed.

#### *5.3.1.5 Sub-theme: 1.5 Parent aspirations for themselves and their aspirations for their children*

Kintrea, St Clair & Houston (2011) are of the opinion that parents play a key role in the formation of learners' aspirations. They state that there is a clear alignment between what the parents say they want for the young people and what the young people aspire to. Seaman et al. (2006) report that in their study of parenting in a disadvantaged community they found that parents had high aspirations for their children based on realistic assessments of their children's strengths. However the capacity to fulfil such hopes, especially educational ones relied on knowledge and resources that many parents did not have. Parental expectations are realistic beliefs or judgements that parents have about their children's future achievement as reflected in their grades, highest level of schooling attained or university attendance; whereas parental aspirations refers to the desires, wishes or goals a learner's parents have formed regarding their children's future attainment (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). They further state that these aspirations reflect the value parents place on education and this is based on the parent's personal goals as well as community norms and its role in promoting professional and personal success.

Parents were asked where they saw themselves in 10 years and where they saw their children in 10 years. Most of the parents have high aspirations for their children however it was difficult to say the same about their aspirations for themselves. A number of the parents are looking to be supported by their children.

*“I am old now; all I want is to enjoy my money. My children are the ones who are going to work for me.” (Parent 9)*

*“With whatever career path he would have taken he will be at a point in his life where he can support me in the things I would like to achieve. If he gets a government job I see him being a respectable and trustworthy employee. If he chooses to be an entrepreneur (which is what I would like), I see him as an entrepreneur that no longer experiences loss, I see him as a person who will have a successful business and perhaps have managers and people working him without having to work so hard.” (Parent 4)*

*“I want to see him successful. I want everything for him to go well. I don’t want him to be anybody’s problem. He must have what he wants in life and he must have education. It will be my turn to ask for money as he is doing now.” (Parent 9)*

*“She must be very very proud of herself and she must say that she achieved what she wanted. She must just please me with education.” (Parent 10)*

Ingrid, Majda and Dubravka (2009) are of the opinion that people’s life aspirations reflect the culture and economic conditions in which they find themselves and that extrinsic aspiration is not necessarily detrimental, but may well contribute to the psychological well-being of individuals, especially in less-affluent developing countries.

*“I see her working, owning a house. I don’t want her to own a house in this town though, I want her to own a house in Port Elizabeth or East London so that I am able to go visit those towns and have some time away from here. Or maybe she can work in Cape Town and drive an expensive car. It’s all up to her; she can get it all if she wants.” (Parent 3)*

Although some parents were not confident that they will still be alive they have high aspirations for themselves.

*“If I can be lucky and still be alive, I would love to be building, if I were to get funding I would buy sites or a site and start building houses and sell them” (Parent 4)*

*“yho yho yho if I’m still alive, I do not want to see myself where I am now. I want to be living a better life, a better life than I’m living now and living a life I want to live and also if God were to be my saviour, I did not want to be a teacher, but due to problems, you know we are black people mos I had to take this career path. I wanted to be a social worker, perhaps in the near future and I can see what I can do about that. See what I can do to follow the career path I always wanted to follow. I will see in my strength. I also have a short term vision which is doing my honours in education, next year” (Parent 2)*

Most of the parents have high aspirations for themselves and their children.

It is clear from the study, that although some parents are uneducated and others work out of town they still takes initiative and makes means to be involved in the academic lives of their children. The reasons parents put forth for not being involved to a certain extent is echoed in the responses provided by the teachers and the learners. Parents explained to what extent they are involved in their children’s homework and future plans; this too was echoed in the responses provided by the learners. It is evident from the responses provided by the participants that they all have consensus on the reasons parents are not able to be completely involved in the academic life of their children. It is also clear that although they have barriers to parent involvement, they do recognise its importance therefore they do what they are able to such as attend school meetings, check that homework is completed, assist with the content they are comfortable with, buy school uniform and stationery or prepare financially for their child’s tuition after grade 12. In the next theme, single-parenting in a disadvantaged community will be discussed.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Residing in a disadvantaged community**

Most communities have common ties such as shared experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and access to services (Poland & Mare, 2005). They further state that common resources and institutions create communities through the shared use of these facilities; people who share

these facilities will have frequent interactions with each other when using community centres, local amenities and services. According to Mayer (2003) the term ‘disadvantaged’ can be used as a noun where it describes a quality that is inherent to a group; however he also stipulates that it can be utilised to describe a process in which mainstream society acts in a way that disadvantages a particular group by denying them access to the same tools found useful to the majority of the society such as autonomy, employment, capital, health and education. He further states that a major feature of disadvantage is the presence of barriers of self-sufficiency where disadvantaged people are denied access to needed tools, the unavailability of resources and inaccessibility to resources.

It is evident that learners in this sample face a number of barriers to self-sufficiency. Due to their low household income; learners are constantly faced with hardships such as not having enough food to eat at home, having to stay home if their baby is sick because they do not afford a baby sitter, not having access to transport to go to school, not having access to various reading materials that could stimulate learning and all other household responsibilities that depend on them because they do not have the capital nor the resources to have them taken care of in other means. Some of their parents are uneducated, others work out of town and others work odd shifts, which makes it rather difficult to be as involved as they would like to in their children’s academics. The schools they are enrolled in face numerous challenges with regards to resources placing a lot of pressure on teachers to find creative ways to provide an adequate education. All the above mentioned factors hinder learners from having the best quality education because of the disadvantage they find themselves immersed in. Table 5.2.2 captures theme 2 and its sub-themes

Table 5.2.2 Theme 2

Major Theme	Sub-themes
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 2</b></p> <p>Residing in a disadvantaged community</p>	<p>The influence of the learner’s socioeconomic status on their academics</p>
	<p>How their community influences their goals</p>

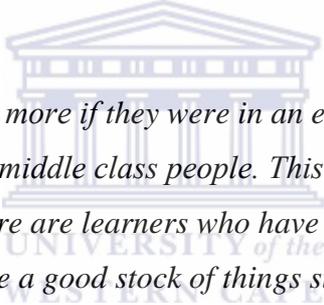
*5.3.2.1 Sub theme 2.1: The influence of the learner’s socioeconomic status on their academics*

The Life Orientation teachers and the principals were asked if the learners were affected by their socio-economic status in class and they provided a variety of answers. They spoke about absenteeism that is a result of factors in the home. In some cases they do not do their work nor come to school due to a sick parent or sick baby, but even then they do not talk about it; they try to brave it on their own. According to Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert (2012) family responsibilities are the reason learners do not attend school. In the context of low-household income some learners have to look after their siblings and in some instances suffer the effect of their vulnerable financial circumstance when the shock hits them after a family member passes away or falls ill (Strassburg, Meny-Gibert & Russel, 2010). Henderson, Hill and Norton (2014) are of the opinion that household instability is also a reason some learners are sometimes missing school.

*“Not in grade 11 or 12, because I know their socioeconomic status because I have taught them since grade 8 to 12; you can see they are neat and they are tidy. It doesn’t affect them unless they are stressed about something such as their mother being sick or their child being sick which leads them to not doing their work. They do not immediately report the things they go through but after a few days when things are not as hectic at home they will then tell you that their mother was sick or my child was sick. They try to survive on their own, they do not want to be pitied, and they have pride. I*

*have spoken to them and try to make them comfortable so that they can open up to me and I tell them they can see me later school but because of other responsibilities especially ones at home, they sometimes do not come. But because they take a while to talk about what they go through, by the time I know about it has burst and gotten very big.” (Teacher 1)*

One of the principals reported that she thinks it would affect them more if they were in an environment with people from higher socio-economic status. Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert (2010) state that poverty is a bit harder in relation to others; they further state that when learners are equally poor they may be less likely to feel excluded or drop out as a result of comparing themselves to those with greater socio-economic status.



*“I think it would affect them more if they were in an environment where there were very rich people or sort of upper middle class people. This year most of the learners don’t have much but of course there are learners who have more than others. They have access to some food, we have a good stock of things such as second hand uniforms that we give to the learners and teachers do notice when learners are really in need.”*  
(Principal 2)

A Life Orientation teacher stated that it affects them a lot particularly those who stay on farms due to transport issues. One of the causes of chronic absenteeism in learners is lack of transportation (Henderson et al., 2014). A study that focused on children in rural areas by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) revealed domestic agricultural chores and long distances travelled to schools often ate into the school day or even resulted into absenteeism. The lack of secondary schools that are close to the homes of learners and the cost of transport was perceived to be a primary reason for learners dropping out of school (Dieltiens & Meny-Gibert, 2012).

*“It affects them because some come to school without eating. Some parents do not afford to buy them school uniform and so DSG learners give us their old girl school shoes and jerseys to give to our learners. Those that are the most affected are those that stay on farms. Each farm has a transport that transports learners from that particular farm to the different schools. These transports arrive late some days, causing learners to miss some morning classes. We also run afternoon classes but these learners are not able to attend these classes because their transport leaves at a fixed time, and because this transport may have only 2 learners from our school, it refuses to compromise its time because it will affect about 10 other learners. There is the option of hitch-hiking, however that is not safe at all and so learners just miss the classes.” (Teacher 2)*

One of the parents painted a picture of how her child suffered in class as a result of their low socio-economic status. She reported that her daughter’s marks had dropped the previous year because she did not have much to eat at home.

*“There is a big difference, last year her marks were dropping and I said to her in the long run you will only blame yourself and not me because I am here to help and support you. Financial struggles made her slack at school. There is no food for my children to eat in the morning so some morning they will have tea for breakfast but sometimes I don’t have sugar so they don’t eat anything. There is a feeding scheme at school so they eat there at break time. That helps but not a lot because they still come home to no food and they sleep with an empty stomach. The children in class who would hear her tummy because she was hungry laugh and gossip about her. All of this affected her performance at school. I told them we will get through it because no person in the whole world has ever died of hunger because there is water. I told them they make me proud because they are not giving up and they must be proud of themselves because they are not giving up. This year she is doing well and she is in school every day” (Parent 10)*

Bhat and Reed (2014) are of the opinion that poverty affects children negatively in a number of ways that make it harder to succeed in school. Children who go to school hungry or suffer

from chronic illnesses are more likely to face obstacles to learning and they have poorer attendance at school (Turner & Berube, 2009). Children who are brought up in poor families are exposed to food with lower nutritional value and they often skip meals such as breakfast (Jensen, 2013). He further states that poor nutrition and diminished health practices make it more difficult for learners to listen, concentrate and to learn.

One of the principals indicated that some of them do not see themselves escaping the circumstances they are in today and therefore need constant motivation.

*“Yes, definitely; absenteeism. If things are not okay at home they stay home. Some of them have babies and so if the child is sick they must take the child to the doctor. Some of them live in homes where the parents are not interested in them and they barely survive. Some of them do not see a life beyond today, it’s not about living in the moment it’s about being stuck; for many of them they come to school because they have to and so they try to just get through it. They don’t have that confidence in themselves; they do not see themselves being better and different rising out of their circumstances. That’s why this morning I had a prophet from a church here in Grahamstown who asked if he could motivate them and it was good. Some of them do not even do homework because they couldn’t. I do go to their homes, you will not believe how some of these grade 12s live. They need to be constantly shown success stories of other people, so that they know they can survive it and you can be successful. I do have confidence in their abilities.” (Principal 1)*

Learners from low socio-economic communities need a lot of motivation for various reasons. Smith (2013) documents that these learners at times view the future as containing more negative events than positive events; they sometimes have a sense of helplessness; and if learners start to think that failure is likely or they believe that they are not smart enough to succeed they are less likely to try.

Children from low socio-economic status homes are less likely to be helped with homework; they have fewer play areas at home; they have less access to computers and the internet; they own fewer books, toys and learning materials; and they are less likely to be involved in enriching after-school activities such as music, athletics, dance and drama (Smith 2013). Bhat & Reed (2014) state that parents are their children's first teachers and that the more words utilised when speaking to an eight month old infant, the larger the child's vocabulary will be at age three. They further state that unfortunately children in low-income families on average are read to less, exposed to more television and have less access to reading materials, both books and online than other children. The aforementioned facts provide further obstacles for the poor learner to be successful in the classroom. In the next section, how the goals of these learners were influenced by their community will be discussed.

#### 5.3.2.2 *Sub-theme 2.2: How their community influences their goals*

Kintrea et al. (2011) indicate that aspirations are hopes that are held about the future concerning education and jobs are built on by young people's own ideas and how they respond to the pressures of school, community and society. Cuthbert and Hatch (2009) state that, communities that have limited social networks contribute to the limited aspirations of disadvantaged youth. A number of the learners live in communities that are poverty-stricken full of unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse; they report that it motivates them.

*“Well in my community there is a lot of unemployment and that is what motivates me to not end up like they are, to be something one day.” (Participant 2, FG 2)*

*“In my community there are a lot of people abusing alcohol and drugs, I see from them that I have to become a better person because of the things that they do.” (Participant 2, FG 6)*

Ray (2006) stipulates that aspirations do not exist in a vacuum, but rather occur within a social context. He further states that individuals draw their aspirations from the lives of others

around them; therefore individuals have an aspirations window through which they view the possibilities that exists within their social sphere. Some say it makes them want to bring change in their community using their profession.

*“I would say yes because seeing that I want to become a psychologist and seeing all the children being raised by a single parent and killing themselves because of financial problems I may be the one who could create a change in my community.”(Participant 4, FG 2)*

Some learners stated that their community is full of supportive people that motivate them and that encourage them to do better.

*“In my community they motivate me to work hard and support my dad because he works really hard on his own for me.”(Participant 1, FG 3)*

*“The community I stay in is very supportive to me because I speak to them and they encourage me. There are times I consider leaving school now in matric; they remind me of all I could achieve if I stay in matric and study further.”(Participant 4, FG 4)*

*“People in my community encourage me a lot. They encourage me to study and be something better in life and I shouldn’t just sit around. For instance there is this one lady who owns a shop always motivates me when I go buy something there. She tells me that grade 12 is no child’s play I should really work hard.”(Participant 3, FG 3)*

Bloom (2007) found that some learners emanating from low socio-economic status families are motivated by their circumstance and therefore want to study further than high school; however they do not bother due to lack of knowledge about university and funding. Some learners reported that some community members do demotivate them, asking them questions like what is the point of studying if they are going to be unemployed anyway.

*“Seeing that I am from a poor community there is no motivation in that, there is only my mother that motivates me and my friends because in the streets and community*

*there is a lot of negativity I don't know how I am going to achieve my goals with so much negativity.”(Participant 4, FG 1)*

*“In my community there are people who encourage me and those that discourage me. Those that encourage me tell me to work hard and make my dreams come true. Those that discourage me ask me what is the point of studying and finishing grade 12 if I'm going to come sit at home and be unemployed anyway”(Participant 6, FG 3)*

Robb, Simon & Wardle (2009) are of the opinion that learners from low socio-economic communities sometimes seem demotivated because of lack of hope and optimism that is usually caused by those around them and the communities they are embedded in. Their teachers were asked how the community these learners come from affects their aspirations. One of the principals showed concern about the fact that when there are no role models in a community for learners they aspire to what they see on television and that is not reality.

*“It's about what the community sees as possible and one needs to be very careful of that sort of thinking that things will just happen because it doesn't work like that. It does especially if you don't have many role models that have made it out of their socioeconomic environment; you see what's on TV and aspire to be that, but that's not reality.” (Principal 2)*

Many factors can influence a learner's decisions and the paths they choose to follow, including parents, community, religious figures, or any role models in a learner's life (Fizer, 2013). The other principal placed emphasis on the values that are instilled at home by their families. She insisted that it is your faith, values and the support your parents gives you that protects a child from all the negativity in the world.

*“It depends on the values in your home and how strong your parent/s is. What they allow and what they do allow, what is right and what is wrong; those Christian values. The support the parents give; you will not believe the amount of support some parents give to their children. It's the values that come from your home that protect you. This tik that they are using now it is available and it depends on how strong you are and if*

*you can withstand the peer pressure. The church supports them and the grannies and grandpas are the foundations of it all. There is also a clinic that goes beyond treating ailments; they look at social problems and address that.”(Principal 1)*

One of the teachers feels the community a child comes from does not always determine them; she has seen extremely neat learners who work hard and produce neat work and then when she conducts a home visit she sees that they live in a very disadvantaged home where the house is one room.

*“I don’t differ with communities because you get lawyers and doctors coming from Sun City and Goldstown. I’ve gone to Sun City and seen some really disadvantaged homes where the house is one room and has no carpet and I get shocked because the learner is so neat and their work is up to date and tidy. When you see that kind of thing you try boost the child and so I went to the principal and informed her of the situation and we arranged for the learner to get clothes and any other things they may need. The children in need never come to complain about what they don’t have. Their parents have dreams for them and the parents are not educated and so cannot understand the work and they just hope and dream. They are happy that their child is passing and in matric.”(Teacher 1)*

One of the teachers reported that the communities these learners come from acts as an eye-opener; it acts as examples of what not to do.

*“It acts as an eye opener because some say they do not want to have children before they matriculate because they are aware of the circumstances of their poverty. Some of them don’t want to drink whilst studying because it will affect their academics and chances of success. The negativity they see in their communities acts as examples of what “not” to do or else.”(Teacher 2)*

The macro-system setting is the actual culture of an individual; the cultural context involves socio-economic status of the person, ethnicity, race and living in a developing or third world country (Krishnan, 2010). An example Krishnan (2010) provides is how being born in a poor family makes a person work harder every day. Andrews (2012) suggests that it may be the

macro-system that places emphasis on merit and achievement to an individual; resulting to them feeling pressured to achieve. In the next section schools in disadvantaged communities will be discussed.

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Schools in disadvantaged communities**

The quality of education in South Africa varies widely (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul & Armstrong, 2011). Fleisch (2008); Taylor and Yu (2009) characterise the South African school system as effectively consisting of two different functioning sub-systems. The majority of South African children are enrolled into the historically disadvantaged system which still serves mainly Black and Coloured children. Van der Berg et al. (2011) document that these learners typically demonstrate low aptitude in reading, writing and numeracy. The second sub-system consists of schools that historically served White children and produces educational achievements closer to the norms of developed countries. Although these schools serve predominantly white children; Black, Coloured and Indian children have migrated to these schools due to the upward mobility of their families.

Xaba & Malindi (2010) argue that it is crucial that historically disadvantaged schools strive to succeed in identifying opportunities out of existing resources to strengthen their educational endeavours. They further state that these schools' survival seems to hinge on attracting learners so that they qualify for more funding in terms of their quintile classification. According to Lupton (2004) explanations for the poor quality of schools in disadvantaged areas are contested. She argues that the most dominant explanation has been that the problem is internal to the schools. Lupton (2004) asserts that not all schools in poor areas have poor education, their location does not in itself determine the quality of the school but rather a lot of these schools are suffering because of poor management and professional practice. The table below summarizes Theme 3 and the sub-themes that emerged from it.

Table 5.2.3: Theme 3

Major Theme	Sub-themes
<b>Theme 3:</b>  Schools in disadvantaged communities	The relationship between learners and their teachers
	The limited training teachers at schools in disadvantaged communities receive for their context
	Efforts made by teachers to involve parents in their children's academic life
	Transfer of knowledge to learners about higher education institutions
	The aspirations Life Orientation teachers and the principals have for their learners

5.3.3.1 *Sub-theme 3.1 The relationship between learners and their teachers*

Mashau, Steyn, van der Walt and Wolhuter (2008) document that teachers should lead, guide, unfold and equip their learners towards mature adulthood. They further state that teachers should motivate their learners and assist those experiencing stress. Life Orientation teachers and the principals of the respective schools reported having a good relationship with their Grade 12s.

*“It’s good because we understand each other. I have been teaching some of them since grade 10 and others since grade 8.” (Teacher 2)*

*“It’s very good because it’s my first time teaching a matric class L.O. At first I was frightened but I’m okay now, we have a good relationship because they listen when I’m talking and they always hand in their assignments.” (Teacher 2)*

One of the principals stated that she is actively involved with a few of them because she teaches the Afrikaans first language learners Tourism; therefore most of her interaction with them is academic. She also stated that she visits the grade 12’s from time to time in their various classes to motivate them.

*“I’m actually only involved with 16 of them because I teach them tourism and it’s Afrikaans; so at the moment it’s just a teacher relationship. With the rest of the learners I do go and visit them from time to time in their classes and motivate them and make extra curricula programs and academic programs. I interact with them a lot of the time, but mostly for academic reasons. I used to teach grade 12s LO for many years so my interaction with those grade 12s was totally on another level. This is my first year not teaching Life Orientation, it used to allow so much contact time with the learners; I was even called Mother.”(Principal 1)*

Thompson, Greer & Greer (2004) state that effective teachers should have high expectations; they further state that learners see caring teachers as those who set limits for them, provide structure and hold high expectations for them to achieve. They also state that teachers with positive attitudes also possess high expectations for success. The other principal stated that her relationship with her grade 12s is up and down because she has to push them therefore some relationships are good and some of them are not so good.

*“I think with a matric class a relationship can always be up and down, I tend to always push matrics because they need to be getting most of their career and future plans into order; so it’s up and down some of them very good and some of them not so good.” (Principal 2)*

Learners were asked how their teachers and principals contribute to their goal-setting. This question provided some insight on the relationship between the learners and their teachers and principals. In both schools learners felt their principals were extremely supportive. They stated that their principals motivated them a lot and provided them with a lot of opportunities to better themselves. Some did state that some teachers also motivate them a lot, however some teachers demotivate them; they do this in the form of negative comments in the classroom and even on their reports.

*“Our principal motivates us a lot; she encourages us to work harder. You can see and feel that she wants you to succeed. There are some teachers who are able to do that but*

*others demotivate us. Some teachers leave very negative comments on your report when you have done poorly, whilst others will leave more positive comments. Sometimes even before tests some teachers will say I know you will fail and they do not understand how that demotivates us.”(Participant 8, FG 4)*

*“The principal motivates us, because we come from different backgrounds she makes sure that we have food to eat at school. In terms of the teachers there are teachers that motivate us and call you aside and tell you where your short falls are and how you can improve. There are also other teachers that will shout in the middle of the class about how you have failed and that some of them have been condoned. Those things demotivate us.”(Participant 3, FG 4)*

According to Department of Education and Training (DET) (2005) one of the features of an effective school is professional leadership that is motivated by the desire to build a vibrant learning community. They further state that an effective school has agreed expectations and coherence around the quality of teaching required to impact on learner performance. The OECD (2012) document state that school principals need to set high expectations for all learners and teachers to succeed. Louie (2007) is of the opinion that the expectations held by the teachers and administrators of a school, in conjunction with academic preparedness can influence a learner’s choice to enrol into university. Some learners feel their teachers go beyond the call of duty because they do not only teach them during the week, but during weekends too.

*“My teachers and principal contribute a lot because there was this one time I really did bad in my academics and my principal came to me and motivated me because she is a very soft and caring person she believes in people’s possibilities when she sees their potential so she really motivated me to do better. Most teachers contribute a lot to my academics because when I get bad marks they tell me where I can do better.”*  
*(Participant 8, FG1)*

*“To add to that, teachers are very supportive because they do not end at teaching us Monday to Friday we also have extra classes during the weekend.”(Participant 5,FG 3)*

Good teachers take into account their knowledge of the learners’ background and emotional needs, learning styles and development stages and their relationships (Panel, 2008). Thompson et al. (2004) state that another trait of an effective teacher is compassion; they state that school is a place where children can learn and be nurtured in an emotionally safe environment. The reality of any classroom is that it does include a significant amount of cruelty and hurt feelings due to insensitivity or deliberate malicious behaviour; therefore a caring teacher can have a healing effect to some children (Thompson et al., 2004). The next section delves in the limited training teachers at disadvantaged schools get. It also speaks about the support these teachers actually need.

#### *5.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: The limited training teachers at schools in disadvantaged communities receive for their context*

De Sousa and Boas (2012) are of the opinion that some teachers are frequently constrained by the adverse and commonly different context from those they were exposed to during training. They state that the best performance will not necessarily be a teacher mastering the largest range of contents but rather the one who in given circumstances manages to integrate their knowledge in the context they find themselves teaching in. De Sousa and Boas (2012) argue that the evaluation of practicing teachers cannot be analysed by only taking the learner’s performance into consideration since the learner’s performance depends on the school, their family and their socio-economic status.

According to Goldhaber and Hannaway (2009) more effective teachers are more likely to transfer out of schools with higher percentages of low-income learners to schools with more affluent learners; leaving less effective teachers concentrated in higher-need schools.

Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor and Wheeler (2006) document that, districts with high proportions of minority learners, typically have novice teachers when compared to districts with smaller proportions of such learners. When teachers were asked if they receive training to teach at disadvantaged schools or not, they said they do not. They stated that nothing prepares them for what they face at the schools they teach at but their experience. The only training they receive is for the curriculum.

One of the principles attributed her ability to manage at her school to her previous school.

*“Except for isiXhosa I think I am. In fact I don’t think I would have been able to do this job if it weren’t for the VG hostels, the caterers and the scholar nutrition program and the financial skills I learnt at VG. It is experience that helps you manage at this school and in the classroom. It is a very tough and busy environment.” (Principal 2)*

When the question was posed at one of the teachers her response referred specifically to the training for the curriculum.

*“Yes, I have enough training. I studied at Rhodes University specifically to teach Life Orientation.” (Teacher 2)*

The other teacher perceives teaching as a calling.

*“Teaching is a calling that is why I have been teaching for the past 29 years with no break. Every day is a new day for me and a new experience; I grow with the children. I am not ashamed when the child says no ma’am that’s not like this, you are reading wrong. I applaud them because you are not too old learn.” (Teacher 1)*

According to Modisatsolile (2012) there are many signs that show that education in South Africa is in crisis. She further documents that concentration needs to be focused on the quality of education; good leadership in schools is necessary to ensure that teachers attend their classes diligently and that they take education seriously. Trevor Manuel, in his ministry diagnostic overview (2011) laments that the quality of schooling is substandard, particularly in the township schools. A study that was conducted by the HSRC found that almost 20% of

teachers in Black schools are absent on Mondays and Fridays (Mundy, 2011). He further documents that absentee rates increase to one third on month end and that teachers in Black schools teach an average of 3.5 hours a day, compared to 6.5 hours a day in former White schools. Mundy (2011) argues that this amounts to a difference of years schooling in total.

*“There is no training school for what you can expect, they can train you with the curriculum but I don’t think anyone is prepared for what you get. I was 21 when I started teaching and I started at Uitenhage high, it was a coloured school, look at that time the schools were not that integrated. I then got married and moved to here and this school had 500 odd students and now we have 1100 and there were a few isiXhosa learners here, but their home language was Afrikaans. It’s my 31<sup>st</sup> year of teaching now and it’s those years that prepared me. Teachers that started now resign quickly and stay absent a lot. I could go teach at any school. The new generation teachers are faced with challenges we could have never imagined when we started teaching and some of them are not coping. Some teachers are trained in the curriculum but do not know how to apply the work. I have received complaints about some teachers who students feel do not know how to explain or teach the work One of the teachers went on sick leave for a whole week and she had taken work in. She came back and she couldn’t find the projects, she made them re do it and then gave them such little time to do it and then I got letters from parents complaining about it. She was not happy about it because she felt she didn’t lose them and so why should she have to suffer. I said ma’am compromise; try to understand, mark those that you get first. Some teachers out of 44, 15 children would have not handed in their work. How is that possible, where is the motivation and how are you managing your class; she was upset with me telling me not to tell her how to run her class. She told me that she laid awake last night telling me that is why teachers stay away from work there is too much stress at this school and now they have to be policed. I had to explain to her that all I’m saying is that it’s not those learners fault.”(Principal 1)*

It is important to note that there are still schools that have insufficient resources (Mgibisa, 2009). He further states that the ongoing changes and amendments to curricula, the unsatisfactory type of teacher training, inadequate support for teachers and unavailability of

learning and teaching materials such as textbooks are significant factors that affect the quality of education produced. Most of the teachers feel like they do extra at the schools they teach at, they do things they would not be doing if they were at affluent schools. In a study conducted by Lupton (2004) he found that principals from disadvantaged schools do a number of duties that do not necessarily pertain to their role; they do counselling, staff support, they are also involved in disciplinary or welfare issues which causes a disruption in strategic issues and planning that she is responsible for.

One of the principals stated that they do everything at their school for their learners; they do not have designated roles.

*“Someone just mentioned just this morning that ma’am we are everything here; we are a nurse, a social worker, a policeman, a psychologist, a teacher, a mother, a father we are involved in the life of our learners. Whether we are equipped or not you treat that child like they are yours; you are involved in that child’s life and not just as a teacher but as everything, that is what we do differently here. If a child has a headache we don’t have the luxury of dispensing pills, and so this headache becomes your problem; you take the child to the clinic or take them home or call their parent. You do not just send the child to the secretary and that’s it; you are involved until whatever action is taken. Whatever the child needs and not just the curriculum the teacher and the principal must be involved, there are no designated roles to certain people because everyone here is everything. We walk around the corridors and police the learners”*  
(Principal 1)

The other principal however, did not feel like she was doing anything differently particularly since she was previously a principal at an affluent school.

*“I think I work much harder because of my load, but I don’t think I’m doing that much different. You sort of accept things like when it’s cold they will wear different colour jackets and that’s not the most important thing, what’s important is that they are warm. At VG I went to houses and I still do that here. I don’t think I’m doing that much differently here. They are still people and children that want the best for themselves it*

*doesn't matter whether you have money or not because there are psychosocial issues that children face no matter the financial situation. Even if you have money you may feel alienated from your family and even if you are poor you may experience the same.”(Principal 2)*

Teachers who support their learners in the learning environment can positively impact their social and academic outcomes (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). They further state that learners in low-income schools can especially benefit from positive relationships with their teachers. Fan and Williams (2010) are of the opinion that learner's perception of their relationship with their teacher is essential in motivating learners to perform well.

*“I do more; I explain to parents that at those schools they will already know. I do research for my learners on the qualifications they need for the career paths they want to take. I invite motivational speakers to motivate the learners; I would not do that at those schools because those learners know what they want.”(Teacher 2)*

*“I am born a teacher, teaching is my calling. All the private schools have all the resources; here I go out of my way to help them. I wouldn't change I love teaching. I help my children and they go to other schools, I don't tell them to go to their teacher because she needs my help.”(Teacher 1)*

Equal access to education signifies an equal and dignified society and holistic equity in all spheres of life, while Learner-Teacher-Support Materials refer to any tool or resource used to enhance teaching and the understanding of the subject content. The explanation of these two concepts is important in facilitating an understanding of the past and present education system in the previously disadvantaged schools (Sedibe, 2011). He states that they are also important in understanding the reason why such schools are still facing inequality of access to resources. It has been 17 years into democracy and a high number of South African schools still lack vital learning resources; in many instances the South African government fails not

only to provide facilities such as libraries and laboratory material but also crucial learning textbooks (Mji & Makgato, 2006.)

The Life Orientation teachers and the principals were also asked if the resources they have at their disposal is enough. One of the teachers and the other principal reported that the resources they have are sufficient.

*“We have access to everything, the resources we have are sufficient. We have computers, laptops, access to the internet. The learners also have access to telematics; they also have access to machines that provide them with previous exam papers.”(Teacher 2)*

*“Every learner in Grade 12 has a teacher for their subject. We use money that the department makes available to us to transport them if they need to go to any academic program after school; we also provide food for these trips. They get breakfast and a meal at break time. Those are the basic things, but they also know that they have many caring teachers that go beyond the classroom and assist learners with difficulties that they face at home. There is a psychologist at the department that is always willing if there is a learner faced with a social problem and so I arrange sessions with her. We used to have a learner support agent whom was very good, but he left because he got a better job. The only thing now is that one of the teachers is sick, but I do have a volunteer here.”(Principal 1)*

One of the principals raised the fact that they have very insufficient resources at their disposal; they do not have enough admin staff and the resources for learners are very limited.

*“Very insufficient, we don't have enough staff, we don't have enough money, we don't have enough admin staff and the load is huge and the resources for the learners are very limited but we are trying very hard to cope with what we have.”(Principal 2)*

It has been estimated that between 18 000 and 22 000 teachers leave the teaching profession a year (Arends & Arends, 2011). They further state that some leave voluntarily and others forcibly and that the same number of teachers need to be replaced each year. There is an

estimated output of 6 000 to 10 000 new teachers graduating annually from higher education institutions, some of whom might not enter the teaching profession or who might go abroad to teach, as a result of low salaries and poor working conditions in South Africa (Arends & Arends, 2011).

One of the teachers reported that they have textbooks, however other resources are limited and that she is unable to take learners to trainings or workshops because they would have to walk resulting in missing a day of school.

*“We have textbooks which are very good and I can talk, I can talk a lot but the resources are limited. I can’t take them to trainings or workshops because there are too many of them because we must then walk and miss a day of school and we can’t afford to miss a day. You make a plan with the limited resources that you have and you learn out of it.”(Teacher 1)*

School resources have significant effects on learner outcomes (Borg et al., 2012). Teachers and principals were asked to identify the support they needed in order to empower these learners to perform to the best of their ability. One of the principals reported that she needs to look after herself because there is no point in working in any environment whilst running empty.

*“We need to keep them motivated so that they can take the opportunities available to them. It’s a matter of finding what is the key to unlock a child’s willingness to take risks and if you can find that key you can be a multi-millionaire because it’s something inside a person. The support that I need is that I need to look after myself because I certainly know that there is no point in working in any environment if you are running empty because then nothing works.” (Principal 2)*

The other principal identified a number of things; she feels she needs subject advisors from the district office because they are the ones with the knowledge and expertise. She also stated

that she wants committed and dedicated teachers and parents. She also emphasized the need for a safe environment for the learners.

*“From the district office subject advisors they are the ones with the expertise and the knowledge. The teachers and parents need to be committed; and then of course our tertiary institutions that will send us information on all opportunities available to the learners. Anyone from the community that comes for motivation we make use of them we don’t say no. Dedicated teachers! That is the main thing. A safe environment for the learners to learn, the environment they have now is not safe because people come as they please and go straight to teachers to slap them or whatever. Children need to be happy when they are at school, not teachers who make them unhappy and humiliate them because unfortunately there are teachers like that. I have had parents complain about how teachers treat their children. I usually call those learners and motivate them because someone them find leaving school as a better option since the teacher treats them like that, I convince them it’s not about the teacher that brings you down its about you. I always tell my teachers that I don’t know if they realise the magnitude of their influence on the learners, it’s unbelievable. We have been given this great task of educating children and we are destroying them; I don’t know if we realise this but then again different personalities do things differently. I do go and speak to the teachers when something has been raised about them, they say I spoil the children but then so be it. It’s not easy for me because they do not like it.”(Principal 1)*

According to Sedibe (2011) the shortage of learning materials results in a further decline in the standard of education. He states that most teachers prefer not to teach at schools with minimal or old resources because it hinders their performance and that of the learners. One of the teachers stated that she gets support from her school and the Department of Education, however the material support is not there and that is what she needs.

*“From my school I have support, from the education department I also have support but the material support is not there, if I can ask the department of education to bring us a bus for career day in Port Elizabeth they will bring it but they will make the learners pay for the bus. Whereas When DSG had a career day here in Grahamstown*

*they organised a bus and food for the learners because they know that for some of them it's the only meal for the day.”(Teacher 1)*

A teacher from School B reported that she would like to attend more seminars, workshops and teacher forums where learner issues can be discussed because currently they only occur once in 2 years.

*“I need to attend more seminars and workshops. I need to attend more teacher forums where we can discuss learner issues; it happens once in 2 years at St Andrews College There is a big gap between the schools, the last time we were at the teacher’s forum with St Andrews they were talking about using tablets in class whilst our learners don’t even have nor afford the latest cell phones” (Teacher 2)*

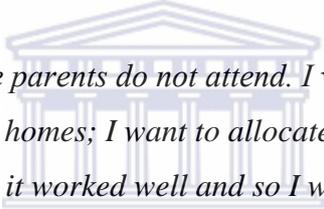
Spaull (2013) and Van der Berg (2008) state that economists have revealed that the socio-economic status of a school has a significant impact on a learner’s performance. They state that the paucity of key school resources impact educational outcomes of learners. In the next section the efforts teachers make to involve parents in their children’s academic life will be discussed.

#### *5.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Efforts made by teachers to involve parents in their children’s academic life*

Patrikakou (2008) is of the opinion that good communication between home and school is important to keep parents in touch with the child’s needs and success. Coleman (2013) states that the meso-system is functioning when parents and teachers collaborate in sending children consistent messages about their behaviour and also making an effort to work with teachers in reinforcing similar learning experiences in the classroom and at home. Little, Goe and Bell (2009) state that for teachers to be effective they must be prepared to collaborate with families to support learner success. They further state that when teachers understand families

and communicate and build relationships with them, learners will definitely benefit. It has been confirmed that strong parent relationships relate to positive learner outcomes such as high learner achievement, university enrolment and healthy social development (Little et al., 2009).

The Life Orientation teachers and the principals were asked what efforts they made to involve parents in the learners' academic life. In all schools they call meetings for parents to attend. Teachers also stress the importance of parent involvement in these schools. With the increase in single-parent households and dramatic change in the network force with mothers of school aged children enrolling into schools in great numbers, time has become a valuable commodity for parents who struggle to make ends meet (Patrikakou, 2008).



*“We call meetings that some parents do not attend. I want to ask volunteer teachers to deliver reports at the matric homes; I want to allocate each teacher with four learners. It was once done before and it worked well and so I want to bring it back. The teachers will go to the homes and explain the report and discuss it. This will also give us a chance to see how the learner lives which will provide some context for us. I want to involve all my staff and not just my matric teachers because all teachers can read a report. I want to turn it into some kind of mentorship so that if a learner isn't well she goes to that allocated teacher, then it will be the responsibility of that teacher to check up on that learner. But I must still see how many volunteers I would get at our next staff meeting” (Principal 1)*

Patrikakou (2008) argues that parents and teachers have multiple responsibilities and pressing time demands, however both need to recognize that parent involvement is integral to the process of learning and the success of schooling. He further argues that teachers are the glue that holds the school family partnership together. Educators need new and different knowledge and skills to meet today's challenges, including the understanding and competencies to work with diverse learners and families (Casper, Lopez, Chu & Weis, 2011).

A teacher from School A reported that they explained to parents at one meeting that subject choice begins in grade 9 and so they should be involved at an earlier stage than grade 12. She also mentioned that they encourage parents to ask questions when they are unclear about matters. They also call parents to come individually when they have issues with a learner.

*“We call parent meetings and in these meetings we explain how important it is for them to be part of the learners’ academic life and career choices. We explain to them that you choose your subjects in grade 9 so they should not only be involved in grade 12. The hall was full of parents that night I hope they understood. We encourage them to come to us and ask questions if they are not clear on matters so we can explain and advise the parent.” (Teacher 1)*

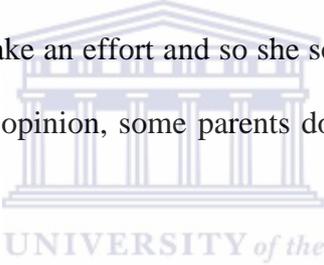
In School B they have decided to get parents to fetch their children’s reports; upon fetching these reports the teachers intended on discussing the reports with them. In School A they found that it is the parents of the academically-performing learners that attend the meetings. They also get assistance from a Dr Ashley Westaway from Gadra finishing school who meets with the parents of a selected few and teaches them how to work with their child and how they can be involved in their children’s academic life, including their applications.

*“We invite parents and inform them of about the progress of the learners. We host grade meetings where we stress the importance of parental involvement; at this meeting they get a chance to speak to subject teachers. At the meetings we also explain to them what a bachelor and diploma pass is and it can be obtained. We also use these meetings to explain the levels we use on the learner’s reports” (Teacher 2)*

*“Specifically to grade 12 we have called more than one meeting this year. If we have a problem with an individual child we call the parent and the parent normally comes. Tonight with the handing out of the reports the parents have to fetch it and we discuss the report with them. In fact what we are doing tonight for the first time we are printing two sets of reports; one that the parent will sign and take home and the other which we will keep and have on record.” (Principal 2)*

Spielberg (2011) argues that the beliefs and mind-sets of teachers' perceptions about families shape their family engagement efforts. She states that teachers should see engaging families as part of their core role and responsibility as well as be culturally knowledgeable and sensitive. School staff and parents need to have trusting and mutually respectful relationships with families that are reinforced by consistent two-way communication (Spielberg, 2011).

Parents were also asked about the efforts teachers make to involve them in the academic life of their children. Some of the parents feel that teachers do make an effort to involve them because they call them for meetings and also encourage parent involvement. One of the parents whose child goes to School A felt that teachers make an effort to involve her because they call and send letters. One parent stressed the importance of parent involvement. She stated that parents also need to make an effort and so she sometimes calls the secretary if she has questions on matters. In her opinion, some parents do not care; instead they blame the school.



*“They call meetings where they include us parents with children. In the meetings we discuss any issues that affect our children. For example we must be the ones to fetch our children’s reports. They sit down with you and discuss the child’s weaknesses. They do this so that we are motivated to take initiative and assist our children where we can...” (Parent 5)*

*“They phone me or send a letter or call me in for a meeting. There was also a meeting for grade 12s and I was there. Whatever they need to involve me I will be there if I can because I have asthma and a heart problem. I will be involved with the teachers and learners, and not just my children; if I can help other learners I will help them.”*  
*(Parent 10)*

Patrikakou (2008) states that parents have identified three barriers that prevent them from becoming involved; time and life demands, lack of knowledge of what is expected of them

and various factors in the school environment. Some parents feel that teachers do not make an effort to involve them.

*“The teachers do not make a lot effort to involve us...There is a lack of communication between the parents and the teachers.”(Parent 8)*

In School B they call meetings and the parents sit in their children’s desks and allow them to go through their books with the learners present, giving them an opportunity to see what their child does in the classroom.

*“Teachers help us, a lot of the time we are called in for meetings. Another thing they do is they will call us for a meeting and make us sit in our children’s desks and allow us to go through their books and the child will also be present meaning the teacher will address him with me around allowing me to get an idea of what goes on in the classroom. The school encourages us to be aware of our children’s study timetable so that we can help them stick to it at home and monitor them. So teachers do help us take our children’s education seriously. They assist us in understanding how we can help our children; how we can guide them without having to actively teach them. ” (Parent 4)*

Patrikakou (2008) argues that teachers are more likely to communicate with parents when their children misbehave or face significant academic problems. She states that it is extremely important to let families know when their child is performing well because this will ensure that communication from the school is not automatically labelled as bad news, giving an indication to the parents that teachers also recognize the potential their child has (Patrikakou, 2008). The learners were also asked what efforts the teachers made to involve their parents in their academic life. Most of the learners reported that teachers do involve their parents in their academic life, particularly with regards to meetings. Their greatest concern is that teachers involve their parents mainly for negative reasons such as their marks dropping or when they do not do their homework. They feel that teachers do not involve their parents when something positive happens such as them passing very well.

*“What teachers do is they write down and take notes if we don’t do our homework; if we don’t do our homework they call our parents. They also call meetings.” (Participant 2, FG 2)*

*“The thing is we have to know that we won’t all be good at academics, that’s one thing for sure; but if you try your best and the teacher sees you are trying they will take note of that. When you are struggling some call your parent and explain that you are struggling in something and they try finding a way forward. However some teachers take the notes and only at the end of the year will they explain to your parent why you are failing which doesn’t help because it’s too late.” (Participant 5, FG 1)*

*“Teachers are not really involving the parents, the reason why I say this is because some of them let you go on and do badly in your academics. They would call you to one side if you struggle but normally they don’t really involve the parents. There are some teachers who really care about us and our academics and want to see the best in us so they would call us and talk to us about where we are lacking and show us where we need to improve, but normally they wouldn’t involve our parents.” (Participant 8, FG 1)*

One of the learners mentioned that teachers involve their parents when they want to assess if their home situation is affecting their schoolwork.

*“They involve your parent when you don’t do your homework or perhaps when your school marks are different they involve your parents. They do this to check if maybe your circumstances at home have not changed causing you to do badly at school.” (Participant 5, FG 2)*

Poverty takes a toll on learners and their academic achievements; some parents have more resources to devote to their children, meaning they can easily find time to spend assisting their children with homework (Koppich, 2014). He further states that when a child is being raised by a single parent, at times this means less parent involvement because of all the duties and roles the parent has to fulfil on their own, which in turn may affect the learner’s marks.

The next sections will discuss the transfer of knowledge about higher education institutions and motivation.

*5.3.3.4 Sub-theme 3.4: The transfer of knowledge to learners about higher education institutions and motivation*

Teachers who talk and support the idea of going to university create an expectation for learners to go to university after high school (Kosine, 2007). Teachers were asked about the information they provide to their grade 12 class to ensure they make an informed decision about post-matric education. Both principals from the schools reported the involvement of Gadra finishing school with their grade 12s. They also mention taking their learners to career days. In their Life Orientation classes they also do a lot of work around career work and higher learning education that they are exposed to since grade 9. They also allow for different institutions to come speak to the grade 12s about the options they have within their institutions and provide information such as entry requirements for certain courses.

Tierney et al. (2009) are of the opinion that learners and their families need the necessary guidance from knowledgeable school staff if they are to successfully enrol into university. They state that learners obtaining the academic, social and cultural skills to gain entrance to university falls upon teachers, counsellors and school administrators. Tierney et al. (2009) further emphasizes that high school plays a pivotal role in preparing learners academically for university and assisting them through the steps of enrolment.

*“I advise them based on their academic results. I do not tell them that they will cope with particular subject when it is clear that they will not. For example some will want to study further and do things that require maths, if they are currently struggling with maths in high school I advise against it. I make sure that they attend career exhibitions so that they listen to speakers from different tertiary institutions. Their principal has one on ones with the learners and advises them accordingly. We also have debates,*

*group activities and research projects where they will research on a particular career and find out what are the requirements to follow that path, how much will it cost, are there bursaries.”(Teacher 2)*

*“We have Gadra education involved to speak to the learners individually they have just done 8 learners so far with parents and they spend at least an hour and they talk about options that’s really good. And then Rota act gets involved in that, we get lots of people to come and speak to the learners and we also organise that they attend career day. We also have information available to them at our Library.” (Principal 2)*

Both schools are involved in the telematics programme which are interactive lessons organised by Stellenbosch University. Grade 12 learners from School A attend these sessions at School B, and these lessons are conducted through a screen. Teachers also advise them on the different career paths they can take and the entry requirements.

*“In life Orientation there are all the subject choices, higher learning of education and learnership information and they have been exposed to that since grade 9; they do have an idea. I will however ask them what they want to be and a learner will say they want to be a doctor and yet their subjects are nowhere near Maths and Science. A lot of them are not aware that there are other occupations out there; they need to expose themselves to it all. Rhodes University comes to speak to them so that they know they have options that are wider than they think. They recently went to DSG for career day where there were exhibitions from varsities and different things that you can do as far as au-pairing, drama and film; they were exposed to a variety of options. We also allow universities and technicians to come and speak to them so that they see how many possibilities there are. Dr Ashley Westaway came here when they were in grade 11 and explained to them what they need to get a bachelor pass, diploma and a higher certificate and so at the end of grade 11 only 22 managed to get a bachelor pass and those are the learners he is working with in matric and hopefully will eventually get a bachelor pass and get a mentor too. We also have a telematics program organised by Stellenbosch University. It is interactive lessons and there are different subjects on different days. The teacher will be teaching in a class in the Western Cape and you will be able to ask questions. They also provide the learner with the resources necessary for that lesson and so we just download it and give it to our learners.” (Principal 1)*

*“We did career guidance at school in first term and then we went to career guidance at St Andrews College; they provided us with transport to go there for the afternoon. We also have a career guidance teacher from Gardra Matric School, Dr Ashely Westaway who chooses the best learners and then works with them. He actually started in grade 11 and then from there chose the best performing learners. He looks at their subjects and they explore their career options. He will come back next year and look at their results again and work with them and help them with application forms. Varsity College also came here to do their marketing and spoke to them. This is to make them understand that they have a lot of opportunities in life. In the L.O class we have a topic called Career choices and we start with stress factors and we identify them, and then we go over to the careers and I explain to them about Universities, Technicons, FET Colleges and all the higher education institutions. I explain the entry requirements for certain courses so for example if they say they want medicine I tell them they have to do Maths and Science and they must pass with correct Swedish points. If they say they want to be a finger print analyst I tell them they can go to the police, the career field is the police. I teach them career skills and how to study. They don't have an excuse because they get the information they just need to apply it properly. ” (Teacher 1)*

Learners were also asked whether their teachers or principals play any role in providing information regarding higher education institutions. All learners from both schools reported being given sufficient information by their principals and teachers with regards to higher education institutions. They stated that they were taken to a career expo at DSG which is a private school in Grahamstown; where they are provided with information with regards to the variety of career options that they have. They also stated that they are frequently visited by higher education institution representatives and they are provided with information with regards to those institutions and what they can study, including the entry requirements for such institutions. Learners also stated that their teachers also speak to them about bursaries and applications to higher education institutions.

*“Yes they do because last month we went to DSG for a career expo so they do help us.”(Participant 5, FG 1)*

*“Yes they do because the principal makes every effort to invite people from different universities to speak to us and motivate us. They provide us with information on these institutions so we can choose where we want to go.”(Participant 1, FG 2)*

*“The principal and the school staff play a huge role in our career choices and institutions that we will go to one day. They are the ones that guide us on every step and they are always there if we need any.”(Participant 2, FG 2)*

According to Temple (2009) learners who do not have family members who studied in institutions of higher learning often look towards the school as their main support; therefore teachers, guidance counsellors and administrators need to motivate learners to complete university applications and financial aid applications. Kintrea et al. (2009) state that there is a discrepancy between the aspirations learners have and the kinds of jobs that are actually available in the labour market; therefore there is a an urgent need to expose learners to a greater range of occupations and to promote a better understanding of job content.

*“Our teachers in class also tell us about university and college. They tell us to work hard so we can get into a university of our choice. Our teachers always explain that we must learn to be independent here because at university lecturers will not be chasing after us.” (Participant 3, FG 3)*

*“When they come I always learn something new for example I never knew you could be a chartered accountant without having done accounting in high school. Our teachers also try, they will ask us what we want to study and then they will advise you and tell you how long will your course take and they will tell you what personality best suits that career path and any other details they think is helpful to you. This allows for us to choose the appropriate subjects early and to be sure that what we want to become is really suited for us.”(Participant 8, FG 3)*

Rowan-Kenyon, Bell & Perna (2008) assert that if the ultimate goal is having learners continue their education beyond high school, the school staff needs to leave their

preconceptions about what role parents should be playing and should try new approaches to get parents involved in this process. Kern and Clemens (2007) are of the opinion that because humans are highly social beings, positive teacher attention can be a very powerful motivator for learners; however teachers often do not make adequate use of simple but effective tools such as praise to promote positive interaction with their learners. The teachers and principals were asked what it is that they do to motivate learners. Some of the teachers use themselves as examples to motivate them because they come from similar backgrounds. They also bring in motivational speakers to motivate them.

*“I invite motivational speakers. I also tell them that it isn’t impossible because I also came from a working class background. I tell them they will change their home circumstances, they must be agents of change.” (Teacher 2)*

*“I do allow anyone to come in for motivation to come and speak to them about to them about themselves and what is out there. Of course in Life Orientation I used to do that because there is a lot of work that you do that creates a platform for you to motivate them. What I want to do now, after the March report is I want to speak to them and have a one on one with each grade 12 and discuss their report. This will allow me to find out who they are, what they are about and what their challenges are and take it from there. Yesterday I saw a grade 12 for the very first time because I was invigilating, I need to get to know them very fast if I’m going to interact with them and be able to intervene with the personal issues that they face.” (Principal 1)*

One of the principals said they invite learners that used to go to their school to motivate others. She also stated that they attract a lot of opportunities for their learners; they can only hope they take them. There is a need to expose learners to a vast range of occupations and to promote a better understanding of job content (Kintrea et al., 2011). They further state that exposing learners to their school alumni as well as locally providing them with greater contacts with local businesses could be of great benefit to them.

*“We get in ex pupils, we put lots of things on Facebook and we provide them with opportunities. These learners have opportunities more than other children because we are attracting a lot of opportunities for them so we hope they take them. What is also happening is that the learners will say that they will do something and they never get it done. They need that push.” (Principal 2)*

*“I use myself as an example, I was brought up by my grandparents and I was also sitting in the same desk that they are sitting in. I tell them that for me average was not good enough and as Mandela said education is the most powerful tool in the world. They must educate themselves first, sit with their books, do their homework and study hard and do revision regularly. If you are positive you can make a change in your life; that’s what I tell them. I try to boost their self-esteem and self-respect so that they can become something and fulfil their dreams.” (Teacher1)*

Cuthbert & Hatch (2009) indicate that in motivating learners, schools should develop social networks that can reach out beyond the local neighbourhood to provide disadvantaged children and help young people with diverse range of contacts, inspiration, information and opportunities. When learners were asked about the contribution of their teachers to their goal-setting, they reported that teachers create an opportunity for them to choose three career choices and create a career plan. They also get assistance with this plan from people from Gadra finishing school. A learner from School B commended her principal on the big role she plays in their ambition. She also mentioned how much some teachers motivate them and then continues to explain how one teacher motivated her personally.

*“Well at our school we have a group where we have a personal plan whether you set out your personal plan and write your 3 career choices that you think you are good in. We also got some people from Gadra to help us with this plan and they also help you draw up a financial plan for university.”*

*“Mrs S, our principal has played a big role in our ambition. When people compare Our school to back in the day they say it has drastically improved even the pass rate has*

*improved. The way we study here is also very different from other location schools. Some learners come from their various schools in other locations and they try learning other subjects here. Mrs S is always trying for us to have a brighter future. She is always trying for us to know our vision and mission. She always making sure we know what it will take for our dreams to come true. There are teachers that motivate us; even if we are falling apart there are some teachers that will always motivate us. Last year I fell pregnant, there was one teacher who called me aside and told me not to quit school. She said yes people will talk but whatever you do, do not quit; don't make them happy, do what you came here to do it is your life."*

Thompson et al. (2004) is of the opinion that an effective teacher is one that is positive-minded and believes in the success of their learners as well as their own ability to help learners achieve.

*"Mrs S plays a big role in motivating us to achieve our goals. Some teachers motivate us but some demotivate us. Our pass rate last year was 86% some teachers say that we are going to bring it down to 30% which demotivates us. They don't trust that we can make it above 86%."*

Latham and Locke (2007) argue that setting goals increase achievement and that setting goals are particularly important for learners with low-achievement motivation. Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Phil and Shore (2010) conducted an investigation on whether goal-setting would have a positive impact on their academic achievement and they found that it had significant improvements on their academic performance. Chenoweth and Galliher (2004) are of the opinion that the school setting has a direct impact on academic motivation. They argue that school belonging and feeling a sense of being accepted, respected, included and supported by their teachers and other adults in the school environment contribute immensely to academic motivation. The aspirations Life Orientation teachers and the principals have for their learners will be discussed in the next section.

### 5.3.3.5 Sub-theme 3.5: Aspirations Life Orientation teachers and the principals have for their learners

Hanushek (2009) is of the opinion that a great teacher can make a difference between a learner who achieves at high levels and a learner who slips through the cracks. He states that a great principal can help teachers succeed as part of a strong and well-supported team. Hanushek (2009) furthermore states that a learner who has great teachers for several years in a row is more likely to succeed academically, while a learner who is taught by less effective teachers may experience lasting academic challenges. Teachers want their learners to learn, to succeed and to achieve (Woytek, 2005). The Life Orientation teachers and the principals were asked about their aspirations for their grade 12 class. They hope they will not just pass grade 12 but pass with quality passes.



*“I would like for them to each have the best possible pass they can have and even better under their circumstances” (Principal 2)*

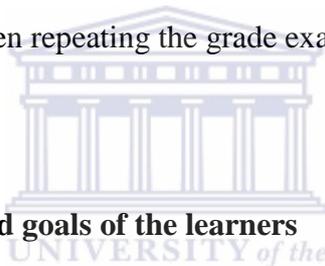
*“That they pass with quality passes, with bachelors. At the moment I have 22 of them whom have been allocated a mentor and they recently had their first meeting with the learner and their parent; discussing their goals and trying to get them into tertiary. Last year for the first time ever, only 2 grade 12s failed in our first language Afrikaans class. That class used to be the weakest academically. What experience has taught me is not every learner wants to go to university, so I do encourage them to follow their dreams.”(Principal 1)*

*“I have very high, very high aspirations for them. I want more than one distinction from them. It’s Life Orientation and I know it doesn’t count at university, but I can encourage them and make the right career and personal choices.”(Teacher 1)*

One of the teachers stated that she hopes they further their studies and not end at grade 12 so that they can change their home circumstances.

*“I wish they could continue with their studies, some don’t because they get disappointed by their results. I want them to continue their studies so that they are able to change their home circumstances. When our learners do badly in matric they are given the opportunity to improve their marks, but they don’t take that opportunity because they feel embarrassed.” (Teacher 2)*

High rates of high school dropout, lower rates of university applications, low self-efficacy and low self-confidence are risk outcomes that are associated with low-income learners (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). In the Department of Education learner retention report (2008) they document that grade repetition has been identified as the single most powerful predictor of dropping out. They further document that learners become disappointed and embarrassed and start disengaging from school activities and the fact that they have to go through exactly the same material and content when repeating the grade exacerbates the situation.



#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Aspirations and goals of the learners**

Williams (2011) is of the opinion that if a young person’s health and well-being needs are not met their ability to form positive and supportive relationships will be impacted. She states that on a basic level this influences an individual’s ability to concentrate and be fully engaged in their education and this in turn will affect their aspirations. Atherton, Cymbir, Roberts, Page and Remedios (2009) are of the opinion that teachers need to help parents assist their children to develop aspirations from an early age. Learners and their families need to be provided with quality career guidance to ensure that they are informed about opportunities, alternative pathways and the consequences of not completing school (Curtis & McMillan, 2008).

Academic achievement has a significant influence on learner aspirations (Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers, & Rumberger, 2004). Gutman and Akerman (2008) and Bowden and

Doughney (2010) state that there is a gap between aspirations and educational outcomes and that disadvantaged young people are more likely to experience this gap. They also state that there is some evidence that key individuals can have a strong influence on aspirations by the form of feedback provided to a learner by a teacher; or through opportunity structures such as the labour market; or through key relationships such as their peer groups. Teachers need to address career ignorance early in secondary school to enable learners to develop their capacity to understand the link between school success and post-school options (Frigo et al., 2007). In the table below, theme 4 and its themes are captured and summarized.

Table 5.2.3: Theme 4

Major Theme	Sub-themes
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 4:</b> Aspirations and goals of learners</p>	Learners' goals after matric and their intention to enrol at higher education institutions
	Reasoning behind goal selection and the influence finances had on them
	Aspirations the learners have and their aspirations to their teacher's knowledge

*5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Goals learners have after matric and their intention to enrol at higher education institutions*

Williams (2011) argues that although there is compelling evidence of disadvantaged young people having low aspirations, there is other research that conflicts this by highlighting the ambitious aspirations of disadvantaged young people. Temple (2009) documents that, finances are a major concern for learners enrolling into university and this is the case even when they are academically-prepared for university. A number of the learners want to go to university after grade 12; a number of those that want to go are concerned about how they will finance their studies. Some of them want to go to an FET college because they perceive

university as being too expensive for their parents. Some of them want to go to university to better their lives and that of their family members.

*“I want to go to college and apply for a bursary because my mother doesn’t have enough money to pay for my studies.” (Participant 3, FG1)*

*“I prefer to go to a college because I don’t know how my mother will be financially in 5 years’ time. If I pass well and get a bursary I will go to university but if I don’t I will go to a college.” (Participant 1, FG2)*

*“I prefer going to college because university costs a lot of money and I am not a rich person.” (Participant 7, FG2)*

*“I would to pass my matric with flying colours and then go to University of Cape Town.” (Participant7, FG3)*

*“My goal is to work that’s the first thing, to provide for my mother for all the years she has provided for me; that’s the reason I want to work and to earn a good salary. I want a good job.” (Participant5, FG5)*

Some of the learners want to go to university because they will be the first to not only pass matric, but to go to university.

*“Yes because I am the first to do matric in my family so I want to make sure that they are proud of me.” (Participant 2, FG3)*

*“I want to go to university and will be first in my family to go to university and that will make my family very proud of me especially since my father worked very hard for me to be where I am. I want to make him proud.” (Participant3, FG3)*

While a number of working-class parents have children enrolling into higher education institutions, their children often become overwhelmed by sacrifices parents had to make in order to attend school (Temple, 2009). Many learners choose to work to gain money for their families rather than enrolling into university (Bloom, 2007). Some learners want to work after grade 12 because they want to provide for their mothers whom they feel sacrificed so

much for them. Some of the learners want to work for their parents and then after a year or two when they have put away enough money they intend on going to university or a college.

*“My goal is to work that’s the first thing, to provide for my mother for all the years she has provided for me; that’s the reason I want to work and to earn a good salary. I want a good job.”(Participant5, FG1)*

*“My goal after matric is I want to work for my mom because she worked for me all these years and I want to work hard and have a good salary. I think the first thing I want to do when I get my salary is buy my mother a big house because she is the one that was there for me all these years.” (Participant 6, FG1)*

*“I don’t think I’m going to study or go to a college now because my mother has already been working for 30 years and she is getting old, I think I have to work first and earn some money for a year or two and then, maybe put some money aside and try to upgrade my subjects or study something else. But I need to work first because my mother is not always going to be there so I have to work first. Maybe after that I will study.” (Participant5, FG3)*

The differences in the life outcomes of children are determined by the characteristics of the family, such as its composition and socio-economic status (Schneider, Atterberry & Owens, 2005). She further documents that research has consistently shown that family structure can facilitate or limit the ways in which parents are able to positively influence the future outcomes of their children. Children residing in father-absent homes do graduate from high school; however they attend university at a lower rate (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). They state that about 70% of these learners graduate from high school and 50% of them attend university.

One of the learners said she does want to study but does not know how she would do that because her mother is ill. One of the learners wants to go to university but she is also concerned about her child, she feels she may need to work to support her child.

*“When I finish matric there is a lot that I want, if ever I don’t afford university I can then go to college on the other hand I want to work so that I can support my child.”*  
(Participant5, FG4)

*“I would like to go study after matric but I am not sure what to study and how to do it because I have a sick mother and I also have a child to look after; but my goal is to provide for my mother.”* (Participant 3, FG1)

Aspirations develop over time and will shift considerably throughout an individual’s life and this may represent changes in social circumstances or in an individual’s reactions to the same circumstances (Kintrea et al., 2011). The one learner reported that she does not have goals after grade 12 because she wanted to do nursing and now she no longer does; she thinks she has to work to provide for her mother.

*“I don’t actually have a goal, at first I wanted to study nursing but now I am not sure I want that and after matric I think I have to work because I have to provide for my mother.”* (Participant 4, FG1)

Cuthbert & Hatch (2009) state that parental influence in shaping the aspirations and engagement of young people is mediated by socio-economic status including their level of education, attitudes to school and the broader community context. Children of university - educated individuals are more likely to graduate from high school and attend university and have higher cognitive skills (Kezar, Frank, Lester & Yang, 2007). One learner stated that he wants to go to university because his parents are educated.

*“I want to study further because my parents are educated and I also want to be; I want to make them proud.”* (Participant 7, FG 3)

Learners gain educational aspirations, cultural and social capital from their counsellors, teachers, parents and community members (Finn, 2006). Bennet (2008) is of the opinion that having family role models with higher educational achievement may provide vicarious

learning experiences for individuals and be predictive of higher self-efficacy and in turn higher educational and vocational goals.

*5.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Reasoning behind goal-selection and the influence finances had on them*

Schaefer and Meece (2009) are of the opinion that aspirations play an important role in influencing how young people make life choices, how they think and feel about themselves; and ultimately their life choices. Learners need to be provided with effective, targeted and accurate career education (Janeiro, 2010; Curtis & McMillan, 2008; Gutman & Akerman, 2008). They further state that ongoing support for disadvantaged young people is vital; they may also require tutors or mentors to assist them with motivation and aspiration development. Some learners chose the goals that they had so that they can have better jobs than those of their family members. Some of the learners indicated that they are choosing the goals that they have chosen so that they have a bright future.

*“I want to get a better job than the ones my family members have” (Participant 2, FG 4)*

A number of the learners chose the goals that they chose so that they are able to support their families. According to statistics on average annual salary, individuals who attend university earn more money as a result of their higher levels of education (Kezar et al., 2007). They argue that university graduates earn more than twice as much as high school graduates. Kezar et al. (2007) also argue that those that attend university are employed at higher rates and with greater consistency; therefore with just a high school qualification an individual is three times less likely to be employed.

*“The way I see it I have a lot of responsibilities. I still have a younger brother and so if my mother passes away he will be my responsibility. I also have a child who is my*

*responsibility. This means I have to further my studies for a better life.”(Participant 5, FG 4)*

*“My mom doesn’t have a stable job; she gets piece jobs which means sometimes she doesn’t work. I want to go to university and succeed and get a job that will help me support my family.”(Participant 8, FG 4)*

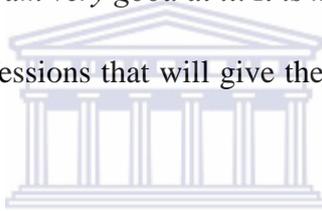
A number of them reported having a passion for what they want to study.

*“I am choosing sports administration because I have played sport before so I would love to be involved in sport again” (Participant 1, FG 3)*

*“I chose fashion design because I love art and I love design.”(Participant 5, FG 3)*

*“The career path that I chose is business, I chose it because I love things to do with business and I believe that I am very good at it. It is my passion.”(Participant 3, FG 4)*

Some of the learners wanted professions that will give them an opportunity to care and help others.



*“I chose being a social worker because I care about people. I always put others before me that is the person I am” (Participant 4, FG 3)*

People who attend university are likely to work in white collar jobs in office buildings or other facilities with air-conditioning, heating and conveniences that improve the quality of life (Kezar et al., 2007). They state that those that went to university have a variety of work options which helps stabilize their income whilst affording those individuals with the lifestyle they want. One of the learners stated that he chose the goals he chose because of the lifestyle he wants to lead and a matric will not provide that for him; hence he feels he should go to university.

*“University will bring me very close to my dreams. Plus the lifestyle I plan to live when I am older will require me to go to university. At the end of the day education is the key to a lot of doors. Just having a matric will mean I will work at checkers which will*

*mean I would probably have to wait ten years just to have a car. I want to work two years and be able to afford a car.”(Participant 1, FG 4)*

According to Froiland & Oros (2012) extrinsic motivation is what learners are most familiar with in education; it is motivation to act that comes from the external environment of the person. They further state that low-income learners are likely to pursue career paths that will provide immediate benefits and rewards. Some of the learners want to enrol at the police college because they get a form of stipend or pay whilst they are in training.

*“The reason I chose the goal that I chose is that when you are studying at the police force you get paid. I don’t really want to be in the police force, I am only going to do it because I will be getting paid whilst I do it. All I want to do is psychology, but if I just go study then financially it will be a problem at home.” (Participant 1, FG1)*

Family, passion, financial circumstance and past experiences are some of the factors that affect the decision a learner makes about what career path they would like to follow (Fizer, 2013). Learners were asked if they felt that their financial situation influenced their goals. Most of the learners felt that their financial situation and home circumstances had a great influence on the goals that they chose.

*“Yes it has because my mother works but not for much; so if I go to university and get a good job I will be able to help at home and support my siblings.”(Participant 6, FG4)*

*“Yes, well my dad does work but he has a lot of debt which makes it hard for him to do some things such as saving for university. (Participant 3, FG3)*

Some of the learners felt that it did; however what they chose is something that they love and that is why they will pursue it.

*“I could say that my financial situation influenced my goal, but that is not the only reason I chose it. What I want to do is something I love! I want to do media and*

*journalism; I want to be a radio DJ and I love that because I love talking.”(Participant 1, FG 4)*

*“It has but medicine is also something I want to study. It is not just about the money as I explained to my mother.” (Participant 4, FG 4)*

Parents’ assets and savings have a positive association with a child’s academic achievement (Zhan, 2006). Williams (2004) found that if a parent has savings, their child is more likely to study further. It has also been found that there is a correlation between savings for university and parent expectations; when parents have made means to save for university, they have higher expectations for their children (Elliot & Wagner, 2007). A few of the learners reported that their family members have saved up for them to further their education and so they do not have a financial situation.

*“The goals that I chose are not influenced by my financial situation. My dad supports me in everything that I want and he promised to pay for the things I need.”(Participant 2, FG 4)*

*“We don’t have a financial situation at home, my father has saved up quite a lot of money for my studies and I believe that I will make him proud.”(Participant 6, FG 2)*

Elliot et al. (2007) state that various theories have been offered to explain differences in academic achievement, most of which focus in one way or another on poor and minority children, the schools they attend and their family and community.

#### *5.3.4.3 Sub- theme 4.3: Aspirations learners have and their aspirations to their teacher’s knowledge*

Gutman and Akerman (2008) state that a strong assumption exist that higher education and occupational aspirations suggest more motivated individuals, whereas lower aspirations imply less commitment to learning and valuing of education. They bring attention to the point that aspirations are shaped by circumstances, what high aspirations with particular life

circumstances is to one person, may be low aspirations for another living in different circumstances. Gutman & Akerman (2008) therefore place emphasis on the fact that aspirations vary according to the context in which people live in as well as their own individual characteristics and development.

Learners were asked where they see themselves in 10 years. They all have very high aspirations, they all see themselves having a collection of material possessions such as cars, double-storey house and being able to send their children to private schools. Some of them feel they would be able to buy their parents houses and cars. Some see themselves working overseas for big companies.

*“In ten years’ time I see myself I see myself as a chief operating officer of the biggest company in South Africa and overseas.”(Participant 3, FG 3)*

*“I see myself as a CEO of a private company living in Johannesburg in Sandton in a luxury home, driving a fancy car.”(Participant 2 FG 3)*

*“I see myself in the United States of America as a fashion designer doing my stuff.”(Participant 5, FG 3)*

*“I see myself working, I would have extended my mother’s house; I would have bought her a car as well. We won’t be struggling financially; we will have all that we want. We will be happy!”(Participant 8, FG 4)*

*“I see myself living in a double story house! I will own a business with a building yeses! Such a big and beautiful building! I will be the owner and I will be calling the shots! My child will be learner at DSG at that time. I see myself with a car! I want to support my brother and pay for his education, I will take him to university! The Lord must keep him, my grandmother and my grandfather for me until all my dreams come true.”(Participant 5, FG 4)*

*“In ten years’ time I see myself sending my child to VG, I will be working and living at Gordan’s bay in Cape Town enjoying the sea view. I will have a beautiful car a BMW and will be living with my husband.”(Participant 2, FG 4)*

There was one learner who understood that 10 years was not long and so felt he would have recently finished school.

*“I see myself as a newlywed; I don’t want to say I would have my own house because 10 years is very short of that 10 years I will be in varsity for 6 years. My first born will be on his way at that time and I would have bought my mom a car because she comes first before me.” (Participant 1, FG4)*

The lifestyles they were certain they were going to be living did not quite match many of the professions they all said they want to be doing; particularly taking in consideration how long they still need to be studying in order to become the things they want to become. For example one learner wants to be a social worker, but believes she can be a millionaire in 10 years’ time with many cars.

*“I see myself as the social worker I want to be, I see myself as a millionaire with so many cars, I don’t know how many I will have because you wouldn’t be able to count them. My house yho, I don’t know how many stories it will have. But besides all that I see myself being helpful to my community and other places that need my help the most.” (Participant 4, FG 3)*

Some learners possess unrealistic career aspirations and have limited knowledge about how to achieve these aspirations (Atherton et al., 2009).

Their teachers were asked to their knowledge, what aspirations the learners had. One of the teachers indicated that their learners have high hopes and dreams but the problem is that they are unrealistic about how much work and effort they need to put in, in order to achieve what it is that they want.

*“Some of them would like to study further, but because of finances other can’t and as a result some end up working at Pick’n Pay. Our learners have high hopes and dreams but the problem is that they are unrealistic about how much work and effort they need*

*to put in, in order to achieve what it is that they want. They are under the impression that hard work should only start at university. That's the challenge we face with them, we try to push them but they just do not realise just how much it's going to take starting today, to achieve their dreams.”(Teacher 2)*

The principal from the same school had the same sentiments; the learners have high aspirations, however they do not quite understand the reality of getting there.

*“I think they have high aspirations sometimes but I don't think they understand the reality of getting there and to me that is a big problem. They do not seem to always see what it's going to take for them to get there.”(Principal 2)*

According to Rooney (2008) stability in a learner's elementary and secondary schooling experience is a contributing influence in their success. One of the teachers stated that the learners do have shortcomings; however due to back logs in their education from their primary years they face a lot of shortcomings.

*“I actually have three classes and most of them have high aspirations but because we are a public school that has its shortcomings they are not prepared from grade 8 and 9 and even some primary schools; some of these learners don't have teachers in some primary schools, grade 8 and grade 9 classes. You can see from this that they have a back log but they try, and we just pray that they will be successful. Some want to pass with a bachelor but because of the back log it's going to be difficult; I'm not saying it's too late though. They try very hard, I even ask the parents to get a tutor for them for the year and then they won't fail and then have to go to a finishing or take a gap year next year.”(Teacher 2)*

Cuthbert and Hatch (2009) suggest that teachers need to promote career planning skills and also facilitate their aspirations. They further state that they need to develop their optimism and self-esteem to help them become confident young people who feel equipped to achieve their goals and are able to cope with disappointments.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the themes and sub-themes as derived from data analysis, as well as the relevant demographic data of the participants were presented. Sufficient data in the form of verbatim quotes from participants were presented to support the findings of the study. The data was described according to themes and sub-themes and the findings were also compared and contrasted with existing literature.

The next chapter concludes this study with a summary, conclusions of the findings, and recommendations.

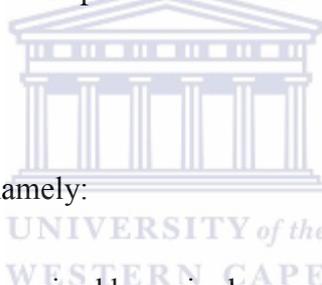


## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to explore and describe how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. The aim was accomplished through the use of a qualitative research approach which sought to explore and describe the social phenomena in terms of meaning brought by people (Boeije, 2010). The research question, which was: How does single parenting in a disadvantaged community influence a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution, was answered in Chapter 5 where research findings were presented and discussed.



The study's two objectives were namely:

- explore and describe how being raised by a single parent influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution
- explore how residing in a low socio-economic status community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution

The objectives were accomplished in achieving the aim of the study and answering the research question. Three sets of data were analysed; data from learners, parents, and teachers and principals. Four themes emerged and were discussed in Chapter 5. Literature was utilised to explain, substantiate, compare and contrast the findings of this study. In Chapter 6, the final chapter of the study, a brief summary on each of the foregoing chapters, as well as conclusions and recommendations from the findings will be given.

## 6.2 Summary

This section encapsulates the chapters covered in this research paper.

### 6.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 served as the outline of the study through which the background of the study, the problem statement, research aim, research objectives and methodology were introduced. The research question that was generated from the research problem was answered by means of an explorative and descriptive research design. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory applied as a theoretical framework for the study was discussed. The qualitative research approach, which was the researcher's choice of approach, was considered appropriate to address the research problem. Purposive sampling for the selection of participants was employed; and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were utilised as a means of data collection. Data was analysed through thematic analysis. Strategies to ensure trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of the study were also discussed. In conclusion, the researcher deduced that the qualitative research approach and the designs and methodology used in the study were adequate for reaching the aim and objectives of the study.

### 6.2.2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 discussed and applied the selected theoretical framework, namely Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. This theory accounts for the development of children through a holistic interaction with their environment from the immediate family environment, to broader society. This theory's origin was presented. The influences of this theory namely, cross-cultural contexts, Lev Vygotsky & Kurt Lewin were

discussed. The micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono systems were discussed and applied to the study. With this theory's applicability the researcher was to conclude that Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory was the most suitable theory for this study as it adequately described it.

### 6.2.3 Chapter 3

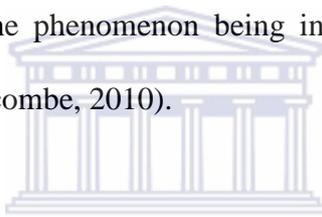
In Chapter 3 literature of relevance to the research topic was reviewed. Education in disadvantaged communities was discussed with close attention being paid to South Africa's education system as well as the distinctive features of such schools and their educators. Literature pertaining to single parenting and their socio-economic status was discussed highlighting the minimal resources these parents are likely to have, affecting the learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. Parental involvement, its significance, benefits and importance was also discussed. This mostly emphasized how pivotal parent involvement is for learner success. The role schools could play in parent involvement was also presented and discussed. It was found that parents' aspirations have an influence on their children's aspirations; therefore literature pertaining to parental aspirations for their children, single-parents' aspirations for their children as well as the aspirations of children from single-parent households were reviewed and discussed.

The researcher concluded that the literature reviewed was in line with the aim and the objectives of the study, and served as a reference for the study.

### 6.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 provided a description of the research methodology that was employed during the study. A qualitative research approach with an explorative and descriptive research design

was utilized. Grade 12 learners, their parents, Life Orientation educators and the principals from two senior secondary schools in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape formed the population of this study. The sampling strategy utilised was purposive sampling. Thirty-two learners were part of the focus group discussions; ten parents, two Life Orientation teachers and two principals were interviewed. Learners had to be in grade 12 and enrolled at School A and B. A further criterion was that learners had to be brought up by single parents. Parents were selected on the basis that their child had to have met the above criteria. A further pre-requisite was that their children had to have taken part in a focus group discussion of this particular study. The Life Orientation educators for grade 12 learners and the schools principals at both schools were selected to partake. These participants were chosen with the assumption that they are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being investigated and studied and could therefore provide rich data (Denscombe, 2010).



Data collection occurred through the use of semi-structured interviews with the aid of an interview guide for the parents, Life Orientation teachers and principals. Focus group discussions with the aid of a focus group guide were conducted with the purposively sampled grade 12 learners. An explanation was given of the interview protocol followed for all the individual interviews and focus group discussions. The data collection process started with preparation and refining of the interview and focus group discussion schedules, setting up of the interviews, preparation of the participants, and conduction of the pilot interviews to the actual data collection process. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed according to Tesch's eight steps of data analysis as proposed by De Vos et al. (2004). The data analysis culminated in the themes and subthemes presented in Chapters 5. Trustworthiness was utilised to ensure the reliability and validity of this study. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent and

informed assent were discussed in detail to provide evidence of adherence to research ethics in conducting this study. The chapter concluded with the encountered limitations of the study which included the difficulty in obtaining a sample from the schools due to the time their academic calendar; the language barrier with Afrikaans first language speaker parents; difficulty finding parents due to their work schedules and their locations during the time of the study.

### 6.2.5 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 comprises of the research findings obtained from learners, their parents, Life Orientation teachers and principals that formed part of the study and presented by means of themes and sub-themes. The demographic details of the latter participants were tabulated and then discussed. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis were presented and compared and contrasted to existing literature. Four themes and their respective sub-themes were generated from the obtained data. A summary and conclusions of these themes are presented in the following sections.

## 6.3 Summary of themes and sub-themes

This segment provides a summary of the themes presented in chapter 5.

### 6.3.1 Theme 1: Single parenting in a disadvantaged community

The micro-system is the inner most system in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory; the family is embedded in this system. The learner interacts with their microsystems daily, it is where they learn life skills and their demeanour; it is where their values and morals are instilled. The family consists of the first social agents of the child therefore understanding

their microsystem becomes imperative to understand the child in other contexts; their aspirations, how they interact with their peers and how they are in the classroom.

Looking at the relationship between the learners and their parents, it is evident that quite a number of parents reported to having good and open relationships with their children. One of the parents stated that his relationship with his child is that 'of siblings'; he demonstrated an understanding of the impact his actions and demeanour has on his child. Another parent however indicated that she had a difficult relationship with her child because she was unable to provide some material resources. Literature acknowledged that single parents are at a disadvantage because of the minimal resources at their disposal; making it difficult for them to provide for their children. One of the mothers reported that she found it difficult to talk to her son about certain matters because of the gender difference. Literature found there is an association between gender and impaired communication with mothers and sons; however they also found that this varied between countries, meaning there is a cultural element at play.

Understanding the dynamics in the learner's home may shed light on the learner's demeanour in the classroom, their attitude towards education, and the way they interact and treat others as well as their mood. When teachers better understand this, they will be better equipped to attend to the individual needs of school learners.

Parents were asked about their decision-making pertaining to their child. One of the parents found it so difficult that she wished her child's father was still alive. Literature states that regardless of whether it is money or time, single parents have fewer resources to provide for their children than two-parent households. It also stipulates that due to low income some parents may choose to forgo a number of resources that may be of benefit to the child just to make ends meet. One of the parents reported that she prioritizes by assessing what is urgent

and what can wait. It was also evident that a number of the parents are transparent about their finances to their children. Literature states that one of the benefits of single parenting is that there is no one to defer or undermine your authority; one of the parents reported that she preferred making the decisions alone. Literature also states that single mothers are more likely to rely on the help of their family members than single fathers. In this study some of the mothers reported to seeking assistance from some of their elders and even from their eldest children.

The meso-system is the interaction between the micro-systems; the learner's micro-systems are the family, classroom and their peers. An example of a successful and functioning meso system is when the school and the home collaborate. According to literature parental involvement in children's education has been found as a strong predictor of academic achievement and positive behaviour. One of the parents reported that it was easier to assist their child with homework when they were in younger grades, now it has become difficult. Literature also stipulates that parents emanating from low socio-economic status communities are likely to be uneducated therefore making it difficult for them to understand what is expected of their child at school. Teachers, learners and parents all agreed that parents cannot assist their children with homework because the content that is being dealt with is not content they understand. One of the parents stated that she cannot assist her child with homework because her child knows more than her. Literature documents that when a parent feels confident about the impact they will make on their child's academics, they are more likely to be involved. One of the parents reported that she helps her child with his homework because she feels her English skills are better than his. Parents and learners agreed that parents assist them according to their own abilities; whether it is poetry, reading novels, providing definitions or simply making sure they have no outstanding homework. Some parents cannot

assist their child with homework because they work out of town. The teachers stated that they do make an effort to be involved in their grade 12 year because they view it as an imperative year. One of the principals stated that it is the parents of the most academically-performing that are most involved. Parents were also asked about their knowledge with regards to their child's strengths and weaknesses; a number of them were aware. One of the parents found it difficult to say because he felt that his son was at that age where he is exploring a lot. Some parents were not too sure because they work out of town.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory consists of a system termed the exo-system. This is the system the learner does not function directly in, but is affected by it. Barriers of parental involvement are highlighted in this study; these barriers are embedded in the exo-system. It is imperative for teachers to fully comprehend a learner's exo-system because it provides context and an explanation on how involved a parent may be in their children's academic life. This becomes even more important because parental involvement is an indicator of learner success. It is also the responsibility of the learner and the parent to ensure that teachers are aware of the dynamics of the exo-system so that they can find ways for the home and the school to successfully collaborate the best way possible for their situation.

Parents and learners agreed that their parents do have plans for them; however they do not want to force them into doing anything. A number of the parents want their child to go to university. One of the parents reported that she does not have plans for her child because money is a problem. Some learners feel like although their parents may have plans for them, they will support them in anything they decide. According to one of the learners, her mother is not involved nor does she think she has plans for her because she does not think she cares. Literature states that parental characteristics, education and income influences the hopes and desires parents have for their children. Some learners reported that their parents want them to study; however also needed them to work to help at home. One of the learners reported that

his mother wants him to study further, just not far from home. Due to the high unemployment rate in South Africa, one of the learners reported that her father wants her to join the military after grade 12.

Literature stipulates that the perception of education is influenced by opportunity and financial costs of education and the perceived benefits of education. A number of parents placed a lot of emphasis on how far education can take their children. Although finances are an issue, a number of parents would like for their child to study further than grade 12. One of the parents reported that she had already saved money for her child's education. Literature reports that children from poor neighbourhoods are less likely to be motivated to study further mainly because of the perception that it will not bring them its full benefits. Some parents motivated their children towards studying further and others did not. Those that studied further than grade 12 use themselves as examples. Those with older children who studied further use them as motivators. Other parents use the fact that they are ready to pay for their tuition as motivation.

Most of the parents have high aspirations for their children; however it was difficult to say the same about their aspirations for themselves. A number of the parents are looking to be supported by their children. Literature stipulates that the aspirations that people have reflect the culture and economic conditions in which they find themselves. Although some parents were not sure if they would be alive in 10 years, they still had high aspirations for themselves.

### **6.3.2 Theme 2: Residing in a disadvantaged community**

The macro-system in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory are the laws, customs and the individual's cultural context which includes their socioeconomic status, their race and

their ethnicity. This system becomes vital to understand because it is the basis from which the learner's aspirations are formed and shaped.

The teachers and principals gave a variety of responses when asked if the low socio-economic status of the learners affects the learners in the classroom. Literature states that family responsibilities are the reason some learners are absent from school. Teachers alluded to the absenteeism that is a result of factors in the home. In some cases they do not do their work nor come to school due to a sick parent or sick baby, but even then they do not talk about it; they try to deal with it on their own. In some instances they cannot come to school because they have to look after their siblings. One of the principals felt it would affect them more if they were surrounded by learners that were more affluent than them. According to literature, poverty is a bit harder in relation to others; when learners are equally poor they may be less likely to feel excluded or drop out as a result of comparing themselves to those with greater socio-economic status. One of the teachers reported that it affects them a lot, particularly those that reside on farms due to transport issues. This even results in these learners missing classes. She also reported that some learners come to school without eating and others do not have the full uniform. Fortunately their school has a feeding scheme; and a more affluent school donates some uniform items to them, for learners in need.

Literature states that poverty affects children in such a negative way that it makes it difficult to succeed in school. One of the parents illustrated how her child suffered in class because of their financial problems the previous year. The struggled so much that other children would laugh and gossip about her. This affected her academics negatively. One of the principles reported that some of these learners do not see themselves escaping the cycle of poverty, therefore they need constant motivation. Literature stipulates that learners from poor backgrounds see their future containing more negatives than positives and over time develop a sense of helplessness.

When teachers get a better understanding of their learner's micro-system, exo-system and macro-system they will be better equipped to motivate and guide their learners leading them to success. Teachers will better understand the relationships learners have with their family members; they will better understand the reasons parents are involved in certain ways and they will better understand the context the learner resides in and how it ultimately influences and shapes their aspirations. Only then will they be able to make a meaningful and effective contribution to the learner's future plans.

It is stated in literature that aspirations do not exist in a vacuum but rather within a social context. A number of learners reported that it is the unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse into their communities that motivate them. Others reported that their community makes them want to bring about change. Some learners stated that their communities are full of supportive people that encourage them; whilst others reported that some demotivated them by asking questions like what is the point of studying if one is going to remain unemployed anyway. One of the teachers insisted that the community that a child comes from will not always determine them. The other teacher reported that the communities these learners came from worked as eye-openers for the learners. They were an example of what not to be. The one principal expressed great concern about how learners will aspire to what is on television if there are no role models in their community. The other principal emphasized how it is the values instilled in the learners by their families that will protect them from the world's negative influences.

### **6.3.3 Theme 3: Schools in disadvantaged communities**

The school and the classroom are also the learners micro-system, this is where the learners learn academic content and life skills; it is also where they are further socialized as well as motivated and inspired to become anything in the world. This therefore means the

relationship of the primary agents the learners interact with has to be a good and constructive one if they are to have such an influence on the learners. This relationship is crucial because in some instances learners, particularly in the context of this study do not have parents who necessarily know about higher education and all it entails therefore requiring more of the teacher.

Life Orientation teachers and the principals of the respective schools reported having a good relationship with their Grade 12s. One of the principals reported that her relationship with the grade 12s was up and down because she pushes them. Literature stipulates that effective teachers should have high expectations and that learners see caring teachers as those who set limits for them, provide them with structure and hold high expectations for them to achieve. Learners reported that some teachers motivate them through their efforts, motivation and resources they make available to them and others demotivate them in the form of negative comments in the classroom and in their reports. Some learners feel their teachers go beyond the call of duty because they teach them on weekends too.

Literature states that learners who do not have family members who studied in institutions of higher learning often look towards the school as their main support; therefore teachers, guidance counsellors and administrators need to motivate learners to complete college applications and financial aid applications. Teachers and principals reported that they provide their learners with sufficient information about higher education institutions. Teachers, principals and learners reported that learners go to career days where they get exposed to a variety of career options. They stated that representatives visit their respective schools and inform them about the various courses offered at their institutions, including the entry requirements. They also reported the involvement of GADRA finishing school and its mentoring of some grade 12 learners at both schools. Teachers, principals and learners also made mention of their participation in the telematics program which is interactive lessons

organised by Stellenbosch University through a screen. Learners also reported that their teachers provided them with information about bursaries and applications for higher education institutions.

One of the teachers reported that she uses herself as an example when she motivates the learners because she comes from a similar background. The principals stated that they bring in motivation speakers to speak to them and also expose them to opportunities. Bringing the school's alumni to speak to the learners is also an initiative one of the principals has introduced in her school. According to literature, in motivating learners, schools should develop social networks that can reach out beyond the local neighbourhood to provide disadvantaged children and help young people with a diverse range of contacts, inspiration, information and opportunities.

Both schools make a great effort to foster a functioning meso-system. Literature states that for teachers to be effective they must be prepared to collaborate with families to support learner success. In both schools they invite parents to attend meetings. Teachers stressed parent involvement and the fact that it needs to begin at an earlier stage than grade 12. They encourage parents to ask any questions they are unclear about as well as setting time aside to see teachers individually. In one of the schools they expect the parent to fetch the learner's report so that they have the opportunity to discuss the report. One of the principals reported that Gadra finishing school has an initiative where it works with a couple of parents and provides them with suggestions of how they can be more involved in their child's academic life.

Some parents and learners feel that some teachers make an effort to involve their parents; some do not. One of the learners stated that teachers do not involve their parents but will rather call them aside to speak to them about the matter. One of the parents reported being

given the opportunity to sit in his child's desk to go through his books during one of the meetings, providing him with an opportunity to see what happens in the classroom. Literature stipulates that teachers are more likely to communicate with parents when their children misbehave or face significant academic problems. Some learners reported that some teachers only involve their parents for negative reasons such as them failing or not doing their homework; rather than positive things, such as them passing very well. One of the learners also reported that they involve their parents when they are performing poorly academically, to perhaps assess if anything at home may be contributing to that.

All teachers and principals are hoping that their grade 12 learners will pass with quality passes. One of the principals acknowledges that not every learner wants to go to university and so encourages them to follow their dreams. One of the teachers reported that she hopes they will study further so that they can change their home circumstances. Literature states that high dropout rates, lower rates of college applications, and low-self-confidence is associated with low-income learners.

The teachers and one of the principals feel like they do extra at the schools they teach at. They feel like they do things they would not be doing if they were at affluent schools. One of the principals however did not feel like she was doing anything differently particularly since she was previously a principal at an affluent school. She reported that she did home visits there and she still does them at this school; she states that there are challenges learners face regardless of their socio-economic status. One of the principals reported that they do not have designated roles, they do everything; they are a nurse, a social worker, a policeman, a psychologist, a teacher, a mother, a father; they are involved in the life of their learners.

When queried about how sufficient the resources these teachers have at their disposal; one of the principals reported that they do not have enough admin staff and that the resources for their learners are limited. One of the teachers stated that she cannot take learners to workshops and trainings because they would have to walk, resulting in missing a whole day of school; therefore they need more resources to assist with that. The other teacher and principal reported having sufficient resources at their disposal.

When teachers and principals were provided the opportunity to state the support they required in order to be of better assistance to the learners, one of the principals mentioned she needed subject advisors from the district office because they are the ones with the knowledge and expertise. She also stated that she needs committed and dedicated teachers and parents; she also emphasized the need for a safe environment for the learners. The other principal felt she should look after herself because there is no use in running empty whilst trying to assist others. According to literature there are still a number of schools with insufficient resources and this affects the academic outcomes of learners. One of the teachers stipulated that she gets support from the Department of Education and her school, but she is not getting enough resources. One of the teachers stated that she would like to attend more seminars, workshops and teacher forums where learner issues can be discussed because currently they only occur once in two years.

#### **6.3.4 Theme 4: Aspirations and goals of the learners**

The Chrono-system in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory speaks of how changes in the family structure, socioeconomic status or even employment can influence the individual. It then becomes vital to understand the learner's chrono-system because of the impact it has on the learner's aspirations. As discussed in this study the learner's aspirations

are influenced by the fact that they are raised by single parents, the employment status of their parents as well as their socioeconomic status. Teachers need to be cognizant of this particularly when doing career planning with their learners.

Literature stipulates that although there is compelling evidence of disadvantaged young people having low aspirations there is other research that conflicts this by the ambitious aspirations of disadvantaged young people. A number of learners would like to go to university after grade 12, however a number of them are concerned about how they will pay for their tuition. Some of the learners reported wanting to go to a college because they perceive university as being too expensive for their parents. Other learners want to go to university so that they can better their lives and that of their family members. Some of the learners want to go to university because they will be the first to not only pass matric, but to go to university.

According to literature while a number of working class parents have children enrolling into higher education institutions, their children often become overwhelmed by the sacrifices their parents had to make. Some learners would like to work next year because they feel indebted to their parent because of all the sacrifices they have made. Some of the learners want to work for their parents and then after a year or two when they have saved enough money they intend on going to university or college. One of the learners stated that she does want to study but does not know how she would do that because her mother is ill. Another learner wants to go to university but she is also concerned about her child; she feels she may need to work to support her child.

Learners provided some reasons for their chosen goals: want to go to university because they want better jobs than those of their family members; want a bright future; want to be able to support their families; and wanted professions that will give them an opportunity to care and

help others. Literature states that low-income learners are likely to pursue career paths that will provide immediate benefits and rewards. Some of the learners want to enrol at a police college because they get a form of stipend or pay whilst they are in training. For other learners selecting their goal was influenced by their community.

Contrary to popular belief that learners from disadvantaged communities have low aspirations, quite a number of learners have high aspirations. However what was noteworthy was that they envisioned having expensive material possessions in ten years' time; this included having the financial capacity to buy these expensive material possessions for their parents and families. There were some learners who made mention of how far they would be in their career; others even envisioned themselves being overseas. It was also notable that some learners were unrealistic about what they would have in ten years' time, when looking at their career choice. One learner wants to be a social worker, but in ten years' time she envisions being a millionaire with numerous cars. There was one learner who stuck out; he understood that ten years was not long and so he gave a realistic response of where he is likely to be, and what he would have.

One of the principals reported that their learners have high aspirations; however they do not quite understand the reality of what it is going to take to get there. The other principal stated that learners want various things such as working or studying, but those that want to study are concerned about finances. One of the teachers feels that learners are already at a disadvantage because of back logs in their education from their primary years.

Through this study, the researcher acknowledges that being reared in a single-parent household and attending schools in a disadvantaged community influences one's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. In this view, the following recommendations are made to different stakeholders.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

The researcher developed three sets of recommendations which included recommendations for (a) Department of Education, (b) high schools in disadvantaged areas (c) Higher Education Institutions to decrease the barriers against enrolling at higher education institutions and to improve the quality of education. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

### **6.4.1 Department of Education**

- There is great concern about resources at these schools. Literature states that teachers are more likely to leave schools that have limited resources because it limits them. The DoE needs to conduct a needs assessment and provide schools with the necessary resources. This includes teachers and administrative staff.
- There should be a registered Educational Psychologist at every school.
- Schools teachers from disadvantaged communities need better training regarding the psycho-social issues their learners face.
- There needs to be more contact between subject advisors from the DoE and teachers because they have the expertise.
- The DoE needs to provide training, debriefings, self-care workshops and seminars on how to manage the issues learners face and how teachers can cope and take care of themselves. When teachers are better equipped to take care of themselves, they will take better care of the learners.
- The DoE needs to provide better incentives for good teachers to stay at these schools because currently they are moving to more affluent schools. This results in a higher

percentage of unskilled teachers teaching a larger cohort of learners with greater needs.

#### **6.4.2 Higher Education Institutions**

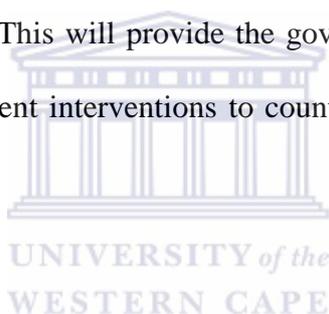
- Higher Education Institutions need to do an analysis of what the barriers to enrolling into university and college are at schools.
- Higher Education Institutions need to tailor-make their information sessions with high school learners so that they have all the necessary information before learners assume enrolling at higher education institutions is inconceivable.

#### **6.4.3 High schools from disadvantaged communities**

- Teachers and principals at these schools need to stress and explain the significance of parent involvement from grade one.
- Schools need to find ways of involving single parents in the learner's academic life; however they first need to fully comprehend the barriers to parent involvement and then find ways to meet them halfway.
- Schools need to provide the necessary information about university and college, including available funding to learners and their parents from a younger grade. This will be of use to those who genuinely want to study further but are concerned about finances.
- Teachers and principals need to realise the great influence they have on these learners; therefore they need to constantly motivate them, encourage them to dream big, be their source of information and constantly be aware of their well-being.

#### **6.4.4 Future research**

- Studies on a larger scale on the barriers of parent involvement of single parents need to be conducted as they may yield information that will aid schools with the necessary information for programs to be implemented to improve parent involvement.
- Quantitative studies on the barriers to the enrolment into university and college for learners from disadvantaged areas need to be conducted so that it can provide schools, DoE, higher education institutions and the government with a basis to create relevant interventions.
- Qualitative studies on the reasons teachers leave schools in disadvantaged areas should be conducted. This will provide the government with accurate reasons so that they may implement interventions to counteract the move as it affects these schools negatively.



#### **6.5 Conclusion**

The research aim and objectives were achieved and the research question answered through qualitative enquiry which was considered the most suitable research approach for this study as it required rich comprehensive data. The findings of this study provided insightful knowledge on how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution.

This final chapter provided the reader with a summary and conclusions of the above-mentioned chapters from the introduction, literature review, applied methodology to the major research findings. It is based on the findings of this study that the researcher made recommendations for the Department of Education, higher education institutions, high schools in disadvantaged communities and future research. In conclusion, the researcher

hopes that this study provided insight into factors that influence a learner who is raised by a single parent in a disadvantaged community when they are deciding whether to enrol into an institution of higher learning. The researcher hopes the study made it clear that the level of investment parents, teachers and caregivers have in a child's education will influence their outcome therefore showing the necessity of the Department of Education, teachers and parents to invest more in the academics of these learners.



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**UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE**

**Appendix A**

**SR1**

**DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT**

**UWC RESEARCH PROJECT REGISTRATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE  
APPLICATION FORM**

This application will be considered by UWC Faculty Board Research and Ethics Committees, then by the UWC Senate Research Committee, which may also consult outsiders on ethics questions, or consult the UWC ethics subcommittees, before registration of the project and clearance of the ethics. No project should proceed before project registration and ethical clearance has been granted.

<b>A. PARTICULARS OF INDIVIDUAL APPLICANT</b>	
NAME: Azola Ralo	TITLE: Miss
DEPARTMENT: Social Work	FACULTY: CHS
FIELD OF STUDY: Masters in Child and Family Studies	
<b>ARE YOU:</b> A member of UWC academic staff? A member of UWC support staff? A registered UWC student? From outside UWC, wishing to research at or with UWC?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

## B. PARTICULARS OF PROJECT

PROJECT NUMBER: TO BE ALLOCATED BY SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE: November 2015

PROJECT TITLE:

An exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution

THREE KEY WORDS DESCRIBING PROJECT: Single parenting, post school education, disadvantaged community

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT: This study will provide better understanding around what influences a learner's decision to enroll at a higher education institution. It will broaden our knowledge about how resilient children with single parents from disadvantaged communities are in the face of adversity. This study will also highlight whether there is a significant role a single parent plays in the process of decision making about their child's post school education.

M-DEGREE: Masters in Child and Family Studies (MACFS) D-DEGREE:

POST GRADUATE RESEARCH:



SIGNATURE OF THESIS STUDENT RESEARCHER – WHERE APPROPRIATE:

DATE

SIGNATURE OF THESIS SUPERVISOR – WHERE APPROPRIATE:

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER – WHERE APROPRIATE:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRPERSON:

DATE:

NOTE: THESE SIGNATURES IMPLY AN UNDERTAKING *BY THE RESEARCHERS*, TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH ETHICALLY, AND AN UNDERTAKING BY THE THESIS SUPERVISOR (WHERE APPROPRIATE), AND THE DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRPERSON, TO MAINTAIN A RESPONSIBLE OVERSIGHT OVER THE ETHICAL CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH.

**E. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AND RESEARCH ETHICS STATEMENT**



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

## **Abstract**

There are strengths offered by single parent families, however research on children's educational outcomes has not found positive outcomes. Children from disadvantaged families are less likely to graduate from high school and attend an institution of higher learning. Educational resilience refers to the capacity of students to attain academic and social success despite exposure to personal and environmental adversities. Parental characteristics such as educational level, income and parents' aspirations for their children are variables said to influence schooling outcomes of South African learners. The aim of this study is to explore and describe how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory will be used in this study because it speaks to how one's environment influences a child's development. A qualitative research methodology will be used. The sample will include Grade 12 learners raised in single parent homes from two senior secondary schools in the Eastern Cape using purposive sampling. The parents of these learners will also form part of the sample and purposive sampling will be utilized to select them. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussions and field notes will be used as data collection tools. Data analysis will be conducted by means of a thematic analysis technique to extract common and diverse themes. Permission from the Eastern Cape Education Department and the school principals will be obtained to get access to the learners. All ethical considerations will be adhered to such as voluntary participation, informed consent from parents and informed assent from adolescents and no harm to participants will be adhered to. Furthermore confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible.

## **Ethical Consideration**

This research will be guided by the following principles: (1) privacy; (2) anonymity; (3) confidentiality; (4) truthful; and (5) voluntary participation (Neuman, 1997, p. 452). Participants have the right to anonymity as they are not obliged to give identification details in order to participate. Confidentiality relates to the protection of the data collected (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Participants have the right to confidentiality and interviews will be conducted between the researcher and the participant only. Participation is voluntary, that is the participant has the right to choose whether or not to participate and have the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Participants who will be interviewed will be requested to sign a consent form, while those taking part in the focus group discussions will sign a confidentiality binding form. For learners under the age of 18, informed assent will be obtained from them by asking them to sign an informed assent form that

states that they are voluntarily participating in the study. Every researcher should be ethically sound and treated participants with respect and dignity (Neuman, 2006) and protected from physical or psychological harm. Rubin & Babbie (2005) stipulate that it is a fundamental ethical rule of social research that it must bring no harm to its subjects; therefore the researcher will ensure to the best of their ability that the learners, teachers and the parents will not be harmed. Participants who need intervention after the interview will be referred for debriefing. Researcher will also seek permission from the Senate Higher Degrees of the University of the Western Cape as well as the ECED for permission to conduct the study in the schools.



Form issued by: Professor Renfrew Christie, UWC Dean of Research, February 2002.  
(959 2949; 959 2948 secretary, 959 3170 fax, email: rchristie@uwc.ac.za)

## **Appendix B**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

**Project Title: An exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences on learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution**

#### **What is this study about?**

This is a research project being conducted by Azola Ralo at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you can provide insight on whether single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. The purpose of this research project is to explore and describe how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion if you are a learner. In this discussion various questions will be asked and the as a group you will be asked to give genuine responses. The latter responses will be recorded and documented. As a parent you will be

participating in a semi structured interview where a series of questions will be posed and you will be expected to answer genuinely. You will be part of the study for the duration of the interviews. The focus group discussion will take place on the school grounds and the semi-structured interview will take place at the parents' homes.

#### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, \_the information you will be providing will be totally private; no names will be used so there will be no way you can be identified for participating in this study. Your information will be anonymous and treated confidentially. This will be done by (1) your name will not be included on the report and (2) a pseudonym will be placed on the report. The reports will be kept in a lock cabinet and only the interviewer and the research supervisor will have access to this information. The research findings will not include any personal

details. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible

**What are the risks of this research?**

There are no known risks in participating in the study. However, some parents/learners may find sharing their information to stressful. In such cases parents/learners will be de-briefed.

**What are the benefits of this research?**

The benefits to you include *[only list the direct and reasonably expected benefits to the subject. Monetary compensation and extra credit for courses are not benefits and should be described in the procedures section]* \_\_\_\_\_

*or*

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. What aspirations single parents have for their children and if these aspirations influence their child's decision making. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of what kind of additional support these children and their families require to strengthen their resilience in order to escape the cycle of poverty. Additional support such as access to resources and information about the learners options after matric and additional resources such as tutorial programmes offered by other schools or universities to help learners who do not have that advantage at their schools. Additional support from the department of education and other higher education institutions to ensure that academically resilient learners are not deprived at school when they are so determined to succeed.

*Describe the anticipated benefits to science or society expected from the research, if any.*

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify

### **What if I have questions?**

You are free to ask me to clarify any questions you may have before, during and after the research. As the principal researcher, I am obliged to respond to any questions you may have. You also have the option of contacting the Head of the Department (HOD) in the Social Work Department to ask further questions or to the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences under which I fall. The contact details are:

Principle researcher: Azola Ralo: 076 825 7768: 3048287@myuwc.ac.za

Head of Department:

Prof. C Schenk Department of Social Work

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville

7535

Tel: 021 959 2011



Dean of the Faculty: Prof J Franz:

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**  
**INFORMATION SHEET TEMPLATE**  
**ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES**

**Informed Consent**

Informed consent is a process, not just a form. Information must be presented to enable persons to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate as a research subject. Therefore, informed consent language and its documentation must be written in language that is understandable to the people being asked to participate.

**Research Involving Minors**

For research involving individuals under the age of 18, include a Parental Permission Form to ask parents for consent to the participation of their child and an Assent Form to ask the minors if they agree to participate in the research, depending on whether the children are capable of assenting. The Parental Permission form should contain all of the elements of the sample consent form. However, the parental permission form should be written in language appropriate for parents granting permission for their child's involvement rather than as though they themselves will be participating (e.g. we are inviting your child to participate the risks to your child's participation include). When determining whether the children are capable of assenting, take into account the ages, maturity, and psychological state of the children involved. Assent forms should be written in age-appropriate language.

**Research Involving Individuals with Impaired Decision-making Capacity**

Using the Informed Consent Form Template, prepare a consent form to ask the research subject's authorized representative for consent to the participation of the research subject. Prepare an assent form to ask the research subjects if they agree to participate in the research, depending on whether the subjects are capable of assenting.

When determining whether the subjects are capable of assenting, take into account the decision-making capacity of the research subjects.

## **SUGGESTED WORDING**

Instructions: You should cut and paste these paragraphs, where applicable, into the appropriate area of the Informed Consent Form. However, the suggested wording below should be modified appropriately for the specifics of your study.

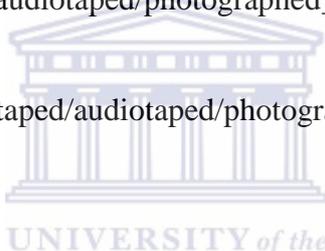
### **Audio taping/Videotaping/Photographs/Digital Recordings**

**[Include the following information in the What about confidentiality? section]**

This research project involves making *[audiotapes/videotapes/photographs]* of you. **[Then explain why the tapes/photos are being made, who will have access to them, where they will be stored, and when (or if) they will be destroyed]**

\_\_\_ I agree to be *[videotaped/audiotaped/photographed]* during my participation in this study.

\_\_\_ I do not agree to be *[videotaped/audiotaped/photographed]* during my participation in this study.



### **Research Projects Involving Data Collection in a Classroom**

**[Include the following information in the Do I have to be in this research? Can I stop participating at any time? Section]**

Participation in the research is not a course requirement.

### **Research Projects Involving Prisoners**

**[Include the following information in the Do I have to be in this research? Can I stop participating at any time? Section]**

Your decision to participate or not participate in this research project will not affect or influence the length of your sentence, your parole, or any other aspect of your incarceration. Also, if you decide to participate and then leave the study before it is over, that will not affect

or influence the length of your sentence, your parole, or any other aspect of your incarceration.



## Appendix C



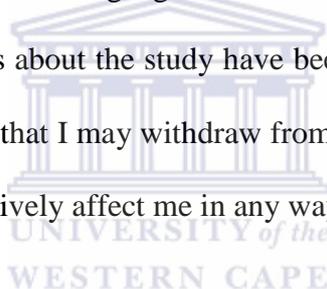
### UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa  
Social Work Department  
*Tel: +27 21-9592277, Fax: 27 21-9592845*  
*Email : 3048287@myuwc.ac.za*

### CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** An exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.



**Participant's name**.....

**Participant's signature**.....

**Parent Signature**.....

**Date**.....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

**Study Coordinator's Name: Azola Ralo**

**University of the Western Cape**

**Private Bag X17, Belville 7535**

**Cell: 076 825 7768**

**Email: 3048287@myuwc.ac.za**

## Appendix D



### UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Social Work Department

*Tel: +27 21-9592277, Fax: 27 21-9592845*

*Email : 3048287@myuwc.ac.za*

### CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** An exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

**Participant's name**.....

**Participant's signature**.....

**Witness**.....

**Date**.....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

**Study Coordinator's Name:** Azola Ralo

**University of the Western Cape**

**Private Bag X17, Belville 7535**

**Cell: 076 825 7768**

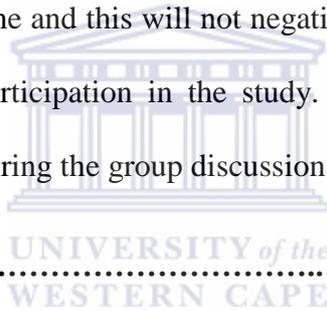
**Email: [3048287@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:3048287@myuwc.ac.za)**

## Appendix E

### FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

**Title of Research Project:** An exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way. I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in the study. I also agree not to disclose any information that was discussed during the group discussion.



**Participant's name**.....

**Participant's signature**.....

**Witness's name**.....

**Witness's signature**.....

**Date**.....

## Appendix F

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### QUESTIONS

1. What are your goals after Matric?
2. Do you intend on going to University, College, Technicon and why?
3. Why did you choose the goals that you chose?
4. Explain how involved your parent is in your academics
5. What efforts do your teachers make to involve your parents in your academic life?
6. What are your parent's plans for you after matric
7. Do you think your financial situation influenced your goals? If yes how? If no explain?
8. How does the community you are from influence your goals?  
-
9. How do your teachers and principal contribute to your goal setting?
10. Do your teachers or principal play any role in providing information regarding higher education institutions such as Universities, Colleges, or Technichons? If yes how?
11. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

## **Appendix G**

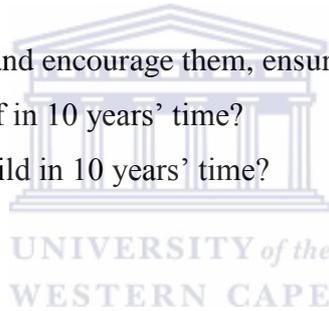
### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND THE PRINCIPALS**

1. How would you describe your relationship with this year's Matric class?
2. What aspirations do you have for your matric class this year?
3. What aspirations do these learners have?
4. How sufficient are the resources that you have at your disposal?
5. How does socioeconomic status of these learners affect them in class?
6. How does this community affect their aspirations?
7. What do you do to motivate them?
8. What information do you provide them with to ensure they make an informed decision about post matric education?
9. How involved are their parents in their academic life?
10. What efforts do you make to involve their parents in their academic life?
11. What do you do differently in teaching in this community that you wouldn't do in a high socio economic community?
12. Would you say you are adequately trained to teach at a school in a low socioeconomic school?
13. What support have you identified that you need in order to empower these students to the best of their ability?

## Appendix H

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. How would you describe your relationship with your child?
2. Given that you are a single parent, how does that affect the decisions you make pertaining to your child?
3. Do you assist your child with their homework and why?
4. How often do you check your child's homework?
5. What efforts do teachers make to involve you in your child's academic life?
6. Explain how your child is performing at school?
7. What are your child's strengths and weaknesses?
8. Do you have any plans for your child after matric? If yes what are they? If no why?
9. Do you want your child to go to university or any higher education institution? Why?
9. What do you do to motivate and encourage them, ensuring that they do go?
10. Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?
11. Where do you see your child in 10 years' time?



## Appendix I

### LETTERS TO PRINCIPALS REQUESTING PERMISSION TO ACCESS SCHOOLS

University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17  
Bellville  
7535

Mrs Schoeman  
School Principal  
P.O. Box 8011  
Grahamstown

#### Request for permission to conduct research in Ntsika Senior Secondary School

Dear Mrs Schoeman

My name is Azola Ralo studying Masters in Child and Family studies at the University of the Western Cape. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters full thesis involves the exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Erasmus from the University of the Western Cape.

I am hereby seeking your consent to access your school, Ntsika Senior Secondary School to participate in this research project. I have provided you with a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approving the methodology and the ethics of my research project. I have also attached my proposal for you to read. Your district director Mr Fetsha, from the Department of Education has granted me permission to approach you.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 076 825 7768 or at [3048287@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:3048287@myuwc.ac.za). Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Azola Ralo



University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17  
Bellville  
7535

Mrs Coetzee  
School Principal  
P.O. Box 2124  
Grahamstown

Request for permission to conduct research in Mary Waters Hoerskoel

Dear Mrs Coetzee

My name is Azola Ralo studying Masters in Child and Family studies at the University of the Western Cape. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters full thesis involves the exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Erasmus from the University of the Western Cape.

I am hereby seeking your consent to access your school, Mary Waters Hoerskoel to participate in this research project. I have provided you with a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approving the methodology and the ethics of my research project. I have also attached my proposal for you to read. Your district director Mr Fetsha, from the Department of Education has granted me permission to approach you.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 076 825 7768 or at [3048287@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:3048287@myuwc.ac.za). Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Azola Ralo



## Appendix J

### ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

OFFICE OF THE DEAN  
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

21 August 2014

**To Whom It May Concern**

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:  
Ms A Ralo (Social Work)

Research Project:

An exploration how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enroll at a higher education institution.

Registration no:

14/6/25

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa  
T: +27 21 959 2988/2948 . F: +27 21 959 3170  
E: pjosias@uwc.ac.za  
www.uwc.ac.za

A place of quality,  
a place to grow, from hope  
to action through knowledge

## Appendix K

### LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO APPROACH SCHOOLS

University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17  
Belville  
7535

Mr AT Fetsha  
District Director  
Private Bag X1001  
Grahamstown

#### Request for permission to conduct research in schools

Dear Mr Fetsha

My name is Azola Ralo studying Masters in Child and Family studies at the University of the Western Cape. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters full thesis involves the exploration of how single parenting in a disadvantaged community influences a learner's decision to enrol at a higher education institution. This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Erasmus from the University of the Western Cape.

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach the Mary Waters Hoerskoel and Ntsika Senior Secondary School in Grahamstown to participate in this research project. I would like for this to be possible from the 16<sup>th</sup> of February to the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2015. I have provided you with a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approving the methodology and the ethics of my research project.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 076 825 7768 or at [3048287@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:3048287@myuwc.ac.za). Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours Sincerely



Azola Ralo

3 December 2014

*This Research project is approved with due consideration of the following:*

- 1) You have permission to contact the two schools about your Research.*
- 2) The information you get from the schools will not be published until you receive written permission from the Dept. of Education (Western Cape)*

*Thanks*

*A.T. Fetsha*



*19/01/2015*

<p><b>A T FETSHA</b> DISTRICT DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Private Bag X1001, Grahamstown, 6140 Tel: 046 6033299 Fax: 046 6033287</p>
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