PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS IN SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES OF A LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the stories of educational support within single-mother families from a low socio-economic community in the Western Cape of South Africa. Research on single-mother families tends to adopt a deficit perspective about parent support (Aragon, 2018; Baquendano-Lopez et al., 2013; Koh, Stauss, Coustaut & Forrest, 2017) and single mothers have been described as uninvolved parents (Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Knowles & Holmström, 2013; Murry & Brody, 1999; Musick & Meier, 2010). Being raised in a low-income single-mother family is often presumed to be an educational disadvantage for children (Gagnon, 2016, 2018; Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2015). Furthermore, research has focused on parent support for children in the earlier grades, and often overlooked parent support for later developmental stages of children's lives. This study aimed to deepen understanding of adolescent experiences of educational support and to apply a lens that would highlight the often misrecognised informal and non-traditional forms of support within single-mother families. To explore this topic, the study adopted a critical framework informed by feminist theory, the bio-ecological model, Bourdieu's theory of capital, Yosso's theory of community cultural wealth, and emotional capital.

For the study, six families were purposively selected in accordance with the following profile: (a) the family unit had to be headed by a single mother; (b) the family unit had to contain an adolescent between the ages of 14 and 18; (c) the adolescent had to be enrolled in a high school; and (d) the adolescent had to have been raised by a single mother for most of his/ her life. This study adopted a social constructivist paradigm and used a multiple case study design. As part of the methods of data collection, the adolescent and single mother participants partook in qualitative, semi-structured interviews and the adolescents partook in a focus group discussion after all of the interviews were completed. The data were analysed through thematic content analysis.

The findings revealed that the single-mother families in this study faced significant challenges, however the mothers acted as encouraging, stabilising pillars that created supportive conditions for their children to be resilient and to stay committed to their education. Adolescents navigated many challenges such as poverty, longing for a father who cares and shows interest, unsafe living conditions, and limited educational resources and physical space in their homes. However, they perceived their mothers as supportive and maintained positive hopes and dreams

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for their futures. The findings show that the mothers supported their children in informal, yet valuable ways. These include: the mothers used their own stories to build aspirational capital; they fostered positive relationships with their children; they were resourceful and willing to make sacrifices; they reported that they encouraged their children daily; they used spirituality as a form of support; they accessed social and familial capital; and they made attempts to engage with their children's schools. The findings therefore contribute to existing literature by centralising the single-mother family as a legitimate family unit and acknowledging that an absent father is not indicative of an absence of other valuable forms of support.

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OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie was ’n ondersoek na die stories van opvoedkundige ondersteuning in enkelmoedergesinne uit ’n lae sosio-ekonomiese gemeenskap in die Wes-Kaap van Suid-Afrika. Navorsing oor enkelmoedergesinne laat veel te wense oor as dit kom by oueronderstеuning (Aragon, 2018; Baquendano-Lopez, Alexander & Hernandez, 2013; Koh, Stauss, Coustaut & Forrest, 2017) en enkelmoeders is al as onbetrokke ouers beskryf (Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Knowles & Holmström, 2013; Murry & Brody, 1999; Musick & Meier, 2010). Om groot te word in ’n lae-inkomste enkelmoedergesin word dikwels beskou as nadelig vir kinders se opvoeding (Gagnon, 2016; 2018; Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2015). Verder fokus navorsing meestal op ouers se ondersteuning van kinders in laer grade en gee nie aandag aan ouers se ondersteuning in die latere ontwikkelingsfases van ’n kind se lewe nie. Die studie het beoog om adolessente se ervarings van opvoedkundige ondersteuning beter te verstaan en deur ’n lens te kyk wat fokus plaas op die informele en nie-tradisionele vorme van ondersteuning binne enkelmoedergesinne. Om hierdie onderwerp te ondersoek het die studie gesteun op ’n kritiese raamwerk wat deur feministeteorie, die bio-ekologiese model, Bourdieu se teorie van kapitaal, Yosso se teorie van kulturele rykdom in gemeenskappe en emosionele kapitaal aangevul is.

Ses families is vir die studie gekies spesifiek omdat hulle aan die volgende kriteria voldoen het: a) ’n enkelmoeder moes aan die hoof van die gesinseenheid staan; b) daar moes ’n adolessent tussen die ouderdom van 14 en 18 in die gesinseenheid wees; c) die adolessent moes hoërskool bywoon; en d) die adolessent moes in ’n enkelmoedergesin groot geword het vir die meeste van sy/haar lewe. Hierdie studie het ’n sosiaal konstruktivistiese paradigma aangeneem en ’n meervoudige gevallestudie-ontwerp is gebruik. As deel van die data-insameling metodes het die adolessente en enkelmoeders deelgeneem aan kwalitatiewe, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude en die adolessente het deelgeneem aan 'n fokusgroepbespreking nadat al die onderhoude voltooi is. Die data is geanaliseer deur middel van tematiese inhoudsanalise.

Die bevindinge het getoon dat enkelmoedergesinne in die studie noemenswaardige uitdagings teëkom, maar ten spyte hiervan het die moeders opgetree as pilare wat ondersteuning gebied het sodat hulle kinders getrou hulle studies vol kon hou. Adolessente het verskeie uitdagings genavigeer soos armoede, ’n hunkering na ’n vader wat vir hulle omgee en belangstelling toon, onveilige lewensomstandighede asook beperkte opvoedkundige bronne en fisiese spasie in

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hulle tuistes. Ten spyte hiervan beskou hulle steeds hul moeders as ondersteunend en behou positiewe hoop en drome vir hulle toekoms. Die bevindinge wys dat die moeders hul kinders op informele, maar steeds waardevolle wyses ondersteun het. Dit sluit in: die moeders wat hul eie stories gebruik as inspirasie vir hul kinders om sukses na te jaag; hulle het positiewe verhoudings met hulle kinders gekweek; hulle was vindingryk en bereid om opofferings te maak; hulle het gemeld dat hulle hul kinders elke dag aanmoedig; hulle het spiritualiteit as ’n vorm van ondersteuning gebruik; hulle het van sosiale en familiale kapitaal gebruik gemaak; en gepoog om betrokke te raak by hulle kinders se skole. Die bevindinge dra dus by tot die bestaande literatuur deur die enkelmoedergesin te sentraliseer as ’n geldige gesinseenheid asook erkenning te gee dat ’n afwesige vader nie aanduidend is van ’n tekort aan ander waardevolle vorme van ondersteuning nie.

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I dedicate this dissertation to you.

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CHAPTER 1:

CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This dissertation explored the experiences of parental educational support within six single-mother families in a low-income community in South Africa. The study was motivated by my desire to problematise the concept of parental educational support within the context of the single-parent household. Although it is estimated that more than 70% of South Africa's children grow up in a single-parent household (Bundlender & Lund, 2011; Hatch & Posel, 2018) very limited research focuses on this type of family unit. Furthermore, when research does focus on such family units, a deficit approach is often followed (Aragon, 2018; Baquendano-Lopez, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Koh, Stauss, Coustaut, & Forrest, 2017). The goal of this research was to expand the knowledge about the ways in which single mothers from low socio-economic groups support their children's educational development.

The feminist standpoint is that "we live in a society that privileges men's viewpoints" (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011, p. 671). This is also true for South African research on parenting, as there appears to be a plethora of research focusing on the problem of absent fathers in South African homes (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Mavunga, Boor, & Mphaka, 2013; Richter & Morrell, 2006; Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes, 2012; Okeke, 2018), with very limited focus on mothers' contributions to family stability. This focus is naturalised in the patriarchal culture that is dominant in South African society (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). This context seems to foreground research that engages with female-headed households from a deficit perspective, and often ignores the opportunities to acknowledge the resiliencies present in such families. This is evident in the way that literature has characterised the single-mother family as a broken, incomplete family unit, and an educational disadvantage (Gagnon, 2016; 2018; Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2015; Knowles & Holmström, 2013; Murry & Brody, 1999; Musick & Meier, 2010). Single mother families are therefore described as being at high risk for financial and social pressures, and thus are perceived to be less involved in their

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children's schooling (Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Knowles & Holmström, 2013; Murry & Brody, 1999; Musick & Meier, 2010).

However, single-mother families are often constructed within homogenising discourses, even though they are different in terms of context and structure. These family units are studied largely through comparison with heterosexual two-parent or middle-class families, which are often framed as ideal families, and this framing could lead to discounting the potential strengths of single-mother families. This is most likely as a result of the prevailing ideology of heterosexual marriages being the ideal (Lesch & van der Walt, 2018), an ideological grounding which also places fathers at the centre of families in terms of economic, moral and other forms of power and leadership. However, this is an ideal that fails to recognise the value embedded in other types and family forms (Lesch & van der Walt, 2018).

As a woman, and a product of a single-mother family, I challenge this narrow focus and break with this tradition of research by centring the mother as a strategic role player in the family and recognising her value as the head of the household. This is in line with a decolonial, feminist agenda (Kessi & Boonzaaier, 2018; Kiguwa, 2007; Mestry & Schmidt, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2012; Mama, 2011; Olesen, 2011). As part of what is called third-wave feminism (Kiguwa, 2007), black feminist researchers are encouraged to acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and their unique contexts. Cultural variation, especially amongst cultures affected by colonialisation, needs to be considered (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2012). As such, Mama (2011) motivates for the development of independent and locally grounded knowledge, or what Olesen (2011) refers to as the specific knowledge and experiences of the situated woman. Most feminist researchers therefore seek to place women at the centre of their analyses (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2012). In practical terms, this means that to enhance an understanding of women's experiences, researchers need to ask them about these experiences directly, in order to "hear and see the realities of women's lives" (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2012, p. 671).

In addition, third wave feminism encourages researchers to recognise that there is a complex relationship of multiple factors that intersect, and which compound women's experiences of inequality, discrimination and marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1991; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; hooks, 2000; Olesen, 2011). By centring women in research, one may shed light on the issue of gender inequality, however there may be other systems of power, such as race and class, which also contribute to the lived experiences of women, and possibly create "multiple

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layers of disempowerment" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1246). By recognising the intersectionality, it becomes possible to disrupt and question ideological structures that define what and who is acceptable, what the problems are, and what the solutions should be (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

A critical, feminist position thus allows one to see that many children raised in single-mother families are able to achieve academic success and psychological wellness. By centralising the mother and observing aspects of intersectionality, one is able to report on the mother's mechanisms of maintaining family stability, coping with financial and social pressures, and supporting her children's education.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Research has consistently shown that children experience educational success when their parents are involved and engaged with their education (Epstein, 2018; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997; Jeynes, 2007; Seginer, 2006; Kaplan Toren, 2013). Parental educational support is a phrase used to describe different practices that parents may use at home or at school to increase their children's educational opportunities (Seginer, 2006). These practices may include making their attitude or beliefs about the value of education known, setting expectations for their child's academic performance, and engaging and assisting with home- or school-based activities (Epstein, 2018; Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong, & Jones, 2001; Seginer, 2006). The history of educational research on parental involvement has been marked by a focus on ways to involve parents more in their children's education in traditional ways, such as help with homework; however, recently there appears to be a shift in focus to research that seeks to broaden the understanding of how parents support their children. This shift in focus appears to have been driven by a desire to reconceptualise the problematic assumption that parents are lacking in competencies and that teachers need to provide them with skills (McQueen & Hobbs, 2014). What the literature shows is that parents who do not contribute in traditional ways to their children's education are blamed for not being involved and for not caring about their child's education, and they are often perceived as lacking the capacity to contribute meaningfully towards their child's educational success (Knowles & Holmström, 2013; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). A recent study in South Africa also found that teachers often do not consider the contextual realities that influence parents' involvement (Munje & Mncube, 2018).

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The recommendations of some researchers include that perceptions about the role of the parent need to be critically challenged (Cottam & Espie, 2014) and that less traditional and informal forms of support need to be identified (Lemmer, 2012). By broadening the understanding of how parents support their children, parents and learners' status as partners in education could be enhanced. Research in this area has shown that parents want to be involved in their own child's learning (Daniels, 2017; Epstein, 2011; Hoover-Demsey et al., 2001; Le Fevre & Shaw, 2005; Okeke, 2014), and often view their contributions in terms of informal home-based activities (Lopez et al., 2001; Williams & Sánchez, 2012).

Research has highlighted the need to understand how parental educational support is perceived within different family structures. Research in this area has shown that children from single-mother families often do not experience the same levels of academic achievement as their two-parent counterparts (Hamden-Thompson, 2013; Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 2001; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Maplethorpe, Chanfreau, Philo, & Tait, 2010). Research has also shown that the single-mother family is often described as an educational disadvantage for children, as single-mothers, especially those from poor communities, experience low education, poor income, stress and poor social support (Amato & Keith, 1991; De Lange, Dronkers, & Wolbers, 2014; Koh, Strauss, Coustaut, & Forest, 2017; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Millar & Ridge, 2009). Single-mother families are often socially viewed as abnormal (Gagnon, 2016, 2018; Newlin, 2017) and this family structure is described as broken, dysfunctional and detrimental to a child's educational success (Hampden-Thompson, 2009).

However, the two-parent family type, often referred to as the nuclear family, is not the norm in South Africa, and even less so in Africa as a whole (Clark, Madhavan, Cotton, Beguy, & Kabiru, 2017; Gachago, Clowes, & Condy, 2018). In fact, it is estimated that only 35% of children are raised in homes where both of their parents are present (Bundlender & Lund, 2011), and that the average South African child is reared in a single-mother family (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Davids & Roman, 2013). It is thus not surprising that there has been a surge in research, especially in the area of gender research, on how best to address the 'problem' of absent fathers in South African families (see Richter & Morrell, 2006). However, this research has been influenced by the western notion of what constitutes a 'family' and it can be argued that the father figure is essentialised in these notions of his inherent place in a 'successful' family unit (Madhavan, Townsend, & Garey, 2008; Gachago et al., 2018). In agreement with recent trends in research, I believe that the African concept of family is much more complex, and that the

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role of other family members, such as siblings, grandparents and extended family, should not be ignored (Baquendo-Lopez et al., 2013; Clark et al., 2017; Hamden-Thompson & Galindo, 2015).

There has thus been an increase in literature that reports on the resilience of families. This area of research has shown that despite this negative view of non-traditional family structures, for example those led by single-mothers, these parents do invest in their children's education in multiple ways. Studies from the USA (e.g. Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Williams & Sánchez, 2012) and a recent study in Queenstown, South Africa (Newlin, 2017) have used lenses that challenge patriarchal notions in their research with marginalised families, and question and disrupt the common negative perception of single-mother families. Research among Latino and African-American single-mother families have shown that many single mothers provide educational support to their children in informal and non-traditional ways (Lopez et al., 2001; Robinson & Werblow, 2012). Researchers in China have also explored this phenomenon and found empirical support showing that single-mothers tend to have higher educational aspirations for their children and invest more to compensate for a deficit in resources and the absence of a father (Leung & Shek, 2015; 2016; 2018). These studies used positive, asset-based approaches in their interactions with single mother families. This study aims to build on these findings, especially in working towards broadening and reconceptualising the concept of parental educational support within single-mother families in South Africa.

In trying to understand how parents support their children, studies have mainly focused on parental support during the primary school years, as it is widely held that parents are more directly involved with their children during these years (Hill & Chao, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Kaplan Toren, 2013). The paucity of research on parental support during the high school years might also be the result of an assumption that as children become older, their dependence on their parents decreases. The perception also exists that parents find high schools intimidating and that high school teachers engage with large numbers of learners, therefore there are limited opportunities to engage with parents about their specific child (Hill & Chao, 2009). However, despite these challenges, parental support has been positively correlated with adolescent educational success (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seginer, 2006; Kaplan Toren 2013).

Adolescence is an important transition period for the child, and therefore the parent-adolescent relationship is subjected to new challenges that emanate from the physical and psychological

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maturation of the teenager (Kroger, 2007). Yet, the dynamics of parental support between parent and adolescent child in single-mother families is still under-researched in South Africa. It is my contention that a broader conceptualisation of parental support is needed, especially regarding how a single mother supports her adolescent child, as this arguably has implications for how the school should engage with a single mother and her adolescent child as partners in teaching and learning (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study proceeded from the view that research in parental educational support lacks a comprehensive account of the resources and cultural capital that economically disadvantaged single mothers provide to their families. There is substantial literature which suggests that children who are raised in single mother families fare poorly at school, and that single mothers are less likely than co-parenting mothers to be involved in their children's education. Many reasons have been given for this discrepancy which is commonly reported in the literature. The first set of reasons relates to factors which may affect single mothers disproportionately, for example, lower income (Amato & Keith, 1991; Koh et al., 2017; Manning & Lamb, 2003), being more likely to have to work long hours out of the home as there is not a spouse to assist with the financial burden (Millar & Ridge, 2009), and having lower education, especially amongst single-mother families living in poverty (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; Härkönen, 2018).

The second set of reasons that might explain this observed lack of educational support, may relate more to the way in which some researchers position themselves and the biases they bring to the research. Several scholars (Aragon, 2018; Baquendo-Lopez et al., 2013; Koh et al., 2017) have argued that researchers often assume that single-mother families are deficient and therefore do not explore possible strengths within these families. There is a need for "counter stories" to emerge, and these stories also need to be told by the children growing up in single-mother families themselves (Aragon, 2018; Koh et al., 2017).

In this study, I challenge the deficit view of parent support within the single-mother family, as it may inadvertently discount many instances and opportunities for educational support within this type of family. This study further sought to challenge the notion of the single-mother family as an incomplete family unit. The research thus aimed to uncover the unacknowledged or unrecognised acts of agency among members of such families. Furthermore, the contribution

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that this study sought to make to knowledge was to advance the understanding of the adolescent perspective of this relationship. This understanding could assist teachers, educational psychologists, counsellors and other educational role players with forming supportive partnerships with single mothers and their adolescent children. Along with Ebersöhn (2015), I believe that we need to work towards "building a sense of connectedness" between families and schools, an endeavour that requires "creating a shared sense of an intervention-partnership identity" (p. 128).

Therefore, the research question guiding this study was: What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families?

The sub-questions that supported the study in answering this research question were the following:

- What are the adolescents' needs for educational support?
- What do the participants consider to be barriers to educational support?
- What are the ways in which single mothers provide educational support to their adolescent children?

1.4 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The aim of qualitative research is to understand the uniqueness of individual experiences and not to generalise. This study therefore did not seek to 'speak' for all adolescents raised in a single-mother family, nor did it aim to find a correlation between parent support practices and adolescent academic achievement. Instead this study sought to explore the unique stories of the participants' lived experiences. The study was therefore delimited to six single-mother families from one community. Most of the residents in this community live in informal housing, experience financial challenges and are of the 'coloured'[1] racial category, one of the groups disadvantaged during the oppressive apartheid system through forced removals, inferior education and limited occupational opportunities. I argue for homogeneity in context, although I acknowledge the complexity and multiple realities within this community through my

[1] There are four major racial designations in South Africa: white, black African, Indian/Asian and Coloured. These terms are still used by present day South Africans to describe themselves and others. According to Seekings (2008, p. 3) "'Coloured' was a composite and diverse category including descendants of relationships between white and black people, the descendants of 'Malay' slaves brought from South-East Asia … and descendants of the indigenous Khoi and San who inhabited the Western cape prior to the arrival of either white or black people". Many people continue to use the term 'coloured' as it reflects cultural values and practices (Heaton et al., 2014).

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paradigm, which is a constructivist one. This paradigm allows me to uncover the unique experiences within such family units. In addition, the gap in the research appeared to be a need to capture the experiences of adolescents, and therefore participants were delimited to the adolescent phase, namely 14- to 18-years-old.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This dissertation was produced as part of a PhD research study in order to gather thick data for deep, detailed analyses. Therefore, the scope of the study was limited to one community and the sample consisted of six single-mother families. The participants do not represent all single-mother families; therefore, the results cannot be generalised. The sample families do, however, provide insight into the phenomenon of parental educational support. Finally, an extended period of data collection, especially the process of following up with the participants a few months after initial interviews, allowed for the study to generate rich data, and thus the number of participants was limited to allow for this method of data collection to be successfully completed.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In an attempt to explore and understand the dynamics of the single-mother family, I used Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The underlying premise of this model is that nothing happens in isolation; rather, every action, experience and relationship occurs within embedded systems of influence. I argue that the single-mother family is a microsystem which has its own power to influence, and which is embedded within other systems of influence.

Important concepts within the bio-ecological model include the significance of process, person, context and time, and their relation to interpersonal relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) human development occurs within an embedded ecological context consisting of real-life settings and real-life implications. In other words, the role that the environment plays in shaping development is emphasised. This model was later expanded by emphasising that the developing person and the ecological context are dynamically and reciprocally involved through regular interactions over time, called proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The power of proximal processes to influence the developing person varies according to the characteristics of the person, the context and the

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period in which the proximal process takes place (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Therefore, in understanding parental educational support within a single-mother family, the bio-ecological model provides a framework for understanding the form, power, content and direction of the proximal processes between the adolescent and his/her single mother.

As Bronfenbrenner's model was conceptualised within a middle-class society, this model speaks strongly to a middle-class context, and draws on middle-class resources to provide educational support. The bio-ecological model thus seems to downplay the role and significance of the macrosystem, which includes socio-cultural and historical factors that are important to consider within a South African context. In order to account for these macrosystemic factors, this study made use of theories of multiple forms of capital, such as Bourdieu's (2007) concepts of economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital, Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth and the feminist concept of emotional capital. These concepts provided a useful analytical lens to understanding experiences of educational support within the single-mother family from a low socioeconomic background, as they could offer insight into challenges and opportunities in micro- and macrosystems.

Bourdieu (2007) proposed that families accumulate types of capital which advance their children's opportunities for educational success. Economic capital refers to wealth and financial resources; social capital refers to a network of people that can provide knowledge or resources; symbolic capital refers to intangible factors such as status, prestige, respect or power within a community; and cultural capital refers to knowledge and resources that parents are able to pass on to their children as a result of past experience. These forms of capital are valued by society and privilege middle- and upper-class families (Gillies, 2006; Siyengo, 2015; Reay, 2004; Yosso, 2005). In contrast, low income single-parent families may not be in a position to access sufficient financial resources or high-status social networks to secure their children's educational opportunities. This does not mean that single-mother families do not have capital. Instead, capital within low income families often remains invisible and undervalued (Hutchinson, 2012; Reay, 2004).

Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth and the concept of emotional capital broaden the lens on what is valuable within families. Yosso (2005) also refers to the significance of social capital, however she proposes that economically disadvantaged families may also have access to the following forms of capital: aspirational capital, which refers to maintaining hope for the future despite adversity; linguistic capital, which refers to the skills

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one develops when one is able to speak more than one language; familial capital, which refers to the ties to family or community members; navigational capital, which refers to the skills needed to navigate social institutions; and resistant capital, which refers to the skills and knowledge developed through challenging inequality or the status quo. Yosso (2005) states that learners from economically disadvantaged communities possess community cultural wealth that should be recognised and seen as legitimate forms of capital within society. Community cultural wealth theory therefore provides an analytical lens for how adolescents from low socio-economic backgrounds are able to understand and navigate their single mothers' support. Similarly, emotional work performed by mothers to secure educational advantage for their children should also have value within society (Gillies, 2006; Hutchinson, 2012; Reay, 2004; Velazquez, 2017). Encouragement, love and care are therefore also forms of capital that economically disadvantaged families may have access to.

By using a framework that considers different notions of capital, the analysis of participants' stories of educational support can recognise and value broader ways of thinking about parental educational support. These concepts enabled me to explore the stories of educational support and identify informal and non-traditional strategies and activities that would commonly not be viewed as educational support.

1.7 RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research was undertaken with the understanding that reality is subjective and that it can have multiple meanings; therefore, the focus was on the participants' stories or representations of their lives and experiences. This belief is in alignment with a social constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, to understand how single mothers support their adolescent children and how these adolescents experience this support, the main goal of this study was to reflect participants' accounts of their experiences (see Creswell, 2007). This paradigm recognises that reality is socially and personally constructed and that the subject is actively involved in the process of meaning making (Delport, Fouché, & Schurink, 2011). The act of research therefore involves listening to the ways that participants describe their reality, and in this way the researcher can better understand their actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This act was in line with the objective of understanding how adolescents from single-mother families experience their mothers' support of their education.

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As is common within the constructivist paradigm, this research was undertaken in the qualitative tradition (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience" (p. 5). The aims were therefore to provide a rich description of their understanding and experiences and to discover the thoughts and behaviours that influence responses and experiences in a particular context, which in this study was the single-mother family.

The design for this qualitative research was a multiple case study. It was anticipated that "multiple facets of the phenomenon [will] be revealed and understood", as worded by Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544). The goal was therefore to select several cases where the same phenomenon under investigation was likely to occur (Rule & John, 2011). In this study, the bounded system or case was the single-mother family, and the specific issue under investigation were the stories of educational support within these families. The unit of analysis was therefore the participants' experiences of educational support.

According to Patton (2002), the potential impact of research depends on selecting information-rich cases. I therefore made use of purposeful sampling, which meant that the researcher carefully selected participants who were perceived to be able to offer rich data (see Merriam, 2009). In order to sample effectively, the following inclusion criteria were applied: (a) the family unit had to be headed by a single mother; (b) the family unit had to contain an adolescent between the ages of 14 and 18; (c) the adolescent had to be enrolled in a high school; and (d) the adolescent had to have been raised by a single mother for most of his/her life.

In this study, one of the main methods of data collection was individual interviews, and the main sources of data were the adolescents and the single mothers. In addition, strategic key informants were also data sources. For example, in instances where the adolescent or single mother spoke about other significant role players such as siblings or grandparents, attempts were made to include insight into the role they played regarding educational support. This research was guided by the belief that multiple sources were needed to understand how adolescents experience their mother's educational support, since multiple sources could offer greater insight and perhaps varying perspectives on these experiences.

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A second data collection method was a focus group discussion with the adolescent participants, where they were invited to engage in an activity and then share their thoughts, feelings and experiences of educational support. Secondary sources of data were informal observations made in the context of the family's home and reflections recorded in a researcher's journal.

My understanding is that qualitative research and the researcher's experiences are subjective; therefore, "the overall interpretation will be the researchers' understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (Merriman, 2009, p. 24). The data collected were analysed by means of thematic content analysis (Rule & John, 2011). As data analysis is an iterative process, the analysis occurred throughout and after the data-collection phase (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The process involved phases of immersing myself in the data, identifying units of meaning, coding these units and then identifying patterns, links and themes in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Rule & John, 2011).

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The population included adolescents, who as minors are considered a vulnerable population. I was therefore guided by ethical principles of not causing harm to those involved in the research. These principles further included seeking informed consent and assent, respecting confidentiality and maintaining unbiased interactions with the participants and the data (Allen, 2008; Rule & John, 2011). The first step to addressing these issues was to seek ethical clearance to conduct the research from the research ethics committee of Stellenbosch University. The assent form for the adolescents and the parent consent form were included in the application to do the research.

Informed assent was obtained from all adolescents participating in the study, and informed consent was obtained from their parents. In meeting with potential participants, I explained the purpose of the research and allowed an opportunity for the participants to ask questions. It was made clear that participation is voluntary and that participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time. I assured the participants that their responses would be treated confidentially. Details of the research were provided verbally and in writing. Consent was also treated as an ongoing process and was not merely a once-off agreement.

To address bias issues, I ensured quality by constantly engaging with my supervisor and peers regarding issues of possible bias. In addition, I made use of a research journal to reflect on my

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own feelings and perceptions throughout the research process. According to Rule and John (2011), "being transparent about one's positionality and its possible effects contributes to the credibility and confirmability of the study" (p. 113).

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION AND SUMMARY

This chapter contextualised the study and motivated the need to problematise the concept of parental educational support within the context of the single-mother household. Furthermore, a brief overview was provided of the literature on parental educational support, which illustrated the gap that exists in understanding the stories of educational support within the single-mother family. The alignment of the focus and the methodology was discussed, as well as aspects of ethical practice.

Chapter 2 provides the conceptual framework for the study. The chapter provides a review of the literature on parental educational involvement, specifically home-based support, adolescent development and its implications for parent-adolescent relationships, as well as what is known about the single-mother family as a family structure.

Chapter 3 introduces the design of the study and justifies the choices made regarding the methodology and research design for this study. This chapter also discusses the ethical considerations and steps that were taken to ensure that the data obtained could be deemed trustworthy.

The findings are presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 introduces the study's population and presents the data relating to the needs that the adolescents have for support, including the perceived barriers to educational support. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which single mothers provide support. In both chapters the participants' stories are presented as direct quotations in relation to the research questions.

Chapter 6 provides an integration of the findings with the literature. This chapter discusses the possible interpretations of and alternative explanations for the findings. The chapter also reflects on the strengths and limitations of the study and concludes with recommendations for practice and future research.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework that guided the study will be outlined. This framework provides a lens to understand the dynamics of studying educational support within

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the single-mother family. A review of the literature is presented. Concepts such as educational support, adolescence and single-mother families are defined in relation to the theoretical grounding of the study. In addition, relevant empirical studies are discussed in order to contextualise the current study and to clarify developments in the field.

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CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"[H]owever configured, however constrained, families come with their children to school. Even when they do not come in person, families come in children's minds and hearts, and in their hopes and dreams" (Epstein, 2018, p. 2).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parental educational support is a multidimensional construct and understandings of the term vary across cultures and socio-economic contexts (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). This study explores the concept of educational support in the context of the single-mother family. Adolescence is a significant developmental stage that has implications for educational needs and outcomes, and although the nature of required support may change (Hill & Tyson, 2009), the need for educational support from parents to adolescents remains (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Therefore, in considering the adolescent development phase and the context of single-mother families, this research was guided by the question: What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families?

The purpose of a literature review is to explore the scholarship on a particular topic so that one may gain an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and identify the gaps in the knowledge and suggestions for future research (Mouton, 2012). Therefore, to review the literature, searches were performed on SunSearch, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, Sabinet, Web of Science and Sage research databases. Search terms included 'parental support', 'parental involvement', 'parental educational involvement', 'adolescence', 'adolescent's perception of parental support', 'single mothers', 'single-mother families' and 'single-mother families and educational support'.

The literature review process made it possible to develop a framework for understanding what parental support is and how it potentially occurs in the family environment. The literature elucidated the multiple ways of home-based parental support and the important role that family

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structure and context play in the educational development of children. However, the review made it evident that there is a gap in understanding the informal and non-traditional ways in which particular types of families, such as the single-mother household, become involved, especially when the children are in the adolescent phase of development.

The literature review shows that parental educational support is a widely debated and contested topic that has evolved over time. There are many theories and perspectives that frame how this topic is approached in this study. These include the bio-ecological theory, community cultural wealth theory and feminism, which shaped and influenced my understanding of the dynamics of parental educational support and the significant role of the mother-adolescent relationship. This research also focuses on adolescents, and argues for their need for educational support, even though the nature of this support changes from childhood to adolescence. Furthermore, perceptions of single-mothers in patriarchal societies are often negative: they are seen as struggling, incompetent and as part of a broken family structure. The literature review sought to uncover broader and nuanced views of single-mother families, particularly perspectives that acknowledge informal and non-traditional ways of understanding and providing educational support.

2.2 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.2.1 History of parental involvement

Research on parental educational support is often focused on explorations of parental involvement. Therefore, in conceptualising educational support, it may be useful to understand the history of parental involvement literature and how this body of literature evolved over time. According to Coleman (1988, as cited in Jeynes, 2011), the influence of family factors is greater than that of school factors in influencing children's school performance. The industrial revolution of the 1900s brought about change in the education system (Jeynes, 2011). During this time, parents were encouraged to see teachers as the experts on education, and greater emphasis seemed to be placed on "teachers' special knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy" (Epstein, 2011, p. 50). As a result, family goals and school goals were seen as distinct categories with little overlap. For example, families became responsible for teaching good behaviour and preparing children for school, while schools were responsible for teaching subject matter that parents were presumed to not be familiar with (Epstein, 2011). Jeynes (2011) interprets this as parents having been "demoted" (p. 23) in terms of their educational roles. This eventually

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established a pattern of parents being less involved with their child's education. As a result, research on parental involvement increased because children were performing poorly at school, and the solution then and now continues to be a much-needed increase in parental involvement (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler 2007; Jeynes, 2011). Research continues to support the claim that there is a link between parental involvement and higher academic performance, motivation and school engagement of children and adolescents (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

2.2.2 Conceptualisations of parental involvement

Parental involvement is conceptualised as behaviours by parents at home or at school that seek to support their children's educational opportunities (Epstein, 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seginer, 2006). Epstein (2011), a leading theorist in parental involvement, distinguished two main types of involvement, namely school-based involvement and home-based involvement. However, more recently, researchers have identified three types of parental involvement that are deemed important in the adolescent phase, namely school-based, home-based and academic socialisation involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). School-based involvement includes activities such as parents attending meetings, volunteering at the school and engaging with teachers about their child's progress or behaviour. Home-based involvement includes activities such as parents supervising homework and providing materials such as books and learning aids. Academic socialisation is often more indirect and involves communication by the parents of their expectations of and aspirations for their child. All three types of parental involvement have been empirically shown to be related to positive academic outcomes such as educational success and school engagement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang, Hill, & Hofkens, 2014; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Furthermore, academic socialisation has been shown to have the strongest positive relationship with and educational success among racially and ethnically diverse high school learners (Toren & Seginer, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

According to Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) academic socialisation is the most developmentally appropriate parental support strategy in the adolescent phase. This is supported by Karbach, Gottschling, Spengler, Hegewald, and Spinath's (2013) research, as it "subsumes parental behaviour that supports the student's autonomy and independence, builds on the development of internalized motivation for achievement and provides a link between schoolwork and future goals" (p. 44). This research suggests that the key to parental support in the adolescent phase is therefore a less intrusive approach that communicates interest and

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aspirations for the child's future, promotes decision making and encourages the importance of education (Jeynes, 2003; Toren & Seginer, 2015; Wang et al., 2014; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil 2014). Thus, while parents remain involved, they give autonomy and decision-making power to their adolescent children (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

This form of engagement that is characterised by less control by parents can be viewed as appropriate for the adolescent phase when independence is sought from parents and where peer influences increase. Research has shown that adolescents actually request that their parents decrease direct involvement with the school (Collins & Laursen, 2004), and that in many cases parents are more likely to engage in more indirect forms of home-based support (Hill & Tyson, 2009). There is also evidence that for adolescents, home-based support, especially academic socialisation, is more relevant than school-based support (Toren & Seginer, 2015).

However, there appears to be contesting voices in the literature. A closer examination of the studies mentioned above indicates that most of the participants in those studies came from two-parent families and that most of the parents had university degrees (e.g. Toren & Seginer, 2015). However, there appears to be inconsistency in the research when it comes to low-income, disadvantaged and single-mother families. In some cases, researchers found that less-educated families with a low socio-economic status (SES) often express lower educational expectations for their children, and they perceive school-based activities as more relevant and as a sign of their parental educational involvement (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016; Carolan & Wasserman, 2015; Davis-Kean, 2005). Benner et al. (2016) suggest that the reason for this may be that parents with a low SES do not need specific educational skills to attend parent meetings and therefore may feel a greater sense of efficacy to be involved in this way.

This research suggests that traditional views of parent educational support are not universally applicable, and a broader conceptualisation of parental educational support is needed. This broader understanding should take SES and family structure into consideration and should include non-traditional and informal ways of supporting adolescents. Moreover, the conceptualisation should support the promotion of schools and families working together as partners in the adolescent's educational success. Towards this endeavour, it is helpful to conceptualise the idea of 'family' within the South African context in order to develop contextually-relevant approaches to educational support.

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2.2.3 Conceptualising family in South Africa

A review of the literature shows that there is a tendency to refer to the family as consisting of a mother, father and child(ren). This structure is also known as the nuclear family. However, there is a range of emerging scholarship critical of the heterosexist and patriarchal ideological underpinnings of viewing the nuclear family as the norm, with scholars stating that the traditional family "as a naturally caring unit is a fantasy" (Ratele & Nduna, 2018, p. 31). According to these scholars there are many cases in which the traditional family may not be the desired state for many families, especially in light of factors such as domestic violence, drug abuse and sexual violence.

The modern family can have many different forms (Davin, 2016). Davin (2016) describes several family types: the mobile family, where the family relocates often and where the concept of 'home' is flexible; grandparents, foster parents and adoptive parents as the primary caregivers; cross-cultural, multi-religious or same-sex families; the extended family, where aunts, uncles and cousins are all considered part of the family unit; and the reconstructed family, which often involves remarriage and new brother(s) and/or sister(s). South Africa also has many child-headed homes, where an older sibling takes care of younger siblings in the absence or death of parents. Additionally, there is the single-parent household, which could consist of a single mother or a single father. In the South African context, a mother is most often the sole parental figure in single-parent households (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2014).

Single-mother households are formed due to a variety of circumstances and influences. These could include the death of a parent, divorce, the choice of the mother to raise her children as a single mother, or due to unplanned pregnancy. However, in a report on the state of fatherhood in South Africa, researchers found that "while single motherhood may not necessarily be a choice by some women, co-residency with the biological father is not always the sought outcome" (Ratele & Nduna, 2018, p. 30), especially in families where fathers abuse drugs or initiate violence in the family. Ratele and Nduna's (2018) research shows that fathers are generally absent in South African families. Fathers are often stereotyped, both socially and within academic spheres, as being disinterested in being involved and present in their children's lives (Madhavan, Townsend, & Garey, 2008). However, these stereotypes essentialise the father figure and centralise his perceived positive influence within the family unit, and Madhavan et al. (2008) note that this creates a discourse that mothers are inadequate as parents.

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In contrast to other social science research, this study does not treat the absence of a father as necessarily indicating an absence or lack of educational support in the lives of children. Instead, educational support is conceptualised as comprised of the behaviours of people within and outside of the family unit, but especially the behaviours of the single mother, that seek to support the educational opportunities of the adolescent. It is important to note that educational support should not be understood in isolation, but the various factors that are linked to this form of support should also be considered. A bio-ecological systems perspective provides a useful framework to further understand the complex interplay of factors that are linked to parental educational support.

2.3 A BIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Parental educational support is not a process that occurs in isolation; instead it is a process that both influences and is influenced by a range of factors and systems. Parental educational support occurs within a parent-child relationship that is shaped by context and by the subjectivity of both individuals. This relationship has been described as a powerful source of influence, because it often includes daily face-to-face interactions. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), developmental theorists, state that such interactions, called 'proximal processes', have the power to exert significant influence, especially when they occur regularly over time.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposed that human development occurs within several systems of influence. He names these systems the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (see Figure 2.1 below). The systems perspective evolved significantly since it originated, and in recent times the influence of biological factors and proximal processes, contextual factors and time (PPCT model) are also understood to play an important role within and between the various systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

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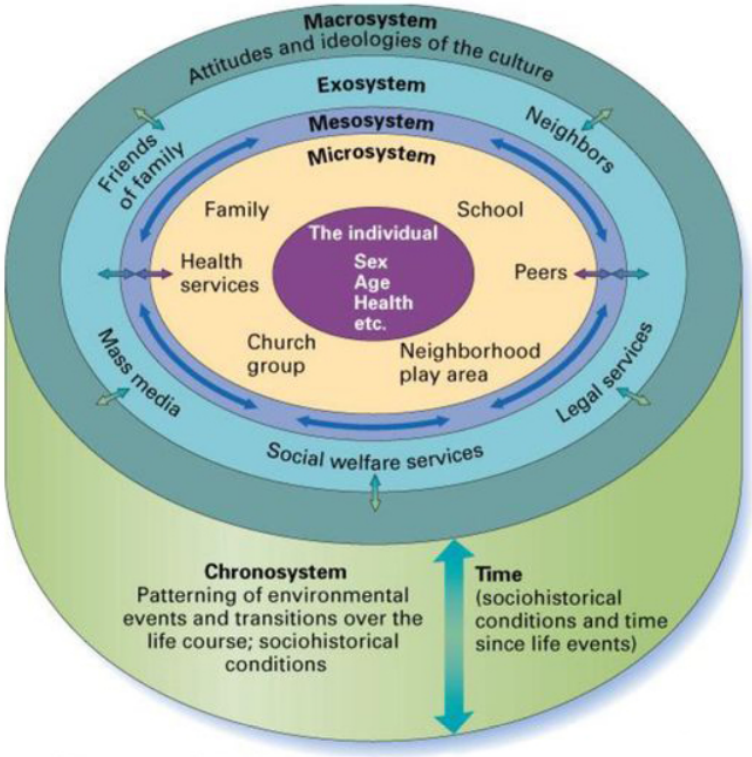

Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, 2018 (https://images.app.goo.gl/heqvc6RcoUSEXuyG6)

The microsystem is the most powerful system because it involves direct interactions with people and objects in one's everyday life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Within the microsystems of adolescents growing up in single-mother families, there exist relationships and interactions between the adolescents with their mothers, other family members, friends and teachers. The adolescent as well as the single mother's own biology and characteristics play an important role in the microsystem. One's characteristics have the ability to manipulate the course and influence of proximal processes. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) identified three types of characteristics, namely dispositions, ecological resources and demand characteristics.

Dispositions are those characteristics that mobilise, sustain and interfere with or limit proximal processes (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). An individual with a high level of motivation might be more active in soliciting educational support. Similarly, an individual who struggles with low self-esteem might lack this ability to solicit support, and might allow any interaction, positive or negative, to have an influence on his/her experience of educational support. Ecological resources refer to those characteristics that have an impact on the manner in which an individual engages with these proximal processes (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). These are often not directly visible and may include mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, intellectual

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abilities and skills. In addition, ecological resources can also include material resources such as access to housing, education and caring parents. Demand characteristics, such as age, gender or physical appearance, often act as personal stimuli that set processes in motion. According to Swart and Pettipher (2011), these characteristics can also hinder one's interactions with the social environment and may "either foster or disrupt psychological processes" (p. 12).

Parental educational support can therefore influence and be influenced by any and all of these factors. Understanding of the microsystem guided this study in viewing the participant as an individual with unique characteristics, influenced by biology as well as the different contexts with which the individual interacts. This study highlights the activities, roles, interpersonal relations and experiences that the participants experienced as meaningful to their experiences of educational support. The other systems, namely the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem, offer more indirect influences; however, their influences are still significant.

The mesosystem is defined as the "system of microsystems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). In this layer of the embedded structures, systems actively interact with one another. The family context can be understood in this way. Face-to-face interactions continuously occur between parents and their children. This study therefore focused on the individuals' perceptions of their experiences that have taken place in the mesosystem, specifically the experiences they deem meaningful in terms of the way in which they perceive educational support.

The exosystem does not have a direct impact on the developing person, although "events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in the setting" of which the developing person is a part (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). In the case of this study, the exosystem would refer to the influence that a parent's workplace can have on a family, or the relationship the parent or child has with the school setting. Researchers have found that in some cases when single mothers' jobs are not stable, this is stressful for the child (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005). Researchers are therefore acknowledged that "processes operating in different settings are not independent of each other" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723) and that many factors may influence adolescents' perceptions of their experiences, whether directly or indirectly.

The macrosystem "refers to consistencies in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, exosystems)" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). Bronfenbrenner refers to these consistencies as "patterns of differentiation" (1979, p. 26), such as one's culture, religious

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beliefs, ethnicity, SES and lifestyle. As a system in which the developing individual is nested, the macrosystem also has an impact on perceptions of educational support.

The chronosystem involves "change or consistency over time" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). These changes or consistencies can occur in the individual or in the environment. Development occurs over time, and so do the experiences of past, present and future. Bronfenbrenner notes that "the developmental outcomes at one age become the person characteristics that influence development at a later age" (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 635).

The bio-ecological perspective therefore highlights the "contextual embeddedness of individual experiences" (Rodrigues & Walton, 2010, p. 313). In other words, experiences of parental educational support are best understood by recognising the potential influences of the whole context, especially factors that influence parental educational support.

2.4 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

The literature highlights several factors within the nested systems of the bio-ecological model that have a particular impact on parental educational support. These factors can influence interactions in the mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Some of the main factors include race or ethnicity, socio-economic status and a sense of self-efficacy.

Research on the influence of race and ethnicity shows that parents from different racial backgrounds sometimes use different support strategies (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Hill & Torres, 2010; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Studies that explore African-American experiences, for example, show how some parents tend to engage in less school-based and more home-based support (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009). This is often due to the fact that a particular race group may have a shared cultural belief about education that is based on their experience as a community or race group (Hill & Torres, 2010). These beliefs are often most influential when they are connected to historically racialised school experiences (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015).

Similarly, in South Africa different race groups may have different school experiences due to the country's political history. According to Heaton, Amoateng, and Dufur (2014), "no other social institution evidenced the government's racial philosophy of apartheid more clearly than the schools. Schools were required both to teach and to practise apartheid, making them both an instrument for and a victim of racism" (p. 101). As a result, many inequalities in education

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continue to persist in South Africa, especially in terms of resources, practices and outcomes (Heaton et al., 2014; Spaull, 2013; Van der Berg, 2007). It is likely that these experiences shape the beliefs of learners and parents regarding the value of education.

The research on the socio-economic status of families suggests that SES has an impact on the quality of the educational support that parents are able to provide and the effectiveness of the support (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Rawatlal, Pillay, & Kliewer, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In Wang and Sheikh-Khalil's (2014) study, it was found that SES was more influential than race and ethnicity on parents' educational support. The main reason for this seems to be that SES is linked to many other factors such as income and financial stability, the level of education that parents have or were able to obtain, as well as the parents' occupations (Rawatlal et al., 2015). Household income and parents' education have an impact on the intellectual as well as financial resources that parents are able to make available to their children, such as books or technology (Karbach et al., 2013). In addition, a parent's occupation also provides standing in the community. In some cases, research has shown that working-class parents are less assertive about their children's education when compared to other groups (Lareau, 2003).

SES can therefore have an impact on many of the behaviours and practices in which parents are able to engage to support their children's education, for example being able to pay for or access necessary resources for their children to go to school. As a result, research shows that parents with a higher SES engage in more parental involvement, and that parents with a low SES engage in less home-based and school-based support, often because of limited material and social resources (Hill et al., 2004; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In addition, SES impacts on parents' ability to provide a supportive structure and intellectual environment, which is important for educational success and which is part of academic socialisation (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Challenges arising from low SES are common in South Africa. Some of the main problems facing South African families are poverty, unemployment and inequality (Department of Social Development, 2012). According to Makiwane and Berry (2013), unemployment is high, low earnings persist and many families continue to endure a low standard of living. These social inequalities were inherited by many 'black' and 'coloured' South African families due to the legacy of apartheid (Heaton et al., 2014, p. 115), which was characterised by segregation and unequal opportunities for different race groups. Heaton et al. (2014) argue that "the importance

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of the family institution is central to understanding racial inequalities in educational outcomes" (p. 116) in South Africa.

Another aspect that appears to influence parents' ability to engage in educational support is their belief in their ability to do so, or their sense of efficacy (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). In other words, when parents feel confident in their ability to support and to make a difference in their child's educational progress, they are more likely to engage in behaviours that will promote educational success. On the other hand, parents who feel powerless to make a change in their children's education will be less likely to engage in educational support. A recent study found that the biggest contributor to feeling powerless was perceived marginalisation, and simply being able to choose which school one's child goes to can significantly mitigate such feelings (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). This factor has implications for single-mother families, who are often marginalised by schools and society.

In the 21st century, family structures are increasingly diversifying, which has necessitated the definition of 'family' to be revisited and refined (Epstein, 2011). The changing nature of families, within the bio-ecological framework, has implications for the interactions within the microsystem, especially for the parent-adolescent relationship. These interactions, and adolescent educational outcomes, are further influenced by multiple factors such as parenting behaviours and parenting styles (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The next section therefore focuses on issues pertinent to the adolescent phase, general parenting practices and the parent-adolescent relationship in order to clarify these influences on educational outcomes and support.

2.5 ADOLESCENCE AND PERCEIVED PARENTING SUPPORT

2.5.1 Adolescent development

'Adolescence' is the term used to describe the teenage years, or the period between childhood and adulthood. It has been challenging for researchers to clearly define the starting point and end point of adolescence (Kroger, 2007; Louw, Louw, & Ferns, 2007). However, adolescence generally occurs between the ages of 12- and 18-years-of-age and is commonly identified by the onset of biological changes such as puberty. The literature distinguishes three (3) stages of adolescence: the early adolescent phase, which occurs between the ages of 10 to 14 years; middle adolescence, which is between the ages 14 to 16 years; and late adolescence, which is normally between 16 to 18 years (Kroger, 2007; Swanson, Edwards, & Spencer, 2010). This

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study's focus was on the middle and late adolescent phases, since these phases aligned with the high school years and were often the most underrepresented in literature on educational support.

For many adolescents, this is a time of confusion and awkwardness, but also of exploration and discovery. This transitional period can bring to the fore challenging developmental tasks regarding schoolwork, sexuality, drugs, alcohol and social life. Peer groups, romantic interests and external appearance tend to increase in importance for some time during an adolescent's journey toward adulthood. Kroger (2007) explains that one of the main reasons for this is that adolescents are at a stage where formal operational thinking is developing. According to Jean Piaget (Dupree, 2010), a leading theorist in the stages of cognitive development, individuals who experience normal development will transition from a stage of concrete thinking to formal operational thinking (see Figure 2.2). Central to this perspective is the assumption that "cognitive development is an active process by which children actively construct knowledge through their interactions with the environment" (Dupree, 2010, p. 65).

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Stage	Age range	What happens at this stage?
Sensorimotor	0-2 years old	Coordination of senses with motor responses, sensory curiosity about the world. Language used for demands and cataloguing. Object permanence is developed.
Preoperational	2-7 years old	Symbolic thinking, use of proper syntax and grammar to express concepts. Imagination and intuition are strong, but complex abstract thoughts are still difficult. Conservation is developed.
Concrete Operational	7-11 years old	Concepts attached to concrete situations. Time, space, and quantity are understood and can be applied, but not as independent concepts.
Formal Operational	11 years old and older	Theoretical, hypothetical, and counterfactual thinking. Abstract logic and reasoning. Strategy and planning become possible. Concepts learned in one context can be applied to another.

Figure 2.2: Piaget's theory of cognitive development (The psychology notes headquarters, 2019)

By developing these cognitive abilities, adolescents are able to imagine different possibilities and are driven by their need for autonomy to question adults. This behaviour of questioning can also be seen as a way of experimenting with different identities, and it is this experimentation that often leads to conflict between adolescents and their parents (Kroger, 2007).

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In general, the adolescent phase is also characterised as a time of forming a sense of identity, seeking independence from parents and placing more value on the relationships with peers, and this need for independence is most prominent in middle adolescence. In early adolescence parents and teachers still play an important role and adolescents still actively engage with these adult figures and seek their advice, while in late adolescence much of the internal struggle for a sense of identity and independence has settled, and most adolescents are able to find a balance between needing their parents' guidance and experiencing a sense of belonging among their friends (Kroger, 2007; Gouws, Ebersöhn, Lewis, & Theron, 2015). However, the transition into the middle adolescent phase is often accompanied by tension and conflict between being dependent on parents and seeking greater independence. In addition, tension arises in terms of a greater reliance on peers and considerations of how much influence peers should have on the adolescent's development.

2.5.2 The importance of peers during adolescence

Relationships with peers become crucial during adolescence (Arnett, 2003; Gouws et al., 2015; Swanson et al., 2010). As part of their development, adolescents cultivate a need for emotional fulfilment, independence and emancipation from their parents (Gouws et al., 2015). In addition, the need for a sense of belonging increases, especially due to its value in developing a sense of self as well as a group identity (Prinstein, Brechwald, & Cohen 2011). Adolescents therefore tend to develop a greater dependence on peers for support (Arnett, 2003). Some are of the opinion that this dependence is temporary, but that it can have major consequences for the adolescent (Gouws et al., 2015), especially when peer relations have negative outcomes such as facing peer pressure in relation to risky behaviour.

When exploring perceived educational support using a broader, more flexible lens, it is essential to consider all role players who are important to the adolescent (Swanson et al., 2010), as different role players can provide support that assists in an adolescent's educational experiences. The literature shows that the significance and influence of peer relations are important considerations during adolescence, especially as it is through peer relations that adolescents learn personal and social skills that can prepare them for the adulthood (Gouws et al., 2015). The peer group has also been described as a sphere with its "own customs, traditions and sometimes language and dress" (Gouws et al., 2015, p. 90). Therefore, many seek friends who are similar to them (Feldman & Papalia 2012) or tend to mirror peers in order to achieve a sense of belonging (Gouws et al., 2015).

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In addition, the social landscape of adolescence is changing, especially in the light of rapid changes in information and communication technologies and social networks (Rodriguez & Walden, 2010). According to Wertsch (2008), the virtual spaces created by social networks are a context for development and have implications for adolescents' identity formation and for parental monitoring. In terms of their identity formation, adolescents often engage with a virtual identity. However, Dupree (2010) questions whether access to global information is a social justice issue, especially in terms of social and economic inequalities. This is particularly relevant in the South African context, where social inequalities are prevalent (Heaton et al., 2014) and access to information and communication technologies vary greatly.

2.5.3 Gender differences and perceived educational support

The literature on parent-child communication indicates that there are several differences between boys and girls in the middle adolescent phase. Girls tend to have more open communication with their parents and are more willing to self-disclose, especially about activities in their leisure time (Almas, Grusec, & Tackett, 2011). Boys tend to be more secretive and tend to solicit help less often (Keijsers & Paulin, 2013). However, research shows that middle adolescence is generally perceived as a time when conflict with parents becomes more emotionally-laden (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014) and perceived parental support is significantly low (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014) for both sexes.

2.5.4 The parent-adolescent relationship

Seeking independence and loosening ties with parents are key developmental tasks for adolescents (Gouws et al., 2015; Newman & Newman, 2012; Santrock, 2013). These tasks are closely linked to establishing a value system and being able to demonstrate independent thinking and decision making (Gouws et al., 2015). Adolescents therefore strive to make their own decisions about their behaviour, they want more control over their lives, and they tend to question and evaluate their parents' morals and values (Gouws et al., 2015). Parents, depending on their style of parenting, often want to maintain some control, especially since they are often more aware of the risks involved with some forms of experimentation. Therefore, parents and adolescents experience ambivalent feelings, which some authors, such as Gouws et al. (2015), have described as the root cause of the conflict between parents and adolescents.

Perceived parental educational support is highly related to the quality of the parent-child relationship (Bokhorst, Sumter, & Westenberg, 2010; Gouws et al., 2015). Research shows that

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adolescents who enjoy a secure parent relationship often have a stronger sense of identity, higher self-esteem, better social competence and emotional adjustment and fewer behaviour problems (Sigelman & Rider, 2014). The conflict that occurs is therefore perceived as a normal part of development, especially as it is a way of maintaining a sense of independence and closeness at the same time (Newman & Newman, 2012). Empirical research has shown that adolescents in the middle phase find peers and parents to be equally supportive, and that peers became more important as they move into late adolescence (Bokhorst et al., 2010). Therefore, the conflict can also be understood as arising from forms of communication that are shaped by aspects of parenting and the quality of the relationship.

2.5.5 Understanding parenting: Dimensions, behaviours, styles and quality

The literature shows that there are several ways of understanding parenting. Mowder (2005, as cited in Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yask, & Shamah, 2012) indicates that there are six dimensions of parenting within parent development theory. These dimensions include bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity and sensitivity. Henry, Plunkett, and Sands (2011) conceptualise parenting as having two distinct elements, namely parental support and parental monitoring. Parental support involves praise, encouragement and warmth, while parental monitoring includes supervision, knowing children's whereabouts and knowing their friends (Henry et al., 2011) as well as influencing their behaviours (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003).

Some studies also focused on aspects of parenting such as parenting styles, behaviours or practices. Parenting behaviours include aspects such as maintaining a strong bond with one's child, applying consistent discipline and responding warmly, but firmly (Musick & Meier, 2010). Warmth and responsiveness have further been highlighted as behaviours that involve accepting and supporting the child (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003). Parenting practices also include spending time with one's children and being involved with matters that concern them (Musick & Meier, 2010). Additionally, parenting practices include disciplinary dimensions such as harshness, strictness and family routines (Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008; Musick & Meier, 2010). This body of research shows that there are many differences in parenting, and that all of these aspects play a role in the quality of the relationship that the parent has with his/her child.

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Research that investigated the quality of parenting identified behaviours as being positive and negative. Positive behaviours include aspects such as warmth, affection, consistent monitoring and discipline (Kotchik, Dorsey, & Heller, 2005). These behaviours have been associated with positive educational outcomes. An example of a negative behaviour is love withdrawal, which involves conditioning one's affection in terms of whether the child complies with the parent's instructions or not (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003). This type of behaviour is also known as parental psychological control, and can be described as an indirect approach of manipulating emotions through inducing guilt and manipulating emotional security (Walling, Mills, & Freeman, 2007). This behaviour includes not only forms of love withdrawal, but also includes discounting the child's perspective and shaming the child (Brenning, Soenens, Braet, & Bosmans, 2012). These behaviours have been linked to poorer educational outcomes for younger children and adolescents.

Knafo and Schwartz (2003) indicate four parenting styles, namely autocratic, which involves being demanding and lacking responsiveness; authoritative, which involves being demanding and responsive; indulgent, which involves being less demanding but highly responsive; and indifferent, which involves a lack of demanding or responsive behaviours. Parents using the indifferent style tend to be permissive and neglectful. An autocratic style often threatens an adolescent's need for independence, and indulgent and indifferent styles do not foster quality relationships. Of the four styles, the authoritative parenting styles is most strongly linked to quality relationships between parents and children.

Although parenting may be conceptualised as consisting of six dimensions (Respler-Herman et al., 2012), as stated earlier, it is important to consider that these dimensions vary according to the child's developmental stage. For example, a younger child may perceive his/her parent's monitoring as a sign of active parental interest, while an adolescent might experience his/her parent's monitoring as a threat to his/her independence, and view their parents as being overbearing (Henry et al., 2011). Therefore, the parent-adolescent relationship is renegotiated as children become older (Hill & Chao, 2009).

According to Brenning et al. (2012), there are two key areas to consider when parenting adolescents. These areas are responsiveness and autonomy support. Responsiveness refers to the ability to interact in a warm, affectionate and involved manner and to provide a sense of security within the home environment. Autonomy support refers to the capacity to encourage behaviour where adolescents are able to make their own choices based on self-endorsed motives

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and preferences. It involves promoting "volitional functioning", trying to understand the adolescent's perspective, avoiding pressure tactics and frequently offering choices to the adolescent (Brenning et al., 2012, p. 803). In this way, parents are able to influence future orientations, set normative standards, be role models and influence the adolescent's self-efficacy (Nurmi, 1991).

Parents' responsiveness and autonomy support therefore play a significant role in developing a supportive relationship with their adolescent child. Supportive relationships are regarded as family assets in different cultures and settings (Steinberg & Morris, 2001) and often serve as protective factors against environmental risks (Collins & Laursen; 2004). In addition, the way that the adolescent perceives the parent-child relationship is also important for the quality of the relationship. It has been argued that adolescents' subjective perception of their parents' behaviour is often more important than what their parents actually do or even what they say they do (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). Therefore, in seeking to understand how adolescents in single-mother families experience educational support, their perception of the quality of the relationship they have with their mother, as well as the mother's perspective of this relationship, can possibly give insight into the dynamics of the relationship and its influence on how the educational support is experienced by the adolescent.

Understanding the various types of behaviours, practices and styles that parents can display is important, because in the adolescent phase, the way adolescents perceive their parents' behaviour has implications for how they experience support (Kaplan Toren & Seginer, 2015).

2.5.6 Perceived parenting and educational support during adolescence

Research has shown that although there are multiple ways of parenting and demonstrating support, the adolescent's perception of parenting behaviours plays an important role, especially because the "family, and particularly the parent-adolescent relationship, provides one of the most important social contexts for adolescent development" (Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, 2008, p. 1000). In other words, it is important to recognise that "children actively process and filter what parents do and say" (You & Nguyen, 2011, p. 555). For this reason, accounting for adolescents' perspectives of parental involvement is a significant component in understanding parental educational support.

The literature distinguishes between direct and indirect types of educational support for adolescents. Direct forms of support include parents offering assistance or guidance with

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planning educational goals, helping with homework, communicating expectations and showing interest in the educational process (Jeynes, 2003; Sands & Plunket, 2005). Although these types of involvement can be regarded as useful for all ages, parents communicating their educational aspirations has been shown to be particularly important for adolescent scholastic success (Jeynes, 2007). Indirect forms of support include inspiring adolescents about education, influencing their sense of competence in areas such as building relationships at school, and believing in their ability to do well academically (Sands & Plunkett, 2005; You & Nguyen, 2011).

These types of support are further distinguished as formal and informal types of educational support. Formal parental educational involvement is conceptualised as the visible and obvious ways in which parents are involved. These can include various activities, such as: attending school meetings, fundraisers and school events; contacting the school about the child's progress, behaviour, upcoming activities or opportunities to volunteer; or offering assistance at field trips or other educational activities (De Gaetano, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). It is perhaps because these activities are visible that most research on parental involvement focuses on these aspects in measuring how involved parents are. Furthermore, many parents are viewed as uninvolved because involvement is most often measured by these visible aspects, and equal attention is not given to the informal ways in which parents support their children.

LeFevre and Shaw (2012) point out that informal and formal types of educational support are equally important to educational outcomes. Informal support often includes emotional support at home; telling stories; sharing family history, advice and cultural narratives; encouraging school attendance and being punctual; providing a quiet space to work; monitoring school attendance; boosting self-esteem; applauding progress; and using spoken and unspoken messages about the importance of education (Auerbach, 2007; De Gaetano, 2007; Zarate, 2007). The key factor in informal support is the content of day-to-day conversations in which parents and adolescents are engaged (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012).

These aspects are often invisible to schools (Auerbach, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Zarate, 2007). Therefore, parents who are labelled as uninvolved are often those who engage in more informal methods of support. For example, research among Latin American families in the USA has shown that in the Latin American culture, parents appear to place more emphasis on informal educational support (Auerbach, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Zarate, 2007). For these parents, helping with homework, encouraging their children to participate in school, providing

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a quiet home setting and discussing future plans are deemed very important in terms of their parental involvement (Auerbach, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Zarate, 2007). This research also points out that culture plays an important role in influencing how and why parents become educationally involved (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012).

Parental educational support is therefore a multidimensional construct (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012), and it appears that the informal ways in which parents are involved are an essential yet ill-explored dimension of this construct. This dimension of parental involvement is often challenging to study, because parents may behave in ways they deem to be supportive, yet the perceived tone or attentiveness may influence how the child responds or perceives the behaviours (Musick & Meier, 2010). Therefore, one can argue that more qualitative research is needed in this regard to detect the variations of adolescents' sensitivity and needs for educational support. Learners, especially at the adolescent phase, are seen as active in the learning process, and therefore should not be treated as passive recipients. As Epstein (2011) points out: "[learners] are not bystanders but contributors to and actors in the communication, activities, investments and decisions" (p. 25). In addition, "even when they do not come in person, families come in the children's minds and hearts and in their hopes and dreams" (Epstein, 2011, p. 26).

Therefore, in order to develop a deeper understanding of parental educational support, especially towards the goal of creating genuine partnerships and better communication between schools and families, aspects such as adolescent perceptions and family structure need to be taken into consideration. Adolescent learners are central to school-family partnerships, and their voices and perspectives should thus be given priority in understanding educational support. Furthermore, understanding family contexts and the ways in which notions of the family are constructed in society are also instrumental in understanding perceived parental educational support within single-mother families. The next section of this literature review explores how the literature engages with the single-mother family and how feminist principles and theories of family capital can offer insight into research with single-mother families as a legitimate family form.

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2.6 SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES

2.6.1 Perception of single-mother families as an educational disadvantage

Literature on single-mother families overwhelmingly characterises the single-mother family as a disadvantaged, high-risk environment for educational outcomes (Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2015; Murry & Brody, 1999; Musick & Meier, 2010). Single-mother families are often perceived as being different from the norm and assumed to be functioning on the margins of mainstream society (Gagnon, 2016, 2018; Knowles & Holmström, 2013). These scholars are critical of how single-mother families are constructed through "homogenising discourses" (Gagnon, 2016, p. 8), which tend to "demonise them as a unit" (Gagnon, 2016, p. 18) and portray them as "broken, dysfunctional, incomplete, inadequate and inferior compared to married, two-parent, heterosexual families" (Gagnon, 2016, p. 20).

In this strand of the literature there is a general understanding that children growing up in single-mother homes are at a higher risk of poverty and show lower educational and vocational outcomes (Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Murry & Brody, 1999; Musick & Meier, 2010), and it is presumed that their families are at high risk of experiencing stress and difficulty (Knowles & Holmström, 2013). In addition, single mothers are portrayed as less involved with their children's schooling because of time, financial and social pressures. A review of the literature shows that many empirical findings seem to support this characterisation, which perpetuates the negative perception of single-mother families.

However, what these studies also found was that some of these challenges are the consequence of fewer educational opportunities and fewer job opportunities that single mothers have, especially when they live in rural areas (Murry & Brody, 1999). In her review of studies on single-mother families done cross-nationally in 18 countries, Hampden-Thompson (2009) found that children growing up in single-mother families are educationally disadvantaged when compared to those growing up in other types of families. Hampden-Thompson's research (2009) shows the lack of economic resources within single-mother families to be a key factor that has far-reaching effects, directly and indirectly, for their children's educational success. Hampden-Thompson (2013) lists these economic resources as the single mother's occupation, her education level and the educational resources available to children in such homes.

Some research has also been conducted on single mothers' well-being (Musick & Meier, 2010; Robinson & Werblow, 2012). These studies have shown that single mothers are often at a high

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risk of stress and time pressure (Musick & Meier, 2010). These studies argue that stressful life events might be a significant contributing factor to why single mothers appear to be less involved with their children's education (Robinson & Werblow, 2012). Musick and Meier (2010, p. 816) state that single mothers are "less emotionally supportive, have fewer rules yet dispense harsher discipline and provide less supervision". Early school dropout and idleness were found to be two of the biggest problems facing school children growing up in single-mother families (Musick & Meier, 2010). Single mothers' employment instability has also been linked to school dropout and a decline in self-esteem and adolescent well-being (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005).

Single mothers might not have the privilege of a support system to help them carry the stress of parenting and to enable them to spend more quality time with their children. Some studies point to single mothers having poor emotional attachments with their children (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Packer Rosenthal, 2013). Gibson-Davis and Gassman-Pines (2010) also found that the single mothers in their study were more often detached and engaged in less supportive parenting. Among the challenges that influence their ability to parent, researchers found that single mothers reported higher levels of childhood adversity and negative family of origin experiences than do married mothers (Avison, Ali, & Walters, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that this influences their parenting style and attachment experience with their children, especially their belief in their ability to support their child.

Single mothers are also seemingly vulnerable to internalising problems and ineffective parenting behaviours, mainly due to the aforementioned life stressors and economic pressures (Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, Widaman, & Cutrona, 2010). Consequently, single mothers have been identified as being in a high-risk category for low self-esteem, depression and anxiety (Affifi, Cox, & Enns, 2006; Murry & Brody, 1999). These psychological vulnerabilities negatively influence parenting quality, which in turn is detrimental to children's development.

Distressed parents, whether married or single, are typically less affectionate and feel less efficacy (Mistry, Vandewater, Huston, & McLoyd, 2002). Parenting efficacy refers to the "extent to which the parent feels confident and effective in his/her abilities to shape his/her child's development" (Barnett, De Baca, Jordan, Tilley, & Ellis, 2015, p. 18). Although Murry and Brody (1999) found that some single mothers believe in their ability to help their children, others, such as Hair et al. (2008), found that many single mothers tend to doubt their importance and feel ill-equipped to support their adolescent children.

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In homes where there is a lack of suitable adult presence, adolescents are forced into roles that normally are reserved for parents, a phenomenon referred to as parentification. Parentification occurs when the child makes an instrumental and emotional contribution to the welfare of parents (Ungar, Theron, & Didkowsky, 2011). In typical adolescent development, adolescents need to engage in self-care during the day, and most parents work and give their children responsibilities; however, adolescents in single-mother families often have to take on more responsibilities, especially when they have younger siblings (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005). Authors found that mothers' employment instability is linked to school dropout and decline in self-esteem, and that it is detrimental to adolescent well-being (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005). This instability often provokes intra-family stress and conflict, which can threaten youth adjustment. The mother's self-concept can also be reflected in the adolescent: "Adolescents perception of the returns to education might diminish on seeing their mother lose a job or remain persistently employed in a low-quality job" (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005, p. 198).

What the literature therefore shows is a general negative perception of the single-mother family. The literature contributes to a perception of the single-mother family as afforded low regard by society. However, what becomes clear too is that the understanding of success of these family units is based on traditional ideas of what it means to be a successful family, and hence the notion that two heterosexual parents make the best parents is perpetuated (Gagnon, 2016). What many of these studies fail to explore is how, despite constraints and the lack of opportunities, many of these households survive and have various forms of resilience and success. Several theoretical insights, such as feminism and theories on social and cultural capital, community cultural wealth and emotional capital, assist in addressing this omission and contesting traditional discourses. I therefore draw on a number of key concepts and models that may, when approached together, allow for the data to show different things and ideas.

2.6.2 Theoretical approaches that support an alternative story

2.6.2.1 A feminist lens

Feminist researchers seek to place women at the centre of their analysis (Kessi & Boonzaaier, 2018; Kiguwa, 2007; Mestry & Schmidt, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2012; Mama, 2011; Olesen, 2011). The aim is to "challenge dominant assumptions and representations" (Standing, 1998, p. 194), that exist due to privileging knowledge that has excluded the voices of women and those who are marginalised within society. In traditional patriarchal societies,

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the father is seen as the head of the family; he is viewed as the one who provides safety and security for other members of the family. Motherhood is therefore often placed under a "patriarchal microscope" (Gagnon, 2016, p. 38) that dictates the way in which the single mother is understood and engaged with by society. Therefore, casting a feminist lens on research with single-mother families would enable a shift from a deficit approach to an approach that is open and willing to hear and see an alternative story.

A single mother is typically viewed as a mother living with one or more children under the age of 18 years, and who is not married or living with a partner (Heuveline, Timberlake, & Furstenberg, 2003). When the single mother is therefore defined in relation to an absent partner and father by a society that only acknowledges the man as the head of the family, the single-mother family could be framed as lacking and therefore be classified as a disadvantaged household. Kissman and Allen (1993) attribute this stance to society's lack of faith in a woman's ability to be a leader and therefore the head of her family, and this has been a primary cause for the negative perception of single-mother families.

It is further argued that another reason for this negative perception are the assumptions that shape the phenomenon of mothering, especially questions of "whose mothering is valued within school spaces" (Velazquez, 2017, p. 520). In addition, Gillies (2006) points out that parent support is often a "profoundly classed and gendered" (p. 281) concept. Adopting a feminist viewpoint thus provides a framework to reflect on how we understand and view the lives and actions of single-mothers and how they engage in the education of their adolescents. Velazquez (2017) and Gillies (2006) also warn against the simplistic application of traditional feminist ideals, and instead encourage researchers to realise the possibility of multiple constructions of feminism within different contexts. Velazquez (2017) quotes Delgado Bernal and colleagues (2006) by stating that "traditional ideals of feminism 'does not have meaning for ordinary women as they go about their everyday lives'" (p. 517). This study therefore aims to build on research that seeks to further an understanding of feminisms for single-mothers raising an adolescent child, which take account of the various challenges they face and the social conditions that they operate within.

In addition to centring women in their analysis, feminist researchers have also encouraged the recognition of intersectionality in the lived realities of women (Crenshaw, 1991; Cho et al., 2013; hooks, 2000; Olesen, 2011). In other words, it is important not to ignore that marginalisation can exist in relation to multiple factors, such as race, gender, class and

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sexuality, and that these factors can intersect and often be compounded in the ways that they affect the lives of oppressed people (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality is thus the study of the multiple ways in which race and gender interact with class and other important aspects of identity (Cho et al., 2013). Cho et al. (2013) state that intersectionality was first "introduced in the late 1980s as a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics" (p. 787). The purpose of recognising the intersectionality of oppression is to question how systems of power define social conditions or social formations, including questioning what is considered an acceptable family formation. Acknowledging the overlapping dynamics of race, gender, class and other factors in "illuminating how intersecting axes of power and inequality operate to our collective and individual disadvantage and how these very tools, these ways of knowing, may also constitute structures of knowledge production that can themselves be the object of intersectional critique" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 796).

In her work with battered women seeking shelter, Crenshaw (1991) explains that although the violence they experienced could be addressed at the shelter, there were several other layers of domination in terms of race and class that hindered their ability to create alternative lives for themselves. Similarly, hooks (2000) describes how white women who experience abuse at home may focus their energy on fighting for the abolition of patriarchy, however, poor women or women of colour may experience more oppression outside of their home, such as race and class inequality, and thus gender inequality may not be the most oppressive system of power they experience. Crenshaw (1991) states that an awareness of intersectionality would "better acknowledge and ground the differences" (p. 1299) between people. Exploring the lived realities of low-income single mothers should therefore include a critical analysis of personal experience, as well as acknowledging the embeddedness of local and global discourses that support inequality (hooks, 2000). Therefore "by challenging Western philosophical beliefs that impress on our conceptions a concept of family life that is essentially destructive, feminism would liberate family so that it could be affirming, positive kinship structure with no oppressive dimensions based on sex differentiation" (hooks, 2000, p. 39).

Contrary to the negative perception created of single-mother families, research demonstrates that many single mothers want to be involved and support their children's education, despite the many obstacles they face (Henry et al., 2011; Kotchick et al., 2005; Robinson & Werblow, 2012; Wilson, 2014). A significant portion of the research that seeks to move away from a

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deficit perspective of single-mother families has focused on African-American and Latin American cultures, which are cultures that are often engaged with as problematic and peripheral in research from hegemonic western and white perspectives. With regard to participating in their children's education, researchers have found that African-American and Latin American individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds face significant challenges (Vega, Moore, & Miranda, 2015; Williams & Sánchez, 2012). Some of the obstacles to their involvement include time, transportation, lack of financial resources and lack of awareness of school activities (Williams & Sánchez, 2012). However, despite these challenges, these empirical studies highlight several protective factors within single-mother families that can lead to promoting educational support for their children, and demonstrate that there are "other ways of knowing" (hooks, 1990, p. 150). The findings of these studies will be discussed in the section on forms of capital within single-mother families.

2.6.2.2 Economic, social and cultural capital

This study views single-parent families as having access to significant forms of capital, although this capital is often misrecognised. Having power in society is often related to the financial wealth or capital of individuals. Bourdieu (2007) points out that there are different forms of capital, namely economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital. Bourdieu (2007) defines capital as the "accumulated labour (in its materialized form or its incorporated, embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private i.e. exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour" (p. 46). Economic capital refers to financial wealth and assets, while social capital refers to the network of relationships or potential resources to which families have access (Bourdieu, 2007). Together, these networks can be described as "collectively owned capital" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 51). Symbolic capital refers to aspects such as status and authority in society, while cultural capital describes the knowledge, beliefs and sense of self that are often transmitted from parent to child (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Reay, 2004). Bourdieu (2007) further argues that these forms of capital, when valued by society, serve as symbolic currency for experiences and opportunities to gain more economic, social and cultural capital. One form of capital can therefore be transformed into another form of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Reay, 2004).

Bourdieu's theory partly aims to "explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes" (Siyengo, 2015, p. 30). For example, parents who are educated and have social standing in their community are likely to have high amounts of

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economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital, which they can use to the educational advantage of their children. However, Bourdieu's theory has been critiqued for placing valuable capital in the hands of the middle and upper classes only (Reay, 2004; Yosso, 2005). In other words, "discourses around education and child development are grounded in middle class privilege" (Gillies, 2006, p. 281). Bourdieu's way of looking at capital is problematic for children growing up in a single-mother family who may not have access to the types of capital that are traditionally valued by society and the social networks that can support academic achievement. The differences of the capital that are embedded in traditional family units might lead to an undervaluing of the capital within the single-mother household, and relate to the "invisible economy of the family" (Hutchinson, 2012, p. 200) which favours middle-class, two-parent families.

2.6.2.3 Emotional capital

Bourdieu's concept of capital was further expanded by feminist researchers (see Hutchinson, 2012; Gillies, 2006; Reay, 2004) who seek to acknowledge the "power of emotions in shaping social and cultural realities" (Hutchinson, 2012, p. 196). Their argument is that even though families may have access to and possess these different types of capital, ultimately it depends on the parent's ability to activate these forms of capital and transform them into productive learning opportunities, which they do by means of actuating emotional capital (Hutchinson, 2012). Emotional capital is therefore primarily seen as a way in which parents seek to secure educational advantage for their children. These scholars believe that emotions and emotional work should also have legitimate social positioning as capital in society (Gillies, 2006; Hutchinson, 2012; Reay, 2004; Velazquez, 2017).

Emotional capital is primarily appropriated through affection, time, attention, care, patience, support and commitment (Reay, 2004), and it is "generally confined within bounds of affective relationships of family and friends and encompasses the emotional resources you hand on to those you care about" (Reay, 2004, p. 572). Love is therefore a significant form of emotional capital. Velazquez (2017) argues that love can function as an "operative tool to deconstruct power relations for […] women who navigate systems of oppression while attempting to create a sense of equality and belonging for their children" (p. 510). In her work with American-Chicana mothers, she found that love was central in the mothers' acts of educational support.

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According to Reay (2004), these emotions can be positive or negative in nature. For example, in the Australian context, Santoro (2010) found that coercion and anger were also useful forms of emotions used by mothers to support their children's education. Negative involvement can thus also motivate children academically, but there is no definitive pattern for this form of involvement leading to motivation. At times, the mother's anxiety can encourage the child, and in some cases both mother and child can be anxious (Reay, 2004). Another aspect that Reay (2004) points out is that emotional capital often struggles to thrive in poverty. This is likely due to how poverty appears to intensify negative outcomes of family functioning and adolescent development (Jones, Zalot, Foster, Sterrett, & Chester, 2007; Leung, Shek, & Li, 2016).

Mothers' emotional investments are often diminished in status and viewed as a "natural" part of parenting (Gillies, 2006) which is not linked to the mother's agency. In adopting a feminist perspective and a broader conception of capitals that can exist within families, and casting an asset-based lens to view single-mother families as legitimate family units, it becomes possible to excavate types of capital within single-mother families that are not traditionally valued by society. However, Gillies (2006) warns that "while emotional capital is a potentially useful analytic tool, its risks being co-opted into a parenting deficit model through narrow association with middle class academic attainment" (p. 284). In other words, researchers should be cautious of imposing middle-class values onto families from different socio-economic backgrounds. Instead, researchers need to excavate the situated nature of emotional capital, especially towards illuminating the adaptiveness, competence and success of families that are marginalised by society (Taylor et al., 2010).

2.6.2.4 Community cultural wealth

Yosso's (2005) research built on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and proposes a theory of community cultural wealth. Community cultural wealth is described as the "knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts" that exist within families (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). For Yosso (2005), culture refers to "behaviours and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people. Culture is also evidenced in material and nonmaterial productions of a people" (p. 75). This stance acknowledges the opportunity for multiple cultural and social formations and systems to emerge and be valued. Figure 2.3 illustrates the different types of capital Yosso proposes are present within families.

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Yosso (2005) explains that those considered disadvantaged by society acquire different forms of capital such as skills, abilities, resources and knowledge that have been developed over time by a network of people. Cultural resources such as family and community members can be utilised to access opportunities such as education. The community cultural wealth can therefore be mobilised as active family resources. Yosso (2005) maintains that the "various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (p. 77). By using Yosso's (2005) framework of analysis to highlight the stories of parent support within single-mother families, it becomes possible to illuminate the complex factors that impact on parental educational support within single-mother families. This framework facilitates an understanding of the complex processes that single-mother families use to encourage educational success for their children.

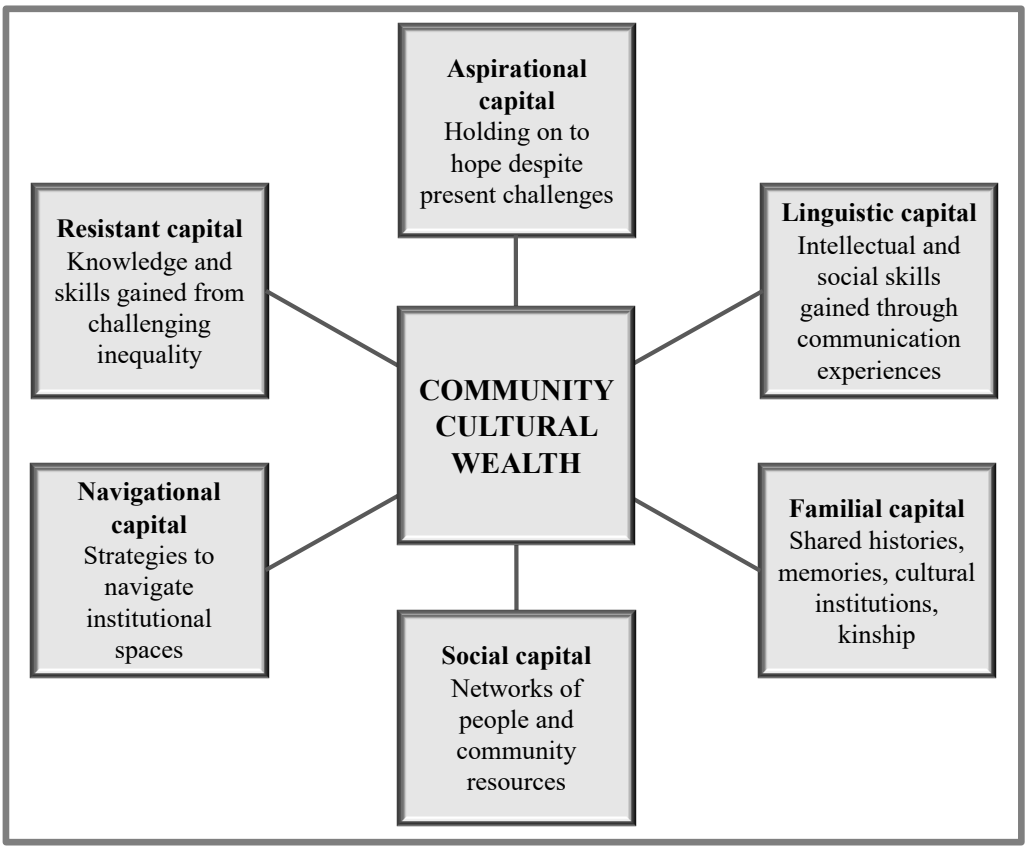

Figure 2.3: Community cultural wealth model (adapted from Yosso, 2005)

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2.6.3 Forms of capital in single-mother families

2.6.3.1 Social capital in single-mother families

The literature shows that social capital plays an important role in the dynamics of educational support in single-mother families. Social capital is defined as significant relationships that act as resources to the family and that assist the family to achieve social outcomes (Coleman, 1990). These may include social ties that provide information, assist the family in meeting obligations and responsibilities, or provide resources that help children acquire knowledge (Dufur et al., 2013). Researchers have stated that acknowledging the role of significant relationships in single-mother families can be very beneficial, as it is the "parents' ability to connect with social support systems that extend the family's resources" (Coleman, 1995, as cited in Murry & Brody, 1999, p. 459). Social capital can include communication patterns, familial and other relationships, atmosphere and norms (Leung et al., 2016). In their study, Dufur et al. (2013) found that "family social capital exerts stronger effects on academic achievement than does school social capital" (p. 17). This finding emphasises the importance of events and experiences in the home in promoting educational outcomes.

Significant relationships in single-mother families can include those with aunts, uncles, grandparents or family friends. One way of describing this relationship is known as 'allo-parenting'. Allo-parenting often refers to the parenting actions provided by individuals who assist parents in raising their children (Barnett et al., 2015). It has been identified as a key buffer in high-risk contexts and in some cases can mitigate negative outcomes associated with single-mother families (Barnett et al., 2015). Barnett et al. (2015) state that "this support may be particularly prevalent and influential among [those who are] economically disadvantaged given needs stemming from economic hardship" (p. 18).

The literature emphasises the role of the perceived availability of social support in these family structures. Thus, for allo-parenting to be successful, single mothers must be aware and make use of the available social capital. Research has shown that when single mothers perceive social support, they tend to feel more parenting efficacy, or a higher sense of belief in their ability to support their children (Barnett et al., 2015). The implication is that schools need to take into consideration that children from single-mother families may be part of multiple households (Henry et al., 2011). This is also relevant within certain cultures that encourage raising children as a collective process. Therefore, in addition to significant role players within and around

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single-mother families, culture also plays a key role in how educational support occurs in a single-mother family.

2.6.3.2 Culture as capital in single-mother families

Parents are understood to transmit cultural values and practices to their children. In the adolescent phase, these values and practices are likely to influence how adolescents appraise their relationship with their parents and the expectations they hold of their parents (Crockett, Brown, Iturbide, Russell, & Wilkinson-Lee, 2009). Crockett et al. (2009) used a qualitative approach to explore the parent-adolescent relationship of Cuban American teenagers. In describing the Latin American culture, they used several aspects such as the family's source of identity, whether the culture adheres to individualistic or collectivist norms, whether children are expected to be obedient and respectful towards elders, the use of masculine and feminine roles, and influences of dominant host cultures experienced in relation to peers, schools and media. Their study underscores the importance of cultural influences on adolescents' understanding and suggests that a broader array of behaviours that signal parental caring should be considered. An important point raised in the study is the cross-cultural differences in parent behaviour appraisals (Crockett et al., 2009). For example, Crockett et al. (2009) point out the cultural differences between Korean and American understandings of parental strictness. For Koreans living in Korea, parental strictness is often viewed as a sign of warmth and the opposite of neglect, while for Koreans living in America, parental strictness is viewed as indicating hostility, neglect, rejection and a lack of warmth.

Prior research about Latin American single mothers found that single mothers were viewed by schools as uninvolved or lacking in parental involvement (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). LeFevre and Shaw's (2012) findings, however, challenged such characterisations. These researchers found that their single-mother participants engaged in informal activities such as helping with homework, offering encouragement for their children to participate at school, providing a quiet home setting and discussing future plans. The participants therefore placed more emphasis on these aspects as opposed to being involved in the ways that the schools would have preferred. Several studies have also shown that these informal aspects are invisible to schools (Auerbach, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Zarate, 2007). LeFevre and Shaw (2012) further highlight that these informal activities are often motivated by values common to the Latin American culture. This example illustrates how cultural values can be a form of capital in single-mother families.

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Their research also emphasises that "students from diverse cultures may benefit from more than one form of support" (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012, p. 15).

2.6.3.3 Spirituality as capital in single-mother families

Another aspect that has been highlighted as an important protective factor in single-mother families is that of religiousness, religiosity, spirituality, private worship or transcendence (Goeke-Morey et al., 2013; Holder, Coleman, & Wallace, 2010; Mahoney, 2010; Walsch, 2003; Wilson, 2014). Some believe that these terms can be used interchangeably, while others see them as distinct. Holder et al. (2010) explain that spirituality refers to an inner belief system from which people draw for strength and comfort in difficult times, while religiousness refers to the rituals, practices and beliefs that are encouraged by a particular religious institution. In this study, the five terms above were understood as sharing meaning and are hence collectively referred to as 'spirituality'.

According to Brodsky (2000), there are four mechanisms of spirituality, namely religious settings and people; internal and individual values; behaviour and the belief in protection; and blessing. Therefore, membership of a religious institution is only one part of spirituality (Brodsky, 2000). The single mothers in Brodsky's study emphasised the important role played by supportive relationships within religious institutions, even when the support was indirect. It was also indicated that most of the participants emphasised a more private and internal role of spirituality in their lives. There was also evidence that spirituality shaped their behaviour and feelings of protection, and that perceived blessing from God gave them hope, despite their struggles. Beavers and Hampson (1990) indicate that "transcendent beliefs and practices provide meaning and purpose beyond ourselves, our families, and our immediate troubles" (as cited in Walsch, 2003, p. 9). Families therefore find strength, guidance and comfort through connections with cultural or religious traditions (Walsch, 2003).

Spirituality has also been linked to resilience and emotional well-being among single mothers. Wilson (2014) investigated the lived experiences of single mothers who had raised successful African-American men. The study showed that "religion provides a means for single mothers to cope within the everyday stressors […] and plays a pivotal role in the lives of single mothers" (Wilson, 2014, p. 93). Spiritual resources and practices such as prayer and religious affiliation all support resilience (Walsch 2003). According to Walsch (2003), "it is most important for families in problem saturated situations to envision a better future through their efforts and for

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those whose hopes and dreams have been shattered to imagine new possibilities, seizing for invention, transformation and growth" (p. 10).

Spirituality is said to be conducive to overall well-being (Mahoney, 2010). Greater individual religiousness of a parent or adolescent has often been tied to adolescents feeling more satisfied with their relationship with their parents (Mahoney, 2010). Similarly, Goeke-Morey et al.'s (2013) research based in Ireland shows positive effects in families of the mother's spirituality, showing that it consistently played a positive role in family relationships. Furthermore, among low-income and minority mothers, private acts of worship have been shown to relate to greater parental involvement and intrinsic religiousness has been linked to greater parental responsiveness (Mahoney, 2010). Findings further indicate that spirituality predicts greater family cohesion and parent-child relationship quality as well as less conflict and fewer adjustment problems. Spirituality therefore plays a strong role in enhancing mother-child attachment (Mahoney, 2010), and might be a resource for single-mother families from low SES backgrounds.

2.6.3.4 Resilience as capital in single-mother families

Resilience is understood as a multidimensional concept; however, there appears to be consensus that it is characterised by emotional and psychological resources existing despite adverse conditions that could cause negative outcomes. Despite adverse conditions, many children are still able to have a relatively good sense of well-being and experience unanticipated positive outcomes (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2009; Theron, Liebenberg, & Ungar, 2015; Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2010). According to Zautra et al. (2010), the presence of two important elements are needed for someone to be labelled as resilient. Firstly, there should be the ability to bounce back relatively quickly after adversity, referred to as recovery, and secondly, there should be the ability to move forward from challenges, referred to as sustainability (Zautra et al., 2010, p. 4). Other important elements of resilience include the following:

> "… active coping, positive emotions, optimism which entails flexibility of thinking and problem solving, the ability to reframe a negative experience in a positive light, and having a purpose in life, a moral compass and a set of internal beliefs of what is right and wrong" (Feder, Nestler, Westphal, & Charney, 2010, p. 36).

Resilience is also seen as an embedded process in that it manifests as protective factors within a person as well as within the systems around the person (Theron et al., 2015). Protective factors

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are defined as skills, strengths, resources, support or coping strategies that can be found in individuals, families, communities or larger society that help people deal more effectively with stressful events and mitigate or eliminate risks in families and communities. These stressful events or moments of adversity, despite normally being associated with negative outcomes, are elements of fostering and experiencing resilience.

In their research on urban American youths' perceptions of support, Vega et al. (2015) found that "the majority of the participants could not ask their parents/guardians for academic support due to the parents' low educational levels, busy work schedules, and language barriers" (p. 62). However, all the participants reported that at least one person in their family was assisting them to reach their goals, and the primary methods of doing this were through strong words of encouragement and communicating high expectations. What is significant in this study is that even though significant family members could not assist with specific academic aspects, for example giving advice on which subjects to choose at school, they placed great emphasis on working hard so that children can have better lives than their parents. One of the participants in Vega et al.'s (2015) study said: "I'm the mirror, look at me, don't be how I am right now. Do your work; just graduate from high school first, then go to college" (p. 63).

This mother did not have the road map for her child to follow in order to achieve educational success, as would parents who have educational qualifications and resources to support their children's education, what Bourdieu would describe as having inherited cultural capital. Instead, this mother uses the adversity she endured in life to motivate her child to succeed. The caring sciences provide a practical theory of adversity that could assist in understanding how suffering can be a form of cultural capital that is invisible to society. Based on their work within the nursing field, Foss and Nåden (2009) state:

> "In a caring perspective suffering has in and of itself no meaning, but if we deny the suffering, we deny a part of life and the human being's possibility to become a whole person. The meaning of suffering is found in that it creates the capacity for compassion and love" (p. 16).

Adversity is often a common experience for single mothers as well as their children, and suffering might often be characterised as having only negative consequences. However, research has shown how in some cases, adolescents who have grown up in single-mother families, having experienced complex trauma such as their parents' divorce or the death of a

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parent, were able to develop coping responses that helped them with future stressors (Dupree, 2010).

Another example of the role that adversity can play as a form of capital in single-mother families is the occurrence of academic socialisation. Academic socialisation has been demonstrated to be most relevant for adolescents in terms of perceived parental educational support (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Toren & Seginer, 2015). Academic socialisation includes those practices that place the value and utility of education into perspective. This may include communicating one's expectations, fostering aspirations towards a career, making links between schoolwork and the world of work, and discussing plans for the future (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Toren & Seginer, 2015). For families with traditional cultural capital, fostering career aspirations would most likely include, for example, taking the child to work for a day to explore a professional setting, or ensuring that the child who has shown an interest in a particular field of study makes appropriate subject choices at school. This relates to findings that have shown that academic socialisation occurs more often in families of a higher SES (Benner et al., 2016).

In the low-income single-mother family, while these methods of academic socialisation are less frequent, it is possible that academic socialisation still takes place. Importantly, these activities or behaviours may not be recognised as academic socialisation due to their divergence from traditional models. Parents could, for example, share stories of their own struggles and use this as encouragement for their children to achieve educationally. They could also emphasise the opportunities that education can bring. These conversations occur often within low-income families, as Vega et al. (2015) and Lopez et al. (2001) found in their research among low-income families. However, due to the discourse not being recognised in traditional models of academic socialisation, its contribution to the educational support of children is not adequately recognised.

The significance of these conversations relates the Freudian pleasure versus pain principle. Although Freud indicated that people are primarily motivated by the desire to obtain pleasure, many scholars, including Aristotle, emphasised that people appeared to be more motivated by the desire to avoid pain than to obtain pleasure (Carlson & Heth, 2007). In this light, the conversations that low-income parents have with their children can possibly be as motivating as the conversations of parents who have inherited cultural capital, as these low-income parents motivate their children to avoid adverse circumstances linked to a lack of education or occupational opportunities. Leung, Shek, and Li (2016) similarly found that despite the

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adversity the single-mother family participants in their study experienced, these mothers actively strove to nurture a good family environment suitable for their children's development.

Researchers have found that promoting educational resources within the South African context is similar to other unequal societies and countries with emerging economies; however, it is important to consider that "local contexts and cultures influence how adolescents and their ecologies transact in using these resources" (Theron et al., 2015, p. 246). This links to the social ecology of resilience theory (Ungar et al., 2011). Ungar et al. argue that studies exploring resilience often limit the focus to individual traits and processes that promote resilience (Ungar et al., 2011). However, understandings and levels of resilience are not static and are context-dependent. Ungar et al. (2011) therefore encourages researchers to explore the sustainability of environmental resources. In other words, what is the "quality" of the social and physical ecologies, and how do they "create optimal conditions for more resilient children" or create a social ecology where "positive development can be expected" (Ungar et al., 2011, p. 2). Resilience studies should therefore account for the "individual and the environment in the same explanatory model" (Ungar et al., 2011, p. 3). Thus, there should be a focus on resilient children, as well as resilient environments.

In line with a feminist agenda, the social ecology of resilience theory also calls for a focus on local, situated, and culturally-embedded knowledge (Ungar et al., 2011). These theories encourage researchers to move away from Western, Eurocentric conceptions of family and models of resilience, parenting and adolescence (Rodriguez & Walden, 2010). Christie (2008) argues that there is a need for researchers in the global south to initiate conversations that will further a universal project and 'delink' from the falsely-positioned Euro-American perspective and methodology (Christie, 2008). Therefore, in considering how adolescents perceive their parental educational support within the single-mother family context, it is important to consider these local variations and the strong possibility that families living in adversity in South Africa may be vastly different to those in the Western world, and that adolescents growing up in South Africa should also be represented in scientific literature, including those children being raised in single-mother families.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed relevant literature that informed an understanding of parental educational support within the middle adolescent phase, specifically as it relates to the single-mother family

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context. The aim was to develop a framework within which to conduct a study guided by the question: What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families? As part of this framework, several theories were presented that provide insight into the phenomenon of parental educational support. Similar to other researchers, the literature review attempted to illustrate how this study is designed to use a strengths perspective to explore how single mothers support their adolescent children. The purpose is also to gain insight into how these adolescents experience the support from their parents, as guided by an understanding that for these single-mother families, "their homes are not 'broken', their lives are not miserable, and their children may have problems but most eventually thrive" (Anderson, 2003, cited in Leung et al., 2016, p. 123).

The next chapter discusses the design of the study as well as the methods used to answer the research question. The aim of this chapter is to make the research process transparent and thereby enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

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CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the stories about parental educational support between parents and middle- to late-phase adolescents in low income single-mother families. In this study educational support was conceptualised as all the behaviours and practices that seek to promote the educational success of the adolescent. Certain decisions had to be made in order to ensure that meaningful data could be extracted and analysed in a valid and reliable way. This chapter discusses the rationale of decisions made and actions taken in terms of the research design and methodology. It further serves to illustrate that "the research process […] is not a clear-cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world" (Bryman & Burgess, 2002, p. 2). Although presented as a linear process (see Figure 3.1 below), the real-world experience of research is often more complex and iterative. Therefore, to increase the credibility of the study as a legitimate and valuable contribution to field of knowledge, this chapter seeks to make the decisions taken about the research process as transparent as possible.

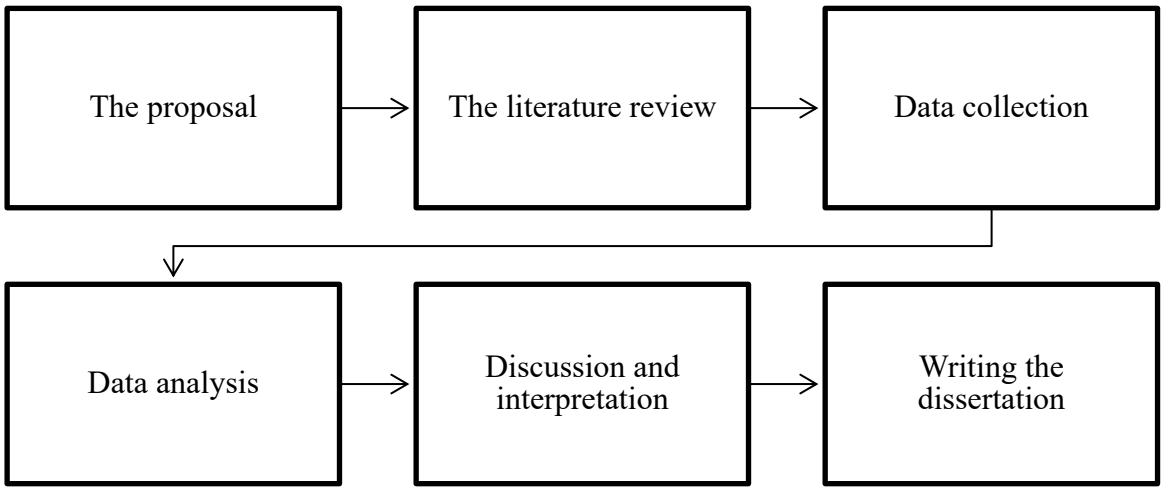

Figure 3.1: Overview of the research process

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3.2 MY POSITIONALITY AS RESEARCHER

As the researcher, who I am, how I see and understand the world and my particular set of skills are important parts of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Silverman, 2010). Key issues for me as the research instrument were my awareness of my own positionality and reflexivity.

Positionality refers to who I am in terms of my gender, race, age, personal experiences, beliefs, biases, preferences and emotional responses (Berger, 2013). According to Berger (2013), these aspects can affect one's research in three ways, namely the ability to access the context, to shape the relationship with the participants and to shape the findings and conclusions. It was therefore important for me to be aware of my position as a young woman, of the coloured population, who was raised by a single mother for most of my life. My position therefore offered me an insider and outsider perspective. One of the key advantages I anticipated was an insider status, which might have assisted with the developing of rapport and comfort with research participants, and could improve the research relationship (Berger, 2013). When participants know that a researcher has a similar background and can relate to their lives, they "are usually more willing to talk to you if they feel some personal connection to you" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 77).

However, there were certain risks of which I needed to be aware. For example, I had to be aware of participants sharing information and assuming that I would understand the unsaid. In these cases, I needed to remember to probe for their intended meaning and understanding. Berger (2013) states that continual internal dialogue and critical self-reflection are important ways to monitor the effects of positionality. Reflexivity was therefore an important tool that I used throughout the research process.

Reflexivity is described as a type of reflection (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), but one that demands more critical thinking and action. Horsburgh (2003) defines it as the "active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation" (p. 309). According to Berger (2013), "reflexivity is demonstrated by the use of first-person language and provision of a detailed and transparent report of decisions and their rationale" (p. 4). In this study my own reflexive practice served as a data-collection method throughout the research process. As far as possible I attempted to record and reflect on my "own reactions to interviews,

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thoughts, emotions, and their triggers", as recommended by Berger (2013, p. 3). In addition, I often discussed these aspects with my supervisor or a critical friend or colleague, which further served to build my awareness of my role in the research as well as an awareness of differing perspectives.

Reflexivity also made me aware of my outsider status. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) note: "Not all populations are homogenous, so differences are to be expected" (p. 56). Therefore, even though some parts of the participants' contexts had a certain amount of familiarity, and even though I was comfortable in the research relationships with the participants, there were many instances where I could not relate and did not share their experiences. One of the greatest challenges I experienced was my emotional reactions to the participants' challenges, such as hearing that they often go to bed without food. I had to constantly reflect on how this knowledge could possibly shape the researcher-participant relationship as well the findings and conclusions. Documenting these thoughts and feelings and engaging in self-reflection and discussions with others were valuable to how I analysed and related to the data in this study.

3.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Parental educational support is a multidimensional concept. This study's literature review on educational support by parents indicated that there are divergent understandings of the phenomenon. However, by adopting a social constructivist understanding, this study approached the data from the perspective that there are many different realities, and therefore also many interpretations tied to the concept and its meaning.

The main purpose of the study was therefore to explore, understand and describe the participants' unique stories of parental educational support. The primary question guiding this research was: ***What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families?***

The sub-questions that supported the study in answering this research question were the following:

- What are the adolescents' needs for educational support?
- What do the participants consider to be barriers to educational support?
- What are the ways in which single mothers provide educational support to their adolescent children?

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Being an educational psychologist, I was motivated to advance an informed understanding of parental educational support in the single-mother family because I believe that this understanding can encourage teachers, educational psychologists, counsellors and other educational role players to form supportive partnerships with single mothers and their adolescent children.

In order to answer the above question and sub-questions, certain decisions needed to be made as to what knowledge is and how one should generate knowledge within a research process. These aspects form part of the foundation of a research study and are reflected in the research paradigm.

3.4 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm is defined as a worldview, or a way of understanding the world and the rules that govern the processes of making meaning and producing knowledge. When one subscribes to a certain worldview, there are several beliefs and assumptions that guide one's thinking and actions (Mertens, 2005). Fouché and Schurink (2011) caution that a paradigm does not give one the answers to research questions, but it does offer guidance regarding where and how one should proceed with looking for these answers. In addition, it offers a framework so that when a researcher engages with meaning-making processes, the paradigm should offer ways of recognising and understanding phenomena (Fouché & Schurink, 2011).

This study was grounded in a social constructivist paradigm, as the purpose was to understand the subjective meaning making of the participants' real-world experiences (see Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). Furthermore, the aim was to understand the reasons that lie behind the participants' actions, which were interpreted through the ways that they told their own stories. This paradigm is in line with the goals of feminist research, which according to Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2012) relies on "qualitative methods because they are particularly useful for eliciting and hearing the collective and unique voices and perspectives of participants and also for understating gendered experiences" (p. 685).

One's research paradigm is framed around ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The ontological positioning of this study was influenced by how I understand social reality. As an educational psychologist, whose research is about the experiences of adolescents and their mothers, I believe that there is not merely one truth of these experiences,

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and that the lives and experiences of those in single-mother families cannot be collapsed into one story or reality. My understanding is that reality is based on the meaning each person makes for him-/herself, and therefore multiple meanings or truths are possible. I was therefore positioned as an empathetic, respectfully curious listener, keen to understand the research participants' meaning of their own lives, as recommended by Fouché and Schurink (2011).

Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, relates to the different forms of knowledge that exist, and essentially describes what can be known about a social phenomenon (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Epistemology also relates to an understanding of how persons know what they know (Dreyer, 2008). In this study, adolescent experiences of their parental educational support in single-mother families could only be understood by investigating how the research participants made meaning of their reality, and this was accomplished by asking them to share their experiences and tell their stories.

The researcher's ontological and epistemological stance then influences the methodological decisions made for the study. This involves the selection of the most appropriate methods to collect data on the phenomenon. My positioning was to engage with the research participants as an empathic listener and to afford opportunities for them to talk and share their experiences. The act of research therefore involved listening to the ways that participants describe their reality, and in this way I could better understand their actions (see Baxter & Jack, 2008). The most appropriate methods that I decided on was semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. As the researcher, I was also an important part of the research (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), therefore my informal observations, critical reflections and notes from peer discussions also served as additional modes of data generation.

Furthermore, I embrace an understanding that reality is subjective and that it can have multiple meanings, which is in line with a social constructivist paradigm (see Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this paradigm the researcher's aim is "to retain the integrity of the phenomenon being investigated, [therefore] efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 17). Knowledge is therefore expanding what is known about a phenomenon based on the subjective world of human experience. Therefore, to understand the phenomenon, the researcher approaches specific people to gather data about experiences, beliefs, attitudes and feelings (Silverman, 2005). Guided by this framework, I identified families who would provide rich data on the phenomenon being studied, who were adolescents being raised in single-mother families.

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Merriam (2009) understands the research process as "an exploration of the patterns and connections unique to the participants within the research context" (p. 4). In considering an appropriate research paradigm to inform the design and methods for this study, I reflected on the purpose of the research and the type of knowledge needed to answer the research question (see Merriam, 2009). This approach links with Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) view that participants are the experts in their own lives; therefore, the methods of data collection that I chose allowed the voices of participants to be foregrounded and for the validity of the data to be strengthened. Based on these premises, the case study appeared to be the most suitable research design.

3.5 THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

"The case is studied in its real-life context. I am interested in understanding how the case influences and is influenced by its context" (Rose, Spinks, & Canhoto, 2015, p. 17).

The above quote is relevant to the reasons for the case study as appropriate for the current research. The purpose of the research was to explore the participants' experiences of educational support in their real-life contexts and to build knowledge on how these adolescents influence and are influenced by their contexts, namely the single-mother family. Case study research was therefore chosen for this study, as the goal was not to generalise the findings to all single-mother families, but instead to ensure that learning would take place and that the knowledge generated would empower all relevant role players. Flyvberg (2006) echoes this objective: "The goal is not to make the case study be all things to all people. The goal is to allow the study to be different things to different people" (p. 238).

A research design is therefore a plan of how the researcher will link the purpose of the research and the research questions to specific steps taken to answer those questions (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The research design further reflects the decisions made by the researcher on which aspects will be given priority in the research process (Bryman, 2012). Guided by these definitions, this study adopted a qualitative multiple case study research design. A visual representation of this design is provided in Figure 3.2.

The case study is an empirical inquiry that seeks to explore a phenomenon within its real-life context (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2003, 2009). Some researchers argue that the phenomena being researched within case study research should all be extraordinary to warrant investigation

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through this type of design (Mesec, 1998). Other researchers raise a counterargument about the case study design, saying that it allows one to uncover deeper layers of understanding about the typical case (Yin, 2009). What the latter school of thought highlights is that "the advantage of the case study is that it can close in on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice … [therefore] many researchers actually find that their preconceived notions were wrong, often because of the close proximity to the context" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 235).

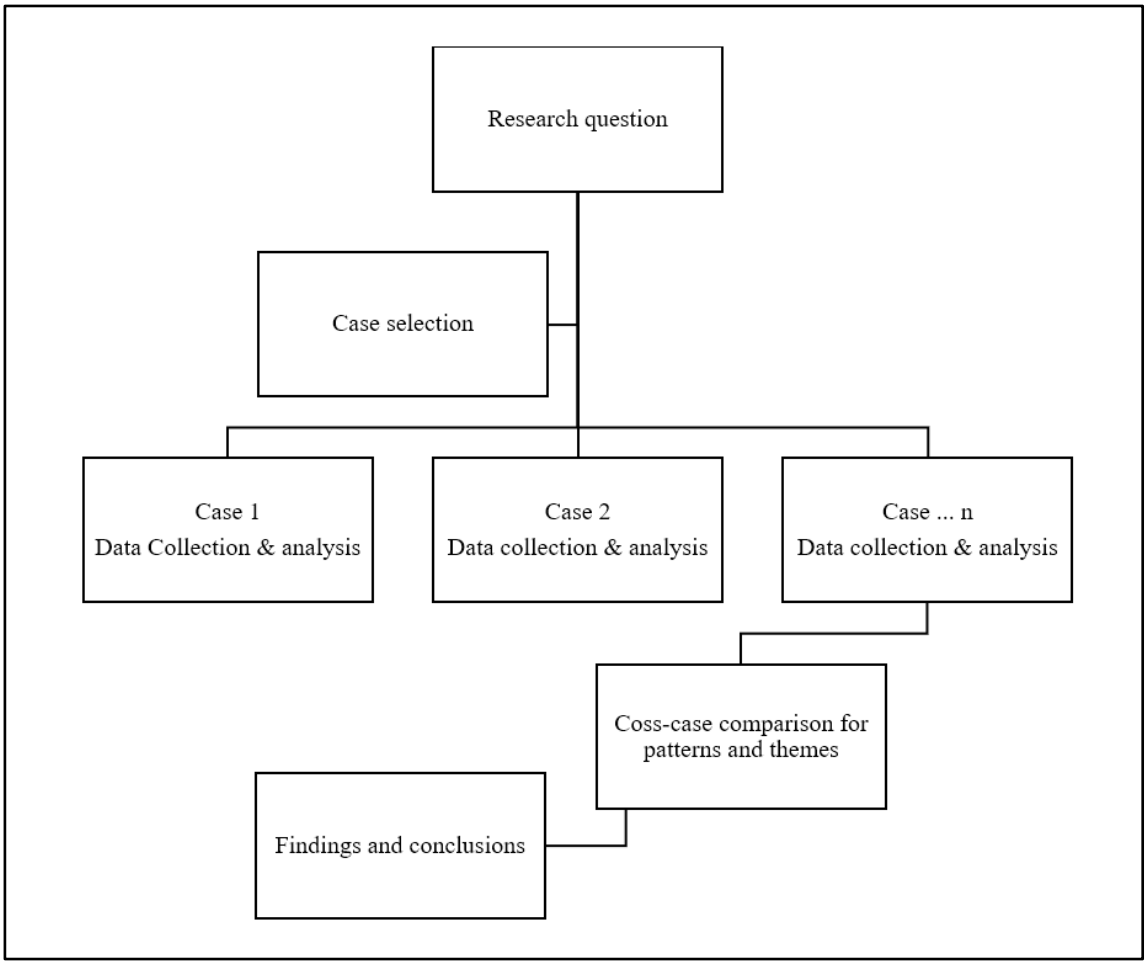

Figure 3.2: Steps in multiple case study design (adapted from Rose et al., 2015, p. 4)

The 'case' can therefore be an individual, a group, a programme or an organisation, and the study is undertaken "with the aim of understanding and describing the case in detail" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 253). The case is also commonly referred to as a bounded system, which means that there needs to be clarity regarding what the unit of analysis will be. In this study the bounded system or case was the single-mother family, and the specific issue under investigation was how the participants, namely the mothers and their adolescent child, conceptualised

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parental educational support. The unit of analysis was therefore the stories of educational support in the context of a single-mother family. As several single-mother families were the focus of this research, a multiple case study design was used.

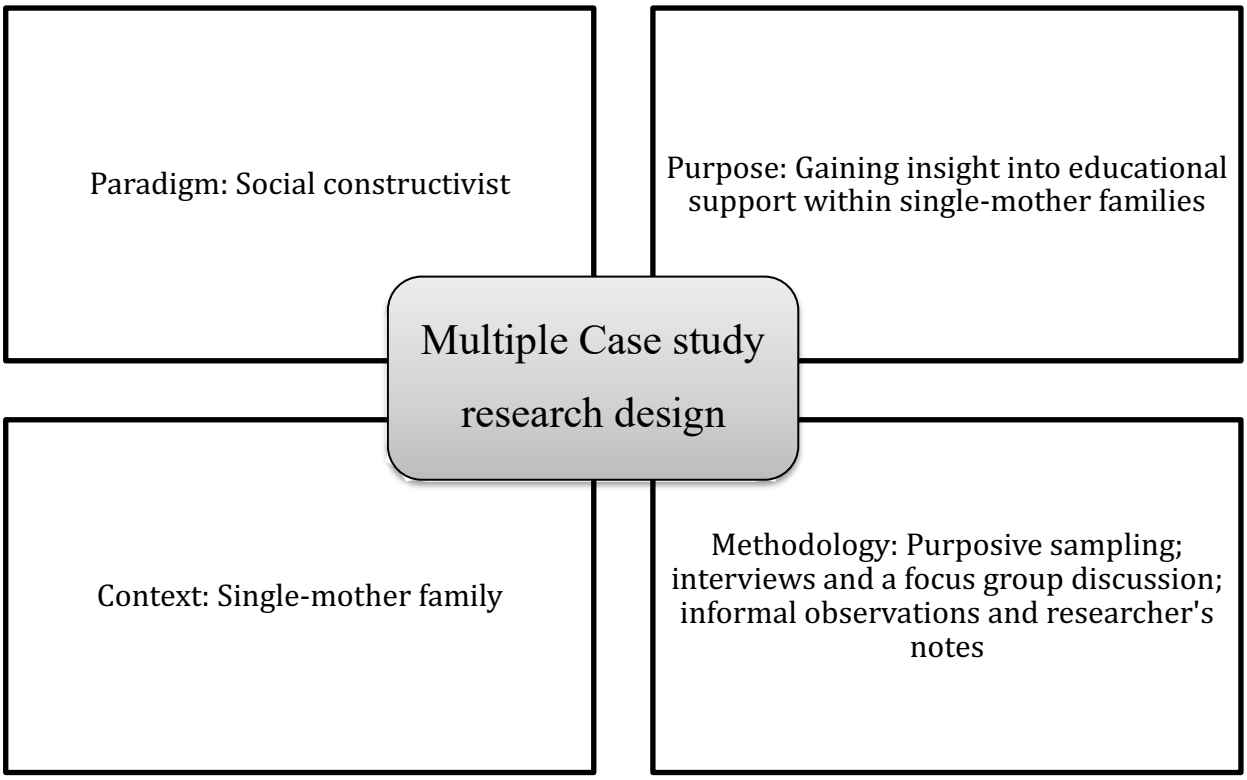

Figure 3.3: The research design of the current study

The diagram above (Figure 3.3) illustrates the components of the research design for this multiple case study, with the first three components already discussed in the sections above. The first component is the paradigm; the second is the purpose of the study; the third component refers to the context of the study and the fourth component involves the methods chosen to gather the data for the study. The fourth component, the data collection methods, will be discussed below.

As the purpose of the research was to access the meaning that the participants made of their real-life experiences, qualitative methods were selected as the most appropriate for data collection. Qualitative methods provide a creative flexibility that allows one to gain intimate knowledge of the participants' experience through accessing their experiences, interactions and documents in the natural context (Barbour, 2007). The primary methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion, and as I was an active part of the

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research, secondary methods included informal observations in the context and reflections in a research journal.

3.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.6.1 Context and selection of participants

Every case is situated within a particular context (Rule & John, 2011). As discussed in Section 2.3 of Chapter 2, context, within the bio-ecological perspective, is understood as embedded systems of direct and indirect influence. Single-mother family units were purposively selected from a community in the Western Cape; most of the residents in the community live in informal housing and experience socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, due to demarcation of the areas in which races could live during the apartheid era, this area is a traditionally 'coloured' township. I share the same ethnicity as the participant community; however, I did not assume that my experiences as a 'coloured' woman, raised by a single-mother, necessarily position me as an insider.

The research sought to uncover the views, beliefs and experiences of the participants regarding parental educational support. As the home context and home circumstances were assumed to have influenced such experiences, I negotiated access to their home environments to be able to contextualise such experiences when they were shared. I visited the homes of each of the participants and was given permission to conduct the interviews with both the adolescent and the parent there. Access gave me the opportunity to observe the physical circumstances of the family and how the home context accommodates its inhabitants.

The population for this study was adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 years, who were enrolled in a local high school and had been raised by a single mother for most of their lives. This also included families where the mother had remarried or lived with a partner, but where the adolescent had still been part of a single-mother family for most of his/her life. The study was thus delimited to adolescents whose mothers have been the sole parent for most of their lives. As the researcher, I had to make judgements in choosing the participants that would provide context-specific knowledge on the research topic, and who I believed would be "good sources of information" (Patton, 2002, p. 51). As Patton (2002, p. 7) states, it is the quality of the insights generated that is important, and not necessarily the quantity of the insights.

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3.6.2 Access to the population

To access the research population, I approached two members of the community who knew the community very well. These individuals introduced me to several parents. As potential participants, I met with the parents and explained the research study. I provided information sheets to the adolescents and their mothers to peruse and encouraged them to ask questions. These mothers further introduced me to other potential participants whom I approached in the same way. From those families who indicated their willingness to participate, six single-mother family units were purposively sampled according to the inclusion criteria. The following inclusion criteria were applied: (a) The family unit had to be headed by a single-mother; (b) the family unit had to contain an adolescent between the ages of 14 and 18; (c) the adolescent had to be enrolled in a high school; and (d) the adolescent had to have been raised by a single mother for most of his/her life.

Interviews were then arranged according to a time and place that suited the participants. Interviews mainly took place in the participants' homes. However, when this was not convenient for the family because of a lack of physical space, or where the home environment was too noisy, another setting was negotiated with participants. For example, on one occasion with the permission of the participant, we sat in my car outside their home and conducted the interview there. Each participant and his/her mother participated in separate one-hour interviews. Thereafter, once the interviews had been transcribed, informal meetings were arranged to cross-check the contents of the interviews with the participants.

3.7 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The primary method of data collection for the study was semi-structured interviews. Interviews are described as "conversations with a purpose" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 101) and also are characterised by respectful curiosity through listening, questioning, framing and gentle probing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These conversations were facilitated by a semi-structured interview guide, which was informed by the research questions and the review of the literature (see Appendix D).

The interview guide was formulated in English. However, most of the participants were Afrikaans-speaking, and therefore the consent forms and guide were translated into Afrikaans.

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The forms were translated professionally and cross-checked for meaning and coherence. As a South African of the same cultural background as the participants, I was knowledgeable about the local culture and was therefore able to make use of colloquial Afrikaans terms, which facilitated how the participants engaged with me. The research interview is, as Kvale (1996, p. 36) points out, "an interaction [and structured conversation] between two people". I therefore engaged with the participants in a conversational manner. However, I always kept the purpose of the research in mind. It was therefore often necessary for me to make use of additional probing and to formulate questions in response to what the participants said, as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012, p. 31). This is common and characteristic of semi-structured interviews.

Reflexivity in terms of the method and methodology also played an important role in the interview process. One example of how reflexivity influenced the interview process was that during the first interview I felt that the single-mother participant did not grasp the meaning of educational support and therefore struggled to explain how she provides support. Therefore, in subsequent interviews I instead asked the mothers to think about what advice they would offer other mothers in their situation with an adolescent child. This question provided richer data and therefore became part of the interview guide.

3.7.2 Focus group discussion

The focus group discussion served as a secondary method of data collection. One focus group discussion was held with the adolescent participants after all the interviews had taken place. A focus group is described as an opportunity where several participants are invited to talk among themselves, perhaps on a specific topic or with a stimulus. The main purpose is to generate and analyse the interaction between the participants (Barbour, 2007; Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). This method is different to a group interview, which seeks to ask everyone in the group the same question (Barbour, 2007). A focus group discussion is a useful tool in that it can offer a broader perspective following individual interviews, encourage reluctant participants to participate, highlight new issues or misconceptions, or access the insider perspective (Barbour, 2007).

When participants are hesitant to speak or uncomfortable with individual interviews, the focus group discussion can provide an opportunity to discuss the topic among others their age, whom they may feel more comfortable with. This method is effective, as some researchers have found

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participants to be less anxious and more willing to reflect on issues and concerns most salient to them (Barbour, 2007). Because knowledge is also conceptualised as an active construction of meaning, the focus group discussion also provides an opportunity for multiple voices and different opinions to emerge. This type of knowledge is deemed legitimate within the constructivist paradigm and therefore valuable to the meaning making about a phenomenon.

At a workshop that I attended in 2016 on how to conduct qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, the presenter emphasised the importance of understanding the qualitative interview or focus group discussion as a social encounter (Pattman workshop, 2016). Pattman proposed that creating a social and conversational environment would generate the most valuable and real-world answers. Guided by these principles, I endeavoured to create a relaxed and pleasurable atmosphere for the participants. I therefore arranged a suitable venue and provided some food and beverages for the participants. The session began with each participant introducing him- or herself and saying something interesting about their life. Thereafter, the group played two ice-breaker games. As the researcher is as much part of the research, I participated in all activities with the group. I believe that this created a safe space where participants could share their stories with one another and allowed for an informal and conversational tone (see Johnson & Turner, 2003).

Barbour (2007) suggests that a stimulus is often a good way to generate conversation and further facilitate honest communication and comfort. Therefore, to facilitate discussion, participants were invited to engage in a creative activity that they could use to tell their story of educational support in a single-mother family. Supplies such as pens, paper, colour pens, paint and cardboard were provided. Participants could choose which materials to use and how they wanted to tell their stories. The following instructions served as a guideline: *Using the creative art materials, create something (maybe a timeline, or a river, or a train) that tells the story of your life growing up in a single-mother family. You can include anything that is significant to you. Focus on the different support you experienced on your educational journey. Point out areas where you did not experience support. What kind of support could have helped you on your way?*

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3.7.3 Recording the data

The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Transcripts as well as the researcher's notes were used as raw data for analysis. A sample of the transcripts of one of the adolescents and one of the mothers is included as Appendix F.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this study, data analysis and interpretation were part of an iterative process that occurred before, during and after data collection (see Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Before data collection, some of the important activities included reviewing the literature (see Chapter 2), reflecting on my position as a researcher and thinking about possible concepts or themes that applied to the issue under investigation. I also remained open to new and unexpected patterns that may have emerged. During and after data collection I continuously engaged with the data by identifying units of meaning; coding words, units of meaning and sentences; and then identifying potential patterns, links and themes in the data (see Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Rule & John, 2011). A qualitative thematic content analysis of the data was therefore implemented.

The first step in analysing the data involved a process of 'open coding', whereby one identifies any unit of data that could be potentially meaningful. This could be a direct quote, an observable behaviour, an emotion or an expression. To assist in this process, the data were processed through Atlas.ti, which is a computer program that allows one to organise, classify, relate and analyse all types of information that is collected in a research study. This program primarily assists in the organisation of all the data; however, identifying the units of meaning and considering interpretations or alternative understandings were still the task of the researcher. In this way the researcher is immersed in the data (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). A sample of the coding system used in this research study can be viewed as Appendix G.

The next step in analysing the data involved 'axial coding', whereby one identifies potential theoretical properties, themes, patterns and underlying relations between and across the units of meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). As this process occurred during and after data collection, axial codes identified within one case often served as a guide for the next case. However, as indicated above, I adopted an inductive stance, which positioned me as open to new meanings and understandings. Reflexivity therefore played an important role during the analysis phase, especially in terms of continuously reflecting, making links between ideas,

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thinking about associations with the literature and considering alternative explanations. It was important to be aware that "alternative explanations always exist, and [that] the researcher must identity and describe them and then demonstrate how the explanation that he [or she] offers is the most plausible" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 221).

The final step in analysing the data involved "making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order" (Patton, 2002, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 219). As Merriam (2009) points out, "the overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 24). Therefore, as one of the research instruments, I played an important role in the data analysis and interpretation of this study. However, one of the main concerns in case study research is that because the researcher is closely involved with the cases, there is great potential to contaminate the results through aspects such as bias. Steps that were taken to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study are explained in the following section.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Studying phenomena in their natural context and relinquishing all objectivity and control can oftentimes come forth as unsystematic and a 'messy' way of conducting scientific research. As a result, qualitative research is often severely criticised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, the credibility of qualitative research methods and a qualitative approach to interpreting data in case study research is sound (Merriam, 2009; Rule & John, 2011; Yin, 2009). Ensuring trustworthiness is possible through the several ways of promoting rigour in case study research. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) offer the following guidelines in this regard:

- Conduct the research in a believable manner and demonstrate credibility.
- Ensure that the data are dependable and can be replicated.
- Ensure that the data are neutral, accurate and confirmable.
- Conduct the research in such a manner that the findings are transferable to a similar context.

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3.9.1 Credibility

To demonstrate credibility, it is advised that sufficient time be spent with the participants (Houghton et al., 2013). The process followed in this study involved an introductory meeting with each participant, after which an individual interview and subsequent meetings were arranged to verify or clarify points shared during the interviews, also known as member checks. Member checks occurred after the transcripts were completed, rather than after the analysis phase (Houghton et al., 2013). It was also valuable to clarify the meaning of certain statements with the participants, as opposed to giving them the transcripts to read. In some cases, the literacy level of the participants, especially the single mothers, was not established; therefore verification through a conversation was more valuable, especially to ensure that their words were not misconstrued and that the transcripts accurately reflect the meaning of participants. Gathering the single mothers' perspectives of their children's experiences of educational support served to offer a different perspective and verify data through more than one source. This further served to enhance the credibility of the study (Houghton et al., 2013).

I decided on the focus group discussion as method as it provided an opportunity for interaction between participants and to verify the data through a different source than the individual interviews. I also anticipated that it would be at a stage of the research when the participants and I were better acquainted and more comfortable with one another, and that it would advance the focus group interaction significantly. To further enhance the credibility of a study, Houghton et al. (2013) advise regular peer debriefing. However, they also caution that these discussions should ideally take place before and during analysis, but not necessarily during the interpretation phase, as interpretations are likely to differ constantly. Therefore, in this study, regular conversations were held with a research supervisor, a colleague and a friend who also works in academia. These conversations allowed me to voice my experiences, thoughts, preliminary ideas and analysis, and to receive critical and constructive feedback, which assisted in further reflection.

3.9.2 Dependability and confirmability

To enhance dependability and confirmability, researchers are advised to make each step of the research process transparent (Houghton et al., 2013). This can be done through an audit trail of decisions and a rationale for each decision, as well as comprehensive notes about the context. This chapter, as well as the appendices, serve as an audit trail.

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Another way of enhancing dependability and confirmability is through reflexive practice (Houghton et al., 2013). As the researcher is part of the research and an important research tool, the researcher's own reflections are also an important source of data. Houghton et al. (2013) encourage the use of a reflection journal in which one records the rationale for decisions, instinctual thoughts as well as personal challenges or difficulties in the research process, and such a journal was used during this study.

3.9.3 Transferability

In the following chapter the findings are presented and the process of developing themes is described. The interview guide and focus group discussion are provided in the addenda for scrutiny. In addition, excerpts of the transcripts and the coding process appear in the appendices. According to Houghton et al. (2013), the following of such practices enhances the transferability of the study.

However, it can also be argued that every study is unique, and therefore no design is completely transferable. Every context is different and therefore, even when a similar design is followed, the data will reflect that unique context.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a researcher and as an educational psychologist, one of the important goals was to conduct the research planning, design, implementation and report in an ethical manner (see Wassenaar, 2006). Therefore, before the research was undertaken, ethical clearance was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the university where I was registered as a PhD student. Approval to commence was granted in September 2016 (see letter in Appendix A).

As the research was being conducted with minors, informed consent was sought from their single mothers and assent from the adolescent participants (see Appendix B for these forms). During my first visit with the family, which was normally an introduction and opportunity to build rapport, I would explain what the research was about, after which I would go through the consent form with the participants. A number of times I also left the consent form with the family to study in their own time and I emphasised that they should feel free to ask questions. I would also explain the study to the adolescent and present him/her with an information leaflet (see Appendix C).

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During this first session I ensured that the participants understood what would be expected of them in terms of time investment and participation. I also explained that conversations would be audio-recorded. Participants were informed that there was no monetary or material benefit involved in taking part in the study. Special effort was however made to explain the indirect benefits of the research. The participants were also continuously reminded of their rights as participants and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality issues were discussed with the research participants prior to the interviews. I explained the details and steps that I was taking to ensure confidentiality and the participants consented to the interviews being discussed with the research supervisor. The participants were also informed that the research was part of a doctoral study, which would be published, and that the data will be in the public domain, but were assured that no identifying information would be included with the published research report. The participants' anonymity was upheld in the study by making use of pseudonyms, omitting identifying details and password-protecting transcripts and audio-recordings. Furthermore, every effort was made to uphold respect and confidentiality in terms of the best interests of the participants.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the paradigm, research design and methodology for the study. These elements were guided and informed by the research question, which was: What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families? This chapter further provided a detailed description of the data-collection methods, which were semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and the researcher's observations and reflections. The chapter explained how the data were analysed and interpreted through a process of thematic content analysis. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the importance of enhancing the trustworthiness of the study and the measures that were followed to strengthen this element. Finally, the chapter discussed the ethical considerations pertinent to the study, and the measures followed to ensure that ethical standards were upheld. Chapters 4 and 5 provide a presentation of the data and discussion of the research findings.

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CHAPTER 4:

DATA PRESENTATION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS I

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of the study. These two chapters display the data that the study generated by giving voice to the participants' ideas, views, opinions, feelings and everyday experiences. The chapters thus explore the stories on parental educational support in six single mother families of which at least one child is an adolescent. This study was undertaken within a social constructivist paradigm, grounded in the perspective that knowledge about parental educational support is best understood by exploring the meaning that the participants subscribe to the phenomenon. The argument of this study has been that in the single-parent households, parental educational support occurs in informal and non-traditional ways, and that such experiences are often misrecognised by schools and society as legitimate forms of support. For the interpretations of the findings, the study used a theoretical framework influenced by intersectional feminist theory, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory and Yosso's theory of community cultural wealth. In Chapters 4 and 5 the themes that the data yielded are presented and discussed as the findings of the study. The interpretations and the implications of these findings are reflected on in Chapter 6, the final chapter.

4.2 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research was conducted in a township community situated in Cape Town, in the Western Cape province of South Africa. This community can be classified as of low socio-economic status (SES), as residents overwhelmingly deal with the challenges of unemployment and poverty. In the time that I spent in this community, I was made aware of the challenges of gangsterism and violence on families' wellbeing. Residents of this township live in brick homes, in backyard dwellings such as wooden homes, known locally as Wendy houses, and in corrugated iron shacks. The community is served by one primary school; however, some parents send their children to primary schools outside of the community. For their secondary education, children travel outside of the community to neighbouring high schools.

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The first interviews took place towards the end of 2016, after ethical clearance had been granted by the Research Ethics Committee. As a novice researcher I navigated many challenges in arranging interviews with participants. It was evident by the various challenges, including poor- and miscommunication, emergencies and cancelled appointments, that the parents lead busy lives, and that researchers have to be flexible and adjust to participants' availability. These adjustments were mainly due to participants not answering phone calls, forgetting meetings, experiencing emergency situations and requesting interviews to be rescheduled.

4.3 PRESENTING THE SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILY UNITS

This section begins by describing the community that the families reside in, followed by an introduction to the families, firstly describing the adolescents and then their mothers. All six families live in Indigo Village, the selected pseudonym for the research community. What was interesting was the nuanced divides that existed in this low SES community, which related to what was perceived as the 'better' parts and the 'poorer', 'more dangerous' parts of the community. The better part was described by the participants as quieter and as having fewer incidents of shooting and gang violence. Two of the families lived in the dangerous part of Indigo Village, while the other four families lived in the 'quieter' part of the community. With the exception of one family, all families identified as being of the coloured population, and the community is considered a traditionally Afrikaans-speaking community. As a result, all the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, with the exception of one interview, which was conducted in English, as the Xhosa-speaking family was not fluent in Afrikaans but were fluent in English. Figure 4.1 below provides a summary of the six family units. The larger text in each home-diagram presents the pseudonyms and ages of the single mothers and the adolescent children who were participants in the study. The smaller text describes other children who are members of the family unit and their relationships with the adolescent participants, in order to represent the family structures which they are part of.

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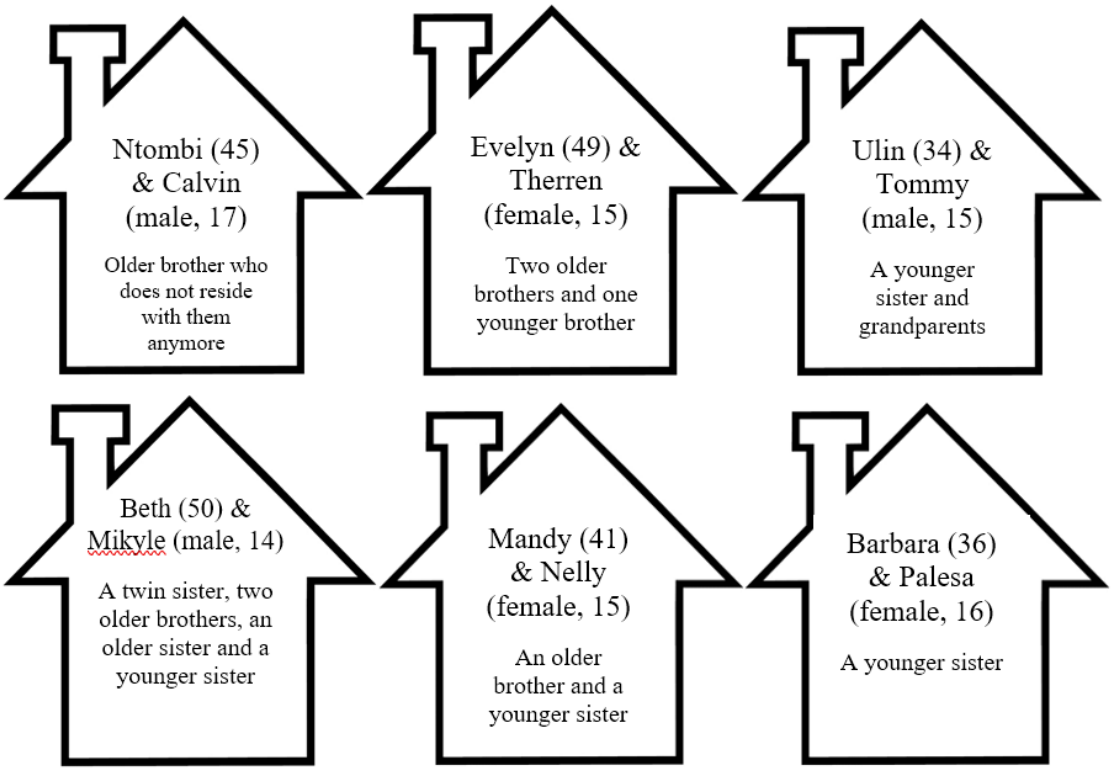

Figure 4.1: The single-mother families interviewed

4.3.1 The adolescent participants

Three female and three male adolescents participated in the study. Most of the participants were in Grade 9, and their average age was 15. All the participants were attending high schools outside of the community, as there are no local high schools in the community. Calvin travelled to school by train, because his mother did not want him to attend the nearby schools. The other participants walked to their various high schools, which are all between 2 and 5 km from their homes. Table 4.1 below provides information on the adolescent participants.

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Table 4.1: The adolescent participants

Participant	Age	Grade	Language
Calvin	17	11	Xhosa and English
Therren	15	9	Afrikaans
Tommy	15	9	Afrikaans
Mikyle	14	9	Afrikaans
Nelly	15	9	Afrikaans
Palesa	16	10	Afrikaans

4.3.2 The single-mother participants

The mothers were all between the ages of 34 and 50. Although all had completed their basic education, these mothers on average had completed only one year of high school education. At the time of the interviews, only Ntombi and Ulin were employed; one as a cashier and the other as a tea-lady. The other mothers were unemployed, and their families can be described as poor, as these households were surviving on State welfare grants. The two who were employed earned minimal wages. With the exception of Mandy, none received financial support from the fathers of their children. My initial impressions were thus of families with major financial constraints.

After 1994, the South African government transferred the title deeds of township homes to the rent paying occupants. Thus, even though these women are poor, they were all homeowners with the exception of Ulin who rents her house. Barbara and Mandy were living in homes that belonged to their parents, and still needed to have the title deeds to their homes transferred into their names. Ntombi, Ulin and Barbara each have two children, while the other three mothers all have four or more children. Table 4.2 below provides a summary of this demographic information on the single-mother participants.

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Table 4.2: The single-mother participants

Participant	Age	Marital status	Years as a single mother	Child support from father	Highest level of education	Form of income	Children	Home owner status
Ntombi	45	Never married	Always	No	Grade 9	Tea-lady & landlady	2	Owner
Evelyn	49	Divorced her youngest child's father	10	No	Grade 8	Older son's work & social grant	4	Owner
Ulin	34	Never married	15	No	Grade 10	Cashier & child support grant	2	Renting
Beth	50	Never married	Always	No	Grade 7	Landlady, cleaning jobs & disability grant for Mikyle	6	Owner
Mandy	41	Separated from her youngest child's father	12	Only baby's father gives support	Grade 8	Cleaning jobs & social grant	5	House on deceased mother's name
Barbara	36	Never married, but father lives with them now	8	No	Grade 8	Cleaning jobs and social grants (Allpay, Sassa and child support grant)	2	House on deceased mother's name

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4.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DATA PROCESSING AND UNDERSTANDING

The analysis of the findings was guided by the research question: What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families? The data analysis revealed three thematic frameworks: (a) perceived needs for support; (b) challenges and barriers to educational support, which included risk factors that threaten academic success for the adolescent participants; and (c) forms of parental educational support, which included assets and protective factors within the family and broader community as well as internal factors that lead to school success for the adolescents. These frameworks are presented below:

Table 4.3: Themes and sub-themes

Chapters	Themes	Sub-themes
4 Contextualising the single-mother families	Challenges within single-mother families	
	Narratives of an absent father	
	The problem of the abusive father and partner	
	Community violence as a barrier to educational success	
	Navigating educational spaces and resources	Navigating homework in a crowded space Navigating needs for material resources related to school
5 Forms of educational support in the single-mother families	Narratives of the mothers' interrupted schooling	
	Narratives of a strong mother-adolescent relationship	The role of open communication The role of the adolescents' understanding of their family's financial situation Mothers' use of authoritative parenting
	Narratives of resourcefulness	Single-mothers are resilient They use Small business opportunities Single-mothers are willing to sacrifice
	Encouragement as support	
	Spirituality as support	
	Community support networks	Educational support within the family Educational support outside the family
	School-based parental involvement	

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The above themes were generated from the data sources, which were the semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion, and informal observations and reflections made in the researcher's journal. The first two categories will be presented in this chapter and the third will be presented in Chapter 5. Quotations that were given in Afrikaans are presented in these chapters in Afrikaans, followed by an English translation; quotations given in English are presented verbatim as far as possible. In some cases, extra information is added to make the meaning of what was said clearer or reworded slightly when the meaning was obscured by the participants' language use. These changes are indicated with the use of square brackets. Each quotation is also followed by a reference, for example (2:13). The first number indicates that the quote belongs to the second participant, and the second number indicates the number of the code number. These references were produced by the software programme Atlas Ti.

4.5 CONTEXTUALISING THE SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES

4.5.1 Single mother families as social construct

When I enquired about their marital status, I found that four of the six mothers never married, one was separated from her husband and the other was divorced. At the time of the research, none were receiving financial support from their children's fathers. From their narratives, I deduced that as family units, they experienced hardship on a daily basis. I thus explored what life was like for women who were raising their families on their own. When they referred to their own family units, the mothers themselves seemed to adopt a deficit perspective. They pointed out how difficult it was to provide for their family on their own. I identified two main challenges in the mothers' stories of their lives as single-mothers: firstly, experiencing financial difficulties; and secondly, the perceptions of fulfilling dual roles and having sole responsibility for the household.

My analysis of the data shows that all of the families experienced severe financial difficulties. The mothers' main concern was putting food on the table. As Barbara stated: "As the parent I know that the children are coming from school and there isn't a slice of bread to eat. Then I sit and worry. Where must I go and where must I start? Where must I go and look for bread?" (12:1). Barbara's statement reflects the mothers' narratives which spoke of the anxiety and worry that financial stress brings.

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In addition, their narratives also expressed a belief that having a father present would alleviate some of this stress. The mothers thus seemed to subscribe to the construction of the father as the head of the household and the one who should provide a sense of safety and security within families.

The second challenge relates to the mothers' perception that they are performing dual roles within the family. A common narrative for all of the mothers was that being the birth mother in addition to fulfilling the role of 'father' in the family units was challenging and exhausting. This is particularly evident in Ulin and Beth's statements:

> Ulin: *O, dis baie hard. Dis baie hard. Finansiëel hard om ma en pa te wees. Want somtyds verwag jy 'n pa se antwoord of 'n pa se advies, maar dan moet jy nou altwee wees. Jy kan nou jou advies gee en dink wat die pa ook sal gee.* (Oh, it is tough. It is very tough, financially hard to be both mother and father. Because sometimes you expect a father's answer or a father's advice, but now you have to be both. You can give your advice and only think what a father would have said) (6:1).
>
> Beth: *Nou dis alles wat die kinders sien, dis mammie, is net mammie en mammie is pa. Mammie is ma. Mammie moet alles vir ons doen. Mammie moet alles gee*. (Now this is all that the children see, it is only mommy and mommy is father and mommy is mother. Mommy must do everything for us. Mommy has to provide everything) (8:57).

My analysis of the data indicates that the single mothers conformed to the dominant construction that mothers and fathers fulfil different, exclusive roles within the family, such as the father being the breadwinner and the mother being the caregiver. Therefore, they saw themselves as different to other families where both a mother and father are present, especially in dealing with financial strain and raising their children. The quotes above provide examples of the expectation that a father would give different advice, and Beth uses the word "provide" indicating the expectation that a father should provide for his family. Another example is Ntombi's view of her situation that single parents have unique constraints, such as that she needed to request an extension for paying school fees and that she needs to think carefully about how she spends her money:

> Ntombi: If I compare myself with some of my neighbours that are not single parents … Like they won't be behind with school stuff (2:44).

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What their data show is that the three mothers, though single, subscribe to a social construction of the ideal family unit as consisting of two parents. This is particularly evident in the way that mothers like Ulin and Beth say that they needed to think like a mother and a father. Similarly, Beth stated that her children saw her being both mother and father, which she framed as a negative, abnormal situation. As such, they subscribe to dominant ideas of what a family should be, and they frame their own family as lacking because a father is not present. The mothers' stories also reflect how a patriarchal society socialises individuals to perform and adhere to gendered roles, and that these roles might be communicated and transferred to children when mothers so strongly reinforce them. This occurs even though the mothers describe themselves as taking on the roles of both mother and father in the family, yet view this arrangement as abnormal. This idea of gender roles and 'motherly' and 'fatherly' orientations and responsibilities are also reflected in the stories of adolescents.

4.5.2 I need my father to show an interest in me: Narratives of an absent father

The adolescents' narratives reflected the need for a "present" father. When asked about their needs for support, most of the adolescent participants described the lack of a fathers' support as a significant need. Although the male participants were aware of the support a father could provide, they deemed the support of their mother good enough. It seemed as though the absence of a father was less significant and less emotionally affecting for the male participants. The female participants, on the other hand, became quite emotional, indicating a sense of sadness and loss that they did not have a relationship with their fathers. In my analysis, three needs categories emerged, namely the need for emotional support, the need to be financially supported and the need for their existence to be acknowledged.

Table 4.4: Adolescents' narratives on the need for a father's support

Need for emotional support	Calvin: When I was still young, I needed to talk to a man of man issues, she [my mother] would have always listened to me and give me ideas like a man would have given me …I would have mostly wanted a father, a father's support and to feel how it feels and shared my thoughts with him and have men-to-men talks and hang out sometimes … like girl issues … to have a relationship with him and get to know each other. I never had that (13:2). It's quite hard to grow up without a father … my mother, she is a father and a mother to me (1:18). Mikyle: Relationship guidance (13:21). Therren: *Ek wens ek het ondersteuning van my pa ook by my gehad … hy moet daar vir my gewees het vir al die jare. Hy moet vir my omgee.*

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	My help … my ma gehelp het met my en so aan (3:30). (I wish I also had the support of my father. He should have been there for me all these years. He should have cared about me. Helped me, helped my mom with me and so on.) Tommy: *In my oë … is my ma … my ma en my pa saam. Ek worry nie eintlik oor hom nie, want hy't nog nooit [omgegee nie] … Van wanneer ek groot geword het, nog nooit nie* (5:48). (In my eyes my mother and father are together. I don't really worry about him because he never really cared for us. Since growing up, never ever.) Palesa: *Dit, [sigh], somtyds miskien as ons nou in 'n vriendegroep sit en my vriende … Elkeen bly by hulle ouers. Hulle ma en hulle pa en dit voel net nie vir my reg nie … dit voel vir my like ek gaan agtertoe in die lewe, sonder my pa* (13:13). (Sometimes, when we sit with our group of friends … each one of my friends stays with their parents. Their mother and their father and that doesn't feel right to me. Without my father it feels like I'm not making any progress with my life.)
Need for financial support	Calvin: My father never supported me, and he never even paid my school fees or paid a visit … (13:2). Tommy: *Nou, my pa drink, as ek reg is. Hy't nie geld gestuur nie, daai nie, niks geld gestuur nie* … (5:48). (Now, my father drinks, if I'm correct. He didn't send money, not any money.) Palesa: *Vir my [sou] dit anders gewees het, dinge wat ek nie kon gekry het nie, sal ek, sou ek kon hê as dit altwee ouers is* … (13:17). (For me it could have been different. Things I couldn't get, I could have had … if it had been both parents.)
Need for father to show an interest/ acknowledge they exist	Tommy: *Hy het op 'n tyd gebel en toe bel hy, toe onverwags toe bel hy nou nie meer nie. Stel hy nou nie meer belang nie* (6:44). (He used to call at one time, and then suddenly he stopped calling. He isn't interested anymore.) Mikyle: *Dat my pa ons net so gelos het. Hy't, hy't ook nou 'n ander familie. Hy stel nie belang nie* (7:24). (That my dad left us just like that. Now he also has a new family. He is not interested.) Mikyle: By communicating with your child … about school and to get to know you, and to know the father better … because then you know you get support from your father and he isn't ignoring you (13:9).

The data show that the participants' general perceptions of fatherhood is informed by the conventional views of what a father's role should be, namely, to be physically present in the lives of his children and wife, and supporting them financially and emotionally. The male adolescents framed emotional support in terms of needing a man's perspective on "manly issues". Despite all of them describing their mothers as an involved parent who is caring and interested in their challenges in life, they all seemed to have internalised the view that a father

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would have performed this role better than their mothers would. The gender of the parent seemed to be matched to specific topics or issues. Calvin fantasised about how it would have been to have a father with whom he could "… have men-to-men talks and hang out sometimes … talk, have a relationship with him and get to know each other … talk about girl issues" (13:2). Similarly, Tommy stated that he could speak to his mother about everything, except 'girls' (5:42).

Therren, Nelly and Palesa framed emotional support from their fathers as a need for care and love from him. They seemed to believe that in two-parent families more love and support were available to children. This is evident in Palesa's narrative where she compared her family to that of her friends' two-parent families and viewed her own family as different from the norm and as deficient. My analysis of the participants' narratives indicates that these young girls subscribed to the social construction of single-mother families being broken and incomplete. Therefore, they spoke with a sense of sadness and longing when considering the need for a father's support.

Another sub-theme that emerged from the narratives is of an uninvolved, disinterested and unsupportive absent father figure. The absent father was held responsible for the lack of material resources within the family. The adolescent participants' views reflect a belief that if a male parent was present, their mother would not struggle financially; that they would need to sacrifice less and there would be money for material resources. However, although the adolescents tied the families' financial struggles to absent fatherhood, they insisted that it was not the main reason they wanted a present father. They wanted their fathers to acknowledge their existence. During the focus group discussion this theme was dominant. The adolescents emphasised that their need for a father's presence in their lives was not for material gain; rather, it was about maintaining or fostering a relationship, and knowing that their fathers cared and that they were interested in them and in what they were doing at school.

My analysis of the mothers' responses validates the adolescents' descriptions of the uninvolved, disinterested and unsupportive father figure. Below, I present two examples from the mothers' narratives of how their sons experienced their fathers' lack of presence in their lives.

Ulin's description of how the absence of a father was experienced by her son resonated with all of the other mothers' narratives. She recalled how there was a time when he asked about his father and longed for one. However, that longing passed, and he seemed to have accepted that

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he will not have a relationship with his father. She offered the following possible explanation: "*dat ek miskien nou net vir hom ondersteun met al hierdie goed dat hy vergeet van die negatiewe goed in sy lewe"* (6:42). (because I support him with everything he needs, he has forgotten about the negative things in his life).

Similarly, Beth pointedly stated that Mikyle's father is not interested in having a relationship with his children. The twins (Mikyle and his sister) have only met their father once, and it is for this reason that they acknowledge him as "*oom*" (uncle). She further shared that ways in which he could have shown interest would have been to spend time with them during school vacations. She added that financial support would also have been very helpful, as he had never paid child support. Although Beth only narrated her experience with the father of Mikyle, she noted that she had had similar experiences with the fathers of her other children.

My analysis of the data further shows that for these families, the absentee father had led to the adolescents taking on adult roles within the family. My impressions were that in Ulin's family, Tommy took on the adult male role, even though his grandfather lives with them. When I asked Ulin about this, she confirmed that he had, from a young age, taken on adult responsibilities. As a ten-year-old he had to collect his sister from the day-care centre, cook for them and take care of his younger sister until Ulin came home from work. Ulin had been working as a waitress at the time.

4.5.3 I wish he would leave: The problem of the abusive father and partner

Although these adolescents are being raised by single mothers, in two of the families, abusive fathers continue to affect their lives, as they live in the same community. In this section I share two mother-daughter dyads' stories of living with an abusive father and partner. These stories also illustrate how these fathers are physically present, but emotionally absent from the raising of these adolescents.

Nelly grew up in a single parent home for most of her life, however she had a stepfather for a few years. He was a drug abuser whose violent acts toward his family were initiated by his drug use. At the time of the interview, her mother Mandy had divorced Nelly's stepfather, and although he was still living on a separate dwelling on the property, he was no longer living in the home. Nelly described how she often had to defend her mother: "*Ek het hom aangevat … baie keer al*" (I challenged him … many times) (9:8). She narrates that when she was in the house her stepfather would argue and shout, but when Nelly was not at home he would become

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violent and start hitting her mother. These experiences caused Nelly to internalise a belief that she did not want to be like her mother, and it frustrated her that her mother continued to offer him second chances (9:26). According to Mandy, she decided to divorce him when the situation became significantly worse: "*toe my man erg in die drugs beginne gaan, toe beginne vat hy van die huise se goete. Verkoop dit"* (10:14). (when my husband became heavily involved in drugs and he started to take stuff from the house. To sell.)

The stories that Barbara and her daughter Palesa told show similarities with the previous case. Barbara stated that she single-handedly raised her children for most of their lives, but that their father came to live with them in the three years prior to the interview. However, even though he lived with them, she still perceived herself as a single mother. According to Barbara he did not provide financial or emotional support to their family. Instead, she considered him to be a burden, especially since she had to arrange his release from jail on two occasions (12:7). Both Barbara and Palesa explicitly stated that they wished he would leave.

Palesa's narrative demonstrated the harsh effects that a negative experience of a present father can have. She described how, when her father had been drinking, he would keep everyone up late at night and cause discord in the home. Experiences of the previous night's chaos would then distract her the next day at school.

> *Elke keer [as] my pa dronk is, dan skel hy my uit, dan moet ek daai goete by die skool dink* (11:3). *Hy is net so dronk in die week en as hy huis toe kom, dan gaan hy net aan. Dan kan ons nie slaap nie want hulle wil nou aangaan … In die oggende moet ek vroeg opstaan, dan kan ek nie eers vroeg opstaan nie om skool toe te gaan, ek moet laat skool toe gaan. Want, miskien die vorige aand het ek nie rustig geslaap nie want hy, soos hy kon aangegaan en by die skool dan dink ek baie* (11:12). *As hy inkom en hy's dronk, dan kan ek nie verder konsentreer nie. Dis net geraas. Hy vloek die hele tyd so* (11:51). (Every time my father is drunk and he shouts abuse at me, I think about it at school. He is drunk during the week and when he gets home he carries on. Then we cannot sleep, because they are fighting. I have to get up early in the morning to go to school, but I cannot get up and I'm late for school. Because I couldn't sleep peacefully because he carried on and then I think about it at school. When he comes into the house and he is drunk, then I cannot concentrate any further. There's a racket. He swears the whole time.)

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Palesa also described how she would never ask her father for help. She told a story of a time when he bought her something she wanted and then later when he became angry, he destroyed the item. Palesa also stated that he often wanted something in return.

> *Ek vra nie eintlik iets vir hulle baie nie, want [soms] as [ek] iets vir my pa vra, dan koop hy dit vir my en dan ná daai, dan vat hy [die] ding af en dan skeur hy dit op, so* (11:20). *Ek vra nooit my pa se hulp nie. Dan nou weer as ek sy hulp vra, dan praat hy aanmekaar van dit* (11:23). (I actually don't often ask them for anything, because sometimes when I ask my father for something, he buys it for me, but then afterwards he takes it back and tears it up. I never ask my father for help. But then again, when I ask him for help, he talks about it all the time.)

During this conversation, Palesa thought back fondly about the time they lived as a single-mother family without the presence of her father.

> *Die jaar het hy baie my ma se ondersteuning … Maar die ding is eintlik wat ek wil hê hy moet net uit ons se huis uitgaan. Toe wat ons eerste net my suster en my ma gebly het, was dit baie lekker vir my. Dit was baie beter …* (11:22). (This year he has had a lot of my mother's support. But what I actually want is for him to leave our house. I really liked it when it was just my sister and my mother. It was much better.)

Palesa's summation that it was much better when they were just a single-mother family challenges the image of the single-mother family being disadvantageous for children. Instead, it ardently implies that single-mother families, despite the adversity they experience, could in fact be a better option for many children.

My analysis of the findings therefore shows that the participants' longing for a present father was based on the social construction of the role a father figure could play; however, in reality, the physically present father was not always a positive influence for the family, thus challenging essentialist notions of the role of fathers.

4.5.4 Community violence as a barrier to educational success

Not only did some of the single-mother families experience violence in their homes, but ongoing community violence also impacted on and was experienced as a barrier to educational support. The mothers were concerned about their children's safety in a community that has many social problems. According to Ntombi, many community children have dropped out of

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school, are on drugs and are committing crimes. She mentioned that all her neighbours' children are abusing drugs. Ntombi noted that she is scared that her son will also succumb to these negative influences in the community. Therefore, she has considered selling their house many times, and moving to a safer community. However, her son, Calvin, has stopped her each time, promising that he will not do drugs (2:36).

It was evident in the data that the participants were worried about their families' safety. All participants reported experiences of danger in the community and how they had to be aware of their safety at all times. Ulin narrated how Tommy often decided to take a long route on his way home due to safety concerns:

> *Tommy stap ook hiervan skool toe, maar hy het baie wat in sy klas is wat ook daai kant bly, maar hulle kom almal hier om, dan loep hulle saam oor die kanaal en so. Somtyds dan voel hy gaan ma 'n lank pad omloep, want dit lyk nou nie vir hom so lekker daar nie, dan loep hy lang pad om* (Ulin, 6:28). (Tommy walks to school from here [home], but sometimes his classmates will come here and they will walk together over the canal. Sometimes he even takes the long way home when it appears unsafe.)

Safety as a general concern had a significant influence on the educational opportunities the adolescents had access to. For example, they had to walk home from school in groups, therefore seldom making use of after-school activities or opportunities. Similarly, visits to the library were only possible if they went as a group. In Calvin's case, he travelled by train, which consumed many hours of his day, and due to safety, he similarly could not access after school activities or participate in study groups as none of his schoolmates lived in his community.

With this background, all of the mothers went to great lengths to protect their children from the negative influences and keep them in school. In the next chapter I discuss how the mothers went about supporting their children to stay safe and in school; however, one more important story about the community will be discussed in this chapter, namely the issue of sexual violence, especially in terms of its impact on educational support.

During the interview Beth shared the disturbing story of how three of her children were raped, and noted that Mikyle was one of them. Mikyle was raped by a young man in the community. He was severely traumatised by this incident and at the time of the interview he refused to speak about the incident. I did not probe as he was receiving counselling at a local NGO. Beth further disclosed that Mikyle had contracted HIV through the incident. A few days later, she told me

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about the assault of a young girl by a well-respected man in the community. These incidents illustrate the dangers that children in this community are exposed to in terms of sexual violence and exploitation.

Safety is important for educational success. Yet, despite Mikyle's traumatic experience, he is doing well at school. He has also become involved in a community project that involves peer-teaching of younger children that live in his street. Though I did not venture into researching the emotional trauma Mikyle experienced, I observed that his experiences of support were important in navigating the adversity that he faced.

4.5.5 Navigating educational spaces and resources

All the participants reported that they enjoyed attending school. Tommy and Mikyle talked positively about their school experiences and had received several academic awards whilst at primary school. As high school students, they are now presented with many new challenges such as a heavier workload and higher expectations. However, both of them were confident about their academic lives and proud of their progress at the time of the interviews. Therren and Nelly were much more modest about their school success. They shared that they were experiencing difficulty with managing the larger workload and difficult tasks, however they felt positive that they would pass all of their subjects. Calvin, on the other hand, reported that he repeated a grade during his primary school years. Therefore, he was 17 and in Grade 11 at the time of our interview. He added that school continued to be a struggle for him; however, he felt optimistic that he would pass Grade 11. Palesa similarly reported that she was repeating Grade 10, as the previous year had been stressful for her; however, she felt more confident at the time of the interview.

In my discussions with the participants, I explored their views on the challenges they experienced as high school students. Two themes emerged in this regard: firstly, the participants described how physical space for educational activities was often a challenge, and secondly, they often had to deal with a lack of material resources needed for school.

4.5.5.1 Navigating homework in a crowded space

As is the norm for Indigo Village residents, participants' homes were usually small brick houses, consisting of mostly one or two rooms. Evelyn and Therren's home is an example of such a structure. On my first visit, Therren showed me around their house, which was a two-

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roomed house, with the front room acting as a kitchen and sitting room and the other room used as a bedroom. The latter was divided into three sections with a curtain used as a divider. Evelyn slept in one section with her youngest son, Therren slept on her own bed in one section and her older brother slept in the other. Overcrowded, limited space seemed to be the norm with these families, and Mikyle experienced a similar arrangement. However, Mikyle was not as privileged as Therren, as he shared a bed with his twin sister in the same room in which his mother shared a bed with his other sister. In addition, his older sister shared a bed with her two children and his older brother slept on the couch.

Tommy's situation was similarly challenging. His family lived in a one-room backyard dwelling that they divided in sections by the use of curtains. Tommy shared the one section with his mother and his sister, while his grandparents shared the other section. Tommy's mother said that he often spoke of wanting his own room. She noted that she would also appreciate some privacy; however, renting a house is very expensive. Their home circumstances made me reflect on how challenging the lack of personal space would be for a school-going adolescent.

Within these contexts I explored their views on the spaces where they do their homework and school projects in. Therren simply pointed to her bed and said that that is the space where she worked, studied and did school projects. When Tommy was asked about where he did his academic work, he noted that he often struggled to concentrate on his homework as his sister used the same space to watch television. However, he stated that when he really needed to focus, he took his books outside and sat by the dog. Mikyle's mother Beth confirmed that he used the same strategy. He often threw a mat on the ground outside their house and did his homework while sitting on the mat. In my conversation with Mikyle I was surprised to find that the family's circumstances did not disempower him. Instead, he was proactive and sought a solution by finding another quieter space to engage more effectively with his homework. Mikyle simply said he went to sit outside, framing this as the norm in his experience. Therren, Tommy, and Mikyle's situations demonstrate how overcrowded home spaces impede school going children's opportunities to effectively engage with their schoolwork, and also demonstrate remarkable resourcefulness in navigating these small, overcrowded spaces.

The data therefore show that even though the adolescents voiced needs for space and privacy, they showed resilience in how they dealt with their living spaces and found strategies to complete their schoolwork because education was important to them.

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4.5.5.2 Adolescents' needs for material school resources

The data show that the mothers often cannot afford to provide their children with the required basic school equipment. The narratives demonstrate concerns that most of the adolescents and their mothers raise about their lack of resources, and participants also note the embarrassment this lack of resources causes to the family. Beth cannot afford to provide Mikyle and his siblings with all of the required stationery and academic resources, so the children do not have all of their prescribed books. She can also not afford to buy Mikyle a new school bag, which is torn and in need of replacement. Instead she had the bag repaired three times. Barbara similarly shared that she set aside a portion of her income for three months so that she could buy Palesa a school jersey. This lack of school equipment was echoed by Therren, Palesa and Mikyle during the focus group discussion. Calvin's experience was different as his mother had a steady income and he was her only dependant at the time of the interview, so he had more material resources for his schoolwork than the other participants.

My analysis of the data indicates that these adolescents were at a place in their lives where appearance and the opinions of others was deemed important, therefore material possessions were important symbols of status to help them fit in with their peers. This was particularly evident during the focus group discussion. The need for stationery and clothes for school was not always prioritised by their mothers due to financial difficulties. However, the mothers did empathise with their children's lack of resources as developing teenagers. Therefore Evelyn, Beth and Barbara made sure their adolescent child at least had access to toiletries each month.

The mothers could not afford to pay the school fees all at once. Ntombi, Evelyn and Barbara all had to make an arrangement with the school each year for a payment plan. Ulin similarly emphasised that it was a struggle to pay school fees. Every year Beth completed an application at the school for exemption of school fees. Unfortunately, this contributed to her children's views of being marginalised within society. What the data show is that the single mother families in this study were functioning under difficult circumstances. This influenced how the mothers saw themselves and what they could provide to support their children.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the first part of the data that the study collected on how the single-mother household engages with educational support. The goal of this chapter was to focus on the data

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that relates to the circumstances of these families, and how these circumstances position both the parent and the adolescent towards education. The next chapter focuses on the ways in which the mothers engaged in educational support to foster positive educational experiences for their children, as well as how the adolescents experienced this support.

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CHAPTER 5:

DATA PRESENTATION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS II

FORMS OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT IN SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The data presented in the previous chapter, in accordance with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, show single-mother families as facing significant financial burdens and lacking in the types of cultural capital that educational institutions, specifically schools, value. Such positioning could misrecognise the potentialities embedded in each unique single-family unit. There is also the assumption that the single mother functions as the sole provider of care, guidance, and educational support to her children, a lens which discounts the multiple sources of influence and care in many single-mother families. The lens of parent support in this study is broader than the aforementioned conception of single-mother families, and employs an ecological systems perspective which is also informed by Yosso's theory of community cultural wealth, which recognises and affirms a variety of different forms of capital. Therefore, this study explored the support that existed within the family units living in the same homes as well as support outside of the households. The analysis of the data shows that adolescents from single-mother families draw from various forms of support, including supportive capacities found in their own psychological and emotional resources, within their family unit and outside of their family unit. Figure 5.1 below depicts the forms of support reported in this chapter:

Forms of educational support in the single-mother families

Narratives of the mothers' interrupted schooling	Narratives of a strong mother-adolescent relationship	Narratives of resourcefulness	Encouragement as support	Spirituality as support	Community support networks	School-based parental involvement

Figure 5.1: Forms of educational support in the single-mother families

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5.2 I DO NOT WANT MY STORY TO BECOME MY CHILD'S: NARRATIVES OF THE MOTHERS' INTERRUPTED SCHOOLING

In my interviews with the mothers, I gained insight into their own struggles with education, and how their stories about past experiences informed how they engaged with their children's education. What follows are narratives of incidents that shaped the parents' own educational histories and informed their views on education.

Ulin narrated how, in Grade 10, she dropped out of school. Although she did not elaborate on the reason for this decision, one reason that was intimated was that it was due to the family relocating. Ulin stated that her father had refused for her to return to the school she wanted to attend, and instead she had to move with the family and was unhappy at the new school. His refusal led to her discontinuing her formal schooling, a decision that she now regrets. Since then she had accepted her own situation and felt that she had become wiser, but the sense of regret remained, which was why she motivated her children to stay in school (6:85).

Beth was in Grade 7 when she discontinued her schooling. Her parents were farmworkers and Beth was put to work in the vineyards by her mother at that stage. Although she earned a mere R12,50 a week, it made a substantial difference to her family's financial situation at that time. She explained: "That's why I am not educated today, but I want the best for my children because that happened to me" (8:21).

Mandy narrated how she had started working as a cleaner at a young age. She often considered completing her schooling while working, but she recalled that while she was growing up, her community did not value education, and thus she continued working. However, she had since learnt that hard work and commitment to academic pursuits were necessary in order to achieve one's goals in life. For this reason, she constantly encouraged her children to stay in school and to take any opportunity for further study, as she recognised that this was a way to "become something in life" (10:38).

Although she did not have her schooling interrupted, Ntombi used stories from her impoverished childhood to encourage Calvin to stay in school. She often told him how her grandmother had to care for 15 children, including herself. She narrated: "I always say to him: I didn't have my own room. We used to sleep on the floor. We didn't eat. How many times a day do you open the fridge and it's full of stuff? That time we only ate once or twice a day then

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that's it. There was no tap inside. There was no bathroom inside. We had to walk a distance to get water. You had to walk a distance for some privacy" (2:15). She later added:

> That's why I always say to him … I'm a cleaner at my work and I'm a tea-girl. I said that's why I want to be a role model to you [Calvin] né. You must see all these things I'm doing, then one day you must also dream like your mother (2:19).

By using stories of their interrupted schooling and stories from their childhood family struggles, these mothers aimed to inspire their children to work hard and to reap the benefits of an education. The mothers tried to demonstrate, through their own challenges due to their lack of education, that their children should work hard at school in order to accomplish greater financial and career success in their lives than their mothers were afforded. These stories which are used to inspire their children can be linked to what Yosso (2005) calls aspirational capital, which is capital that seeks to "maintain hopes and dreams for the future … and nurture a culture of possibility" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78).

In addition to the verbal narratives of how these mothers spoke to their children about the importance of education, they also kept many items in their homes that supported or symbolised the importance of education. For example, in Evelyn's home there were three framed photographs, with one of the photographs showing Evelyn with a certificate she received for a short course. Similarly, when I first walked into Beth's home, my attention immediately went to one wall dedicated to displaying all of her children's certificates. Barbara was also in the process of obtaining the General Education and Training Certificate through an Adult Basic Education and Training programme by attending evening classes at the time of data collection. Bourdieu (2007) refers to such physical items as contributing to cultural capital.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) point out that "proximal processes [involve] interaction not [only] with people but with objects and symbols [too]" (p. 796). Evelyn and Barbara therefore used their own symbols of educational success to motivate their children, and Beth displayed her children's symbols of educational success so that it would motivate everyone in the family. Therefore, it was not only the person-to-person verbal interactions that constituted powerful proximal processes between the mothers and adolescents, but the adolescents' interaction with symbols of education as well.

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5.3 NARRATIVES OF A STRONG MOTHER-ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP

My analysis of the data shows that the mother-adolescent relationship is characterised by a strong bond across all of the families. Most of the parent-child dyads reported a close relationship and spoke of their relationships in terms of love and feeling supported. A strong relationship thus served as a solid foundation for perceived support. During the focus group discussion, all the adolescent participants reported that their mother played both a parental role and that of a "best friend". Calvin narrated in a written reflection during the focus group discussion:

> My mother is everything to me. She is my mother and my father. She did everything for me and I appreciate her hard work. When I was still young my mother worked as a maid in people's houses … for 10 years until she got a proper job. She sacrificed everything for me and everything I asked her, she will make sure that I get it. When I was still young, and I needed to talk about man issues, she would always listen to me, and give me ideas like a man would have given me. Most of all she is a loving mother that cares and gives all the support (13:1).

Calvin and his mother, Ntombi, were the only black African[2] family who participated in the study. Ntombi spoke about how isolated she felt being so far away from her extended family who all live in the Eastern Cape, a neighbouring province to where the family currently reside. She attributed her close relationship with her son to the two of them being on their own in the Western Cape. She explained that she dedicated herself to her role as mother to Calvin. She encouraged a relationship in which he is free to speak to her about anything, including girls. She described their relationship as follows:

> It's not easy né, this person that you're raising up né, to understand one another … Like I don't treat him like my child, I treat him like I'm his sister or like I'm his friend (Ntombi, 2:1).

According to Ntombi, the level of understanding between her and her son stemmed from their relationship being more like a friendship, where they felt free to discuss any topic. For Ntombi, it was important to treat Calvin as an equal. It was also important for her to be a good example

[2] The term 'black African' is used as the participants themselves identify with the racial majority in South African that are descended from indigenous African groups. Black Africans experienced the most severe forms of oppression and segregation during apartheid. Although racial segregation has ended, research has shown that black Africans continue to experience inequality on multiple levels (Seekings, 2008).

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to him and to set the standard she expected of him. Later in the interview Ntombi described how this openness extended to her asking Calvin's opinion when she started dating again and valuing his viewpoint. This speaks to the closeness and understanding they enjoyed as mother and son, and indicates the type of relationship that fosters the proximal processes which Bronfenbrenner deems necessary for developmental outcomes, such as educational success.

Mikyle, Tommy and Nelly similarly reported close relationships with their mothers. To illustrate the connection he had with his mother, Mikyle stated: "*As sy hartseer is, dan is ek ook hartseer, en as ek hartseer is, is sy ook hartseer*" (7:9). (When she is sad, then I am sad, and when I am sad, then she is sad.) Beth thus also demonstrated empathy towards Mikyle's feelings. Mikyle came across as very protective towards his mother. This perception was confirmed by Beth's comment during our interview that Mikyle wanted a better life for her:

> Mommy, I am going to take you away from this place. I am going to buy a house and a car, and you will come live with me. Mommy will not live like this anymore … Mommy you deserve a better life (8:55). (this was said in English)

Tommy similarly displayed a protective role towards his mother. He described in the following quote the volatility of his extended family situation, and how he felt forced to help and protect his mother against verbal and physical abuse:

> *Ons het al probleme [gehad] al in die familie, dan skel hulle en baklei hulle en daai … Somtyds dan steur ek my nie daaraan nie … Maar somtyds dan help ek my ma* (Tommy, 5:24). (We have had problems in the family, then they shout abuse and fight. Sometimes I ignore it … But sometimes I help my mother.)

Similar to Tommy's experiences, Nelly had often witnessed her mother being abused by her partner, and on many occasions had to intervene to defend her mother. Nelly also reported a strong bond with her mother, and I understood her protectiveness as linked to the vulnerability she witnessed during her mother's abuse. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), "a child who has developed a secure attachment relationship is likely to expect positive interactions […] and thus elicit responsive care reminiscent of his or her caregiver's behaviour" (p. 816). Therefore, in these cases, adolescents experienced their mothers as supportive and in turn felt the need to support their mothers. This speaks to the bi-directional nature of proximal processes where perceived support leads to orientations of care and acts of support. However, this was not the case with all of the adolescents in the study.

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When I analysed the adolescents' responses, Therren and Palesa's experiences of their relationships with their mothers seemed markedly different to how their mothers experienced these relationships. The girls reported more troubled relationships with their mothers than the boys did. Therren described how her mother often scolded her and had her do all of the chores at home instead of having her male siblings help. Palesa similarly said that she felt that her mother favoured her little sister over her, and that she often did not feel that she could speak to her mother about personal matters like relationships. Instead, she found her aunt, her mother's sister, more supportive towards her. The mothers, however, stated that they had good relationships with their daughters, also emphasising the importance of talking to them and maintaining good communication practices.

Four sub-themes emerged in terms of aspects within the relationship that contributed in strengthening the mother-adolescent bond: namely, the mothers and adolescents emphasised the perception of open communication; the mothers described their parenting style as authoritative; the adolescents possessed characteristics that fostered a good relationship with their mother; and finally, the adolescents demonstrated understanding for their family's financial situation which further contributed to the experience of a strong mother-adolescent relationship.

5.3.1 Open communication leads to a strong mother-adolescent relationship

One of the key practices in fostering a good relationship with one's child, which most of the mothers referred to, was communication. They emphasised that mothers and children needed to be open with one another. My own perception in relation to this need for openness was that it was the most conducive factor to perceived support. As Mandy pointed out, openness and communication allow for Nelly "… to see and to feel the support" (10:33). Ulin similarly stated that she thought that communication is the most important factor that separates involved parents from parents who are not involved in their children's lives. According to her, parents need to listen closely to their child, as subtle forms of communication or few words can inform the parents of exactly what children need. She described it as follows:

> *Ek is baie oop met hulle en hulle is oop met my … kommunikasie, dis baie belangrik … Luister wat die kind te sê het … laat die kind klaar praat. Miskien dink jy dis nie nodig nie, of nie baie belangrik nie, maar daar is een woordjie miskien wat laat vir jou trigger, maar dit is iets belangrik.* (I am very honest with them and they are honest with me.

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> Communication, it is very important. Listen to what the child says … allow the child to finish. Maybe you think it is not necessary, but maybe there is one little word that is a trigger for you, that it is something important) (6:50;77).

According to Mandy, it is the parent who should initiate the support. Mandy explained that parents need to reach out and offer help, as adolescents often will not ask for help. She stated that parents should find time within their difficult work schedules to attend to their children's needs, and should show interest by asking about homework and whether their child needs their support:

> *Al werk ons ook hoe hard, moet ons probeer om baie aandag te gee aan ons se kinders, vra um, het jy tuiswerk gekry? Waarmee moet ek help? Dan sal die kind mos vir jou sê, "Nee maar Mammie, dis klaar gedoen, of nee, ek need nog daai … moet ek nog doen" of, so is, is belangrik laat ons kommunikeer met die kind … So laat ons kan weet wat se hulp daai kind nodig het.* (It doesn't matter how hard we work, we must try to give a lot of attention to our children. Ask "Do you have homework? Is there anything I can help you with?" The child might answer, "No, but Mommy, it's finished, or I must still do this or that", but it is important to communicate with the child in order to know what type of help the child needs) (10:35).

The mothers spoke about the importance of maintaining open communication between themselves and their children. According to Barbara, it is the parent who should teach the child about personal development and social realities in their environments. However, when parents are not available, adolescents seek advice and support elsewhere, sometimes from people who may negatively influence the adolescent.

> *Ek glo daaraan dat 'n kind moet openlik wees met sy ouer nè, en 'n ouer moet ook self openlik wees. Moet die kind meer inlig van wat binne-in gebeur en wat buite in die lewe gebeur, verstaan? … En kommunikasie is baie belangrik tussen 'n ouer en 'n kind … Jy weet party dae dan is die kinders so bang om met hulle ouers te kommunikeer nè, dan gaan hulle buitekant na vreemde mense toe en dan gaan kommunikeer hulle met daai persoon wat eintlik verkeerd is …* (I believe that a child must communicate freely with a parent and that a parent must also be honest. And communication is very important between a parent and a child. You know, when children are afraid to communicate with

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> their parents, they will go outside and talk to strangers who will lead them astray) (Barbara, 12:32).

The participants' narratives in this section highlight an awareness of the mothers' circumstances and emphasise the need for openness. The data show that these adolescents take on a protective role towards their mothers in situations where mothers face emotional, verbal and even physical abuse in the family setting. When participants discuss the characteristics of fulfilling the role of mother, they emphasise that communicating with one's child is something that all mothers should do. The data point to how, in the midst of their daily struggles, these mothers were keenly aware of the importance of a good relationship with their adolescent children, and that this could serve as a mechanism to keep them safe and to protect them from negative influences.

5.3.2 Mothers' use of authoritative parenting contributes to a strong mother-adolescent relationship

Another way in which the mothers maintained good relationships with their children was through authoritative parenting. The findings show that the mothers asserted themselves as parents who were in charge of the family unit. The mothers described how they often spoke with their children in a stern or scolding manner. They described themselves as firm and strict, and linked these characteristics to effective parenting. Barbara emphasised that it was important not to overindulge one's children by giving them too much freedom or material possessions, because children should be obedient and respectful. These views are evident in the table below.

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Table 5.1: Single mothers' use of authoritative parenting

Ntombi	I'm not saying that he must be an angel. He is still a child because he must grow up né, but at least he knows the rules of the house … If he is out, not later than seven in the evening. Like [taking] turns [to make] food. I cook the weekends and during the week he cooks (2:2).
Evelyn	*Sy sal altyd luister. Al raas ek so baie en hulle sê aanmekaar, "Mammie bly skel, Mammie bly skel." Maar ek raas baie met hulle, maar hulle sal [nooit] vir my teengaan of so nie* (4:32). (She will always listen. Even if I scold them a lot and they keep saying, "Mommy keeps scolding, Mommy keeps scolding us." I do scold them a lot but they will never oppose me.)
Ulin	*Ek is baie hard, ek is verskriklik hard, maar ek het 'n sagte plekkie* (6:68). (I'm very strict, I am extremely strict, but I have a soft spot.)
Beth	*Ek het vir hulle streng grootgemaak en ek het vir hulle gesê hoe die lewe is en hoe die ander jong kinders is daar buite is …* (8:19). (I was strict when I raised them and I told them about life and how other young people act.)
Mandy	*As ek vir my kinders kan gee, dan gee ek, maar ek wil nie vir hulle bederf nie. Laat hulle môre oor môre voel hulle kan loop oor my nie. Daar is 'n lyn* (10:11). (If I am able to give to my children, then I give, but I don't want to spoil them. So that they don't feel tomorrow or the day after tomorrow that they can walk all over me. There is a line.)

The adolescents' narratives validated the mothers' assertions of being strict and authoritative mothers. They emphasised how their mothers taught them to always have respect, especially for others:

> Tommy: *Want kinders mag nie met grootmense terugpraat of uitvloek nie. Daai is wat my ma-hulle vir my ook geleer het. Mag nie terugpraat, hulle uitvloek, onbeskof wees nie. Altyd groet* (5:35). (Because children are not allowed to backchat or swear at grown-ups. That is what my mother taught me. You cannot backchat, swear, be rude. Always greet.)
>
> Palesa: *Van respek? Vir my … Respek kom eerste … my ma sê altyd vir my dit. So waar … sy praat baie met my …* (11:29). (About respect? For me … respect comes first. My mom always tells me that. It's true. She talks to me a lot.)

My analysis of the data shows that the mothers deemed respect as an important element in their relationships with their children. In addition to fostering opportunities for open communication where they encouraged their adolescents to feel free to speak to them about any issue, they also

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felt that respect and understanding boundaries within the relationship were important factors, and that these contributed towards good relationships within the family.

5.3.3 Adolescents' character contributes to a strong mother-adolescent relationship

A third sub-theme that emerged within the theme of strong mother-adolescent relationships was the idea of the adolescent participants possessing strong, respectable character. The mothers spoke of their children with pride, pointing out that they were well behaved and good children. Ntombi compared Calvin to the children from their neighbourhood by saying: "they [other children] don't go to school … they are on drugs … they break into people's houses" (2:36). She further described how she had contemplated selling their house several times to escape these potential negative influences. However, she proudly stated that Calvin convinced her otherwise, and made her a promise that he would not be influenced by others in the neighbourhood, saying: "I won't do these things that other kids are doing" (2:36).

When discussing their children, Ntombi, Evelyn, Ulin and Beth use phrases such as "no problems with him"; "nice child"; "never disappointed me"; "doing well" and "dependable and going to achieve in life". The mothers describe their children in terms of positive characteristics and as possessing strong character. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) state that personal characteristics can be explained as the dispositions and ecological resources that mobilise and sustain the proximal processes between mother and adolescent. My impression of how the mother's described their children was that it made a strong contribution towards a healthy and positive relationship.

Furthermore, these single parents are astutely aware of the dangers that their community poses to their children. In this regard, Beth's children had already been victims of sexual violence. However, when she talks of Mikyle, she describes him as an ambitious, driven child who wants to make a better life for himself, which might indicate a great deal of resilience in the face of such trauma. Mikyle and Tommy are also doing well academically. According to Ulin, Tommy has been receiving academic awards since his first year of formal schooling, and "had never disappointed [her]" (6:35). These qualities further strengthened the bonds between the mothers and their children and contributed towards their good relationships. The participants' stories challenge the image of single-mother families producing maladjusted children who are assumed to experience academic failure, and instead speak to mechanisms of resilience and often

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unacknowledged psychological and relational resources which could lead to academic success and remarkable strength of character in the face of adversity.

5.3.4 Adolescent's understanding attitude of their family's financial situation contributes to a strong mother-adolescent relationship

All the single-mother families that participated in this study experienced financial difficulties. Ntombi worked as a tea-lady and Ulin as a cashier, earning minimal wages. Beth, Mandy and Barbara depended on state welfare grants and intermittent work as cleaners to sustain their families. Evelyn, after many years of working as a cleaner, depended on her two eldest sons to provide for their family at the time of data collection. My analysis of the mothers' narratives shows that in the midst of severe financial difficulties, what they valued most was their children's understanding attitude towards their financial situation. When there was not enough money, the adolescents all displayed a sense of understanding and patience until their mother could find a solution. This is evident in the following quotes:

Table 5.2: Mothers' views on how their children dealt with financial difficulties

Ntombi	School fees is expensive, travelling and school clothes too … but I try to pay it bit by bit … if I got then I got, but if I can't, he will understand (2:34).
Evelyn	*… sy't altyd verstaan, of ek moet sê, Therren, ek het nie, onthou net jy moet nou wag tot wanneer ek het … sy sal altyd verstaan* (4:41) (She will always understand, or I just say I don't have, just remember that you need to wait until I have again … she will always understand.)
Ulin	*… want ek wil vir hom transport [skool toe] gereël het dat hy … Hy sê nee, dis te veel geld* (6:29). (I wanted to arrange transport [to school] for him, but then he said no, it's too much money.)
Mandy	*Ek leer vir hulle as ons nie het nie, dan het ons nie, dan gaan ons klaarkom sonder dit, en hulle verstaan dit* (10:10). (I teach them, when we don't have then we don't have, and we get by without it, and they understand.)
Barbara	*Sy's very understand[ing], as ek en sy nou dorp toe om vir haar iets te koop … dan sal ek miskien iets vir die kleintjie sien, sal sy weer sê, "Mammie, nee, koop dit maar vir haar, los maar die vir my." That's how she is, very understanding, and respectable. I can send her anywhere* (12:13). (She is very understanding, when we go to the shops to buy something for her, and I see something for her little sister, then she will say: "Mommy, it's ok, buy it for her and leave my item. That's how she is, very understanding, and respectable. I can send her anywhere.)

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The adolescents' data validate the above statements by the mothers that their children understood their families' financial constraints. Tommy understood that his family would not always have money. He understood that there would be times when the family would lack certain resources. Similarly, Nelly commented that she had learnt from her mother that there would be times when the family would face constraints and lack food or other necessities, and that it would be difficult for the family. She knew that when their financial circumstances improved, they would again have enough to eat. This sense of understanding within the single-mother family unit speaks once again to good mother-adolescent relationship which formed the foundation for perceived support. Love, trust and understanding can also be understood as forms of emotional capital that the single mothers invest in and foster in their relationships with their children.

The mothers nurtured good relationships with their children and offered emotional support systems, including offering stories of caution and advice to their children, and demonstrating the importance of education in overcoming many challenges in life. The mothers valued open communication, and expressed how this strengthened their relationships with adolescent children. This form of investment in emotional capital was a strong component of how the children felt supported and were thus able to support and respect their mothers in kind, and were able to demonstrate commitment to their studies even in the face of great adversity. The following themes expand on how the mothers activated their emotional capital and transformed challenging situations into productive learning opportunities.

5.4 I ALWAYS MAKE A PLAN: NARRATIVES OF RESOURCEFULNESS

The single-mother families in this study faced great challenges, including living in poverty, coping with unemployment and being exposed to unsafe living conditions. Limited financial resources were often the biggest challenge to navigate, especially in providing for their basic needs. However, what the data clearly showed was that the mothers were significantly resourceful in this regard. Three sub-themes emerged related to the mothers' resourcefulness, namely: the mothers were resilient in the way they coped with adversity; the mothers used small business opportunities to generate income; and thirdly, the mothers were willing to sacrifice and place their children's needs above their own.

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5.4.1 Single mothers are resilient

The ability to survive and maintain hope was evident among all the mothers. Evelyn described how most days they have something to eat, even if it is only a piece of bread. "You just need to try and survive", she said (4:19). Her statement reflects the experiences as well as the attitudes that all of the mothers had towards adversity. It was evident that the mothers were resilient, which refers to the ability to overcome and move forward despite adverse circumstances (Zautra et al., 2010). The quotes in table 5.3 below display some of the mothers' attitudes towards the adversity they faced and how they portrayed themselves as strong women.

These quotes illuminate the presence of resistant capital within the single-mother families in this study. Resistant capital refers to an attitude of fighting against inequality in society and not accepting the current situation as the norm (Yosso, 2005). Even though the mothers do not fight inequality in broad terms, such as through political or social activism, their resistance to their disempowered status and their determination to improve circumstances for their families can be understood as a form of resistant capital. In other words, these mothers are resisting their marginalised status and the idea that their children's outcomes will be similar to their own, and they are determined to provide for their children despite the overwhelming adversity which is often framed as stripping them of agency in their lives, be it within patriarchal societies which disempower women, in countries with histories and legacies of racialised oppression like South Africa, or in capitalist societies which disempower and marginalise the poor. In this way, these mothers make use of significant resistant capital to challenge social constructs of what would be possible for them in their circumstances. Despite the adversity, all the mothers portrayed resilience and a determination to do their best for their children, believing that their children deserved good lives. Therefore, regardless of how much they struggled or their lack of resources, all of the mothers expressed in one way or another the idea that they always find a way to provide for their families.

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Table 5.3: Single mothers' attitude towards adversity

Ntombi	No, no I just like tell them, when you've got a problem, don't run away from the problem. Stay inside. Solve it (2:30).
Evelyn	*Dit is seker maar hoe ek opgegroei het, want ek is maar al die tyd … My tjommies ook, hulle kan nie glo dat ek so alleen survive met my kinders. Maar, ek is maar nou net so, ek sal nie loop kla by mense … As ek het nie kos nie, en ek het nie daai nie. Ek gaan nie kla nie. Ek gaan maar kyk wat ek kan doen* (4:27). (Maybe it is how I was raised … my friends also, they cannot believe that I'm surviving alone with my children. But that is how I am, I will not complain to others. If I don't have food to eat, I am not going to complain. I am going to make a plan.)
Beth	*Ek is nou al gewoond … ek is nog deur alles dit, so vir my is dit nog soos 'n elke dag* (8:51). (I am used to it. I went through all of it and for me it is just like every other day.)
Barbara	*Jy moet nooit teen die omstandighede vaskyk nie. Dit wat ek geleer het, en die ander ding is die … Moenie dink omdat ons nie het wat ander mense het nie, ek kan nie eendag daar uitkom waar ek wil wees nie. Jy moet nooit daai in jou gedagte het nie. Jy moet altyd positief dink vir jouself en sê, "I want to reach that goal and I'm going to reach that goal"*(12:20). (Don't let your circumstances trap you. That is what I have learnt, and the other thing … don't think that just because we don't have what other people have, that I cannot reach my goals. You must never think that. You must always think positively and tell yourself, "I want to reach that goal and I'm going to reach that goal.")

5.4.2 Single mothers creating small business opportunities

The narratives across families contain similar references to many nights that the household would be without food or where the main meal would be a slice of bread and a cup of tea (4:19; 8:7; 12:2; 13:27). In the absence of many economic resources, the mothers worked in creative ways to supplement their income to support their families.

Ntombi and Beth, for example, had Wendy houses erected on their properties. Ntombi had three Wendy houses in her front yard and Beth had one in her front yard and one in her backyard. They rent out these units to people in the community. However, with the various safety concerns in the community, Ntombi pointed out that she was very strict with her tenants and had implemented rules regarding visitors and the use of alcohol on the premises.

Beth also displayed her determination for putting food on the table by sharing a story of a young man in the community who asked her to do his washing She described him as an "African

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outjie", which means he was a young black man. He asked her if she would be willing to wash his blankets, and paid her R50 for her services. She used the R50 he paid to buy electricity and maize meal, two basic resources for the family. Beth ended the story by saying that she did not want a handout; she was willing to work to earn money for her family.

Ulin's living situation was different from the rest of the participants in that her parents lived with her and her two children. Even though they both received a government pension, she often had to see to their needs as well. To supplement her income, she sometimes bought and sold bags of rice to her friends and neighbours.

These stories demonstrate the mothers' use of small business opportunities to supplement their financial resources in order to provide for their families' most basic needs. It was evident that the mothers' viewed the responsibility to be a provider as a very important form of support.

5.4.3 Single mothers' willingness to sacrifice

In addition to generating income in creative ways, the mothers also expressed a willingness to sacrifice and place their children's needs above their own. Barbara's comment below represents a sentiment common among all of the mothers:

> *Want jy kan nie sien dat daai kind honger is nie, soos ek, as ek sien my kinders is honger dan is ek baie hartseer ... sometimes dan is daar net so dat hulle kan eet, dan worry ek nie oor my nie, verstaan?* (12:2). (If I see my children are hungry then I feel very sad … sometimes there is just enough for them to eat and then I don't worry about myself.)

My analysis of the data shows that parents often make great sacrifices for their children. These sacrifices did not only apply to the most basic needs such as food, but sacrifices were also made to provide their children with non-essential items that the children wanted. Ulin narrated how she would not agree to Tommy's request for a new phone. However, because Tommy was achieving academically, having made the top ten list for his grade, she decided to acknowledge his accomplishment by obtaining a cell phone for him. Ntombi also shared that Calvin sometimes asked for expensive things, but she would say to him: "Ok, can you wait two months or three months, I'll look at that … then he will get it. That's how I like to operate things with him" (2:14). Ulin and Ntombi's stories of finding a way to provide their children with 'expensive' things like a new cell phone are examples of aspirational capital. Ulin, for example,

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acknowledged her son's hard work at school, and bought him the phone as a reward to encourage him to continue to aspire towards success.

In the following story, Barbara described that when it came to equipment her children needed for school, she would always find a way to provide this equipment for them:

> *Dit is 'n groot challenge vir my … Die sente wat ek kry, as die een nou by die skool dit soek, moet ek miskien drie dae werk en daai drie dae se geld moet ek net so vat. Miskien iets is R300 by die skool dan moet ek 'n R100 wegsit en op die einde van die dag moet ek daai R300 vat en daai ding vir die een koop en dan vir die week daarna moet ek weer daai week char en dan weer vir die ander een, so vir my is dit nogal 'n groot challenge. Ek koop nie, ek kom nie rêrig by my uit nie want ek sit meer in vir die kinders* (P12:3). (It is a big challenge for me. If one of them needs the money I earn for school, then I have to work for three days, and use three days' pay. Let's say something costs R300 at school, then I put R100 aside, but at the end of the day I have to take that R300 and spend it on one of them. The week after I have to char the whole week for the other one. And this is a huge challenge. I don't buy, and I don't really spend any money on myself because it all goes to the children.)

An important line in Barbara's narrative is: "I don't worry about myself". This highlights how the participant mothers position themselves as selfless providers for their children. These stories illuminate the resilience, resistant capital and aspirational capital within the single-mother families in this study. The mothers' creative strategies for providing for their families, and the patience and commitment they applied, are often overlooked as ways in which single mothers provide support. Drawing from resistant capital, the mothers believed that their children deserved good lives, regardless of societal expectations which might have devalued their family structures as deficient or failed to recognise the multiple ways that these mothers provided for their children. Beth's words echo the belief that all of the mothers voiced when it came to supporting their children:

> *"Deur al my situasie, deur alles wat ons deurmaak, het ek nog probeer om my kinders die beste te gee"* (8:11). (Through my situation, through everything that we have been through, I have always tried to give my children the best.)

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5.5 NARRATIVES OF ENCOURAGEMENT AS SUPPORT

Mothers in the study were often shown to encourage their children. Acts of encouragement could include providing support, confidence or hope (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2019). Encouragement can also be understood as emotionally supporting someone to continue an activity or to inspire the start of an activity, or supporting new ways of thinking about one's situation (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2019). In my analysis of the mothers' support practices, it became evident that the mothers used different forms of encouragement to ensure that their adolescent children could resist the negative influences in the community, which were described in the previous chapter. The table below illustrates ways in which the mothers encouraged their children to value education as a protective factor in their lives and as a means to attainment.

Table 5.4: Forms of encouragement as support

Ntombi	[I tell him] don't leave school like these other children in our street … (2:7). I don't want him to make friends with kids that are not at school. … I don't allow that (2:37).
Evelyn	*Ek praat baie met haar. Ek sê sy moet nie die verkeerde dinge wat die kinders so doen nie en sy moet fokus op haar skoolwerk* (4:52). (I talk to her a lot. I say that she must stay away from bad things other children are doing and that she should focus on her schoolwork.)
Ulin	*Want hy vra vir my vir wat sal ek geleer het. Ek sê ek [sou] gegaan [het] vir prokureur, 'n advokaat en dit het nou nie uitgewerk nie. Hy sê hy gaan mechanical engineering doen. Sê ek "O, dis mooi, my kind, hou daarby dat jy gaan"* (6:87). (Because he asks me what I would have studied. I answer that I would have studies to become an attorney or an advocate, but it didn't work out. He says he is going to do mechanical engineering. I tell him "Good for you, my child, stick to your plan to study.")
Barbara	*Sonder universiteit kry jy nie vandag 'n goeie werk nie. … baie kinders stop by matriek. Jy kry net winkelwerk. Dis hoekom ek altyd vir hulle sê, leer klaar en gaan universiteit toe* (12:19). *Ek sê vir haar baie keer, "Palesa, maak klaar die skool, sien jy wil ook nie kombuiswerk doen soos jou ma nie … maar as jy nie wil kombuiswerk [doen nie], moet jy leer eendag om iets te kan bekom"* (12:36). (Without university you will not get a good job … many children stop with matric. With matric you will only get a job in a shop. That's why I always tell them that they have to finish school and go to university. I often tell her, "Palesa, finish school, you don't want to work in a kitchen like your mother. If you don't want kitchen work, then you must study to become something.")

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My analysis of the data shows that the mothers encouraged their children to stay in school and value education by pointing out behaviours that they should avoid and talking to them often about their future. Mothers also used the example of how their own lack of career training and qualifications led to many limitations in their lives, and stressed how children should focus on their schoolwork in order to avoid the same outcome. Additionally, the mothers discussed the negative behaviour of others in the community, using these as examples of behaviour that would be detrimental to educational success. The data also show that mothers encouraged their children to pursue further education as a way of securing a better future.

Ulin used her own academic aspirations to inspire her children, presenting them with possibilities of what they could aspire towards. By telling Tommy that she had wanted to become a lawyer, she encouraged him to dream beyond the limiting examples he witnessed in their community. Barbara pointed out that most of the young people from the community work in local food stores as packers. Barbara also used herself as an example when she told Palesa that the only way to avoid being a cleaner is by making every effort to finish school and attend university.

The adolescents' narratives also illustrate examples of how the mothers used encouragement as a form of educational support. Calvin narrates that his mother always encouraged him to be a "better person", and equates this with completing his studies and securing a well-paying job. Calvin further states that he aspires towards this because he would like to "pay her back for everything she did" for him. "She gave me a good education" (1:23), he says.

Tommy and Mikyle narrate similar strategies that their mothers employ to keep them away from the influences of youth delinquency in the community. Tommy is a high achiever who has always done well at school. He attributes his success to his mother's encouragement. When he did not do well in a task, his mother would motivate him to do better by saying, "*Daar's 'n volgende keer. Jy moet net beter doen."* (There is always next time. You just have to do better) (5:14). She would, however, also warn him against emulating the anti-social behaviours of other community members, and tell him that his school work should be prioritised over all other activities. Mikyle describes how his mother would tell him that his mother and others love him, and that he should not allow negative influences to hold him back from achieving his best in life. It was clear that Mikyle had internalised this encouragement when he stated: "*ek is 'n baie goeie kind en hulle is so saam met my omdat ek nie soos hulle wil wees nie, ek sal nooit soos*

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hulle wees nie (7:17). (I am a good child and they support me because I don't want to be like them, I will never be like them.)

It was further evident in the data that the adolescents internalised their mothers' encouragement, especially in how they linked education to a better future:

> Calvin: I see how things are with people … When you use drugs you will just be like … drop out of school. You will be lazy … and don't want to work and that's not the life that I want to live. I want to become a better person and help people (P1:13).
>
> Tommy: *... by die laerskool het daar mense gekom en gepraat oor armoede en hoe mense hulle kinders treat ... toe het ek besef, nee, ek moet my eie pad vat, wat ek dink is reg* (P5:9). *So my skoolwerk kom eerste, altyd* (P5:15). (At the primary school people visited us and talked about poverty and how children are being treated … That's when I realised, no, I have to go my own way, do what I think is right. So my schoolwork comes first, always.)
>
> Nelly*: Toe besluit ek ek gaan 'n dokter word eendag ... Ek moet net gefokus bly* (Nelly, 9:33). (Then I decided that one day I am going to be a doctor … I just have to stay focused.)

The participants saw education as a pathway to a better life and a means of leaving their present community; in other words they had "dreams of possibilities beyond their present circumstances" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). This culture of possibility was therefore not only evident in the mothers' interviews, as indicated in section 5.2, but was present in the adolescents' interviews as well. The adolescents' narratives thus further reflect Yosso's (2005) notion of resistant capital, as they appeared to maintain attitudes that "challenged the status quo" (Yosso, 2005, p. 81). In other words, the adolescents challenge the structural and systemic constraints that they face, and are determined to achieve success despite the influences they are surrounded by. This can be seen as a form of resistant capital as it allows for individuals to navigate their environments in ways that contained the possibility for change and transcendence, which potentially held promise not only for the adolescents but for their families and communities too.

The adolescents showed awareness of the struggles they faced, but they also believed in a better life and better circumstances for their family. Most of the adolescent participants also had desires to help others. During the focus group discussion, Palesa shared that she wanted to

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become a doctor, Therren a social worker and Mikyle a teacher. Their choice of helping professions might also be indicative of their heightened awareness of the needs in their community and therefore they fostered goals to serve others. These could link further desires to transform their communities and to provide opportunities and care for others in ways that they might have lacked in their own lives.

5.6 I PRAY FOR MY CHILD: NARRATIVES OF SPIRITUALITY AS SUPPORT

In addition to stories of their past and forms of encouragement, the mothers also accessed spirituality as a form of support. My analysis shows that spirituality performed several support functions and also shaped the mothers' behaviours and attitudes in ways that enabled them to be supportive. Firstly, the mothers perceived praying for their child as a form of support. Prayer was also a way of teaching hope, gratitude and perseverance to their adolescent children. It would seem that the mothers drew strength and comfort from their belief systems during difficult times, and in turn taught their children to do the same. They viewed spirituality as a belief in protection and blessing. With all of the participating families, going to church was an activity that most of the families did together. This was viewed as an activity that strengthens the family. The theme of spirituality generated the following sub-themes:

- Prayer as support
- Spirituality as attending church together
- Teaching thankfulness through spirituality
- Spirituality as a source of personal strength to mother and children

In the table below I illustrate these sub-themes:

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Table 5.5: Single mothers' narratives of spirituality as support

Prayer as support	Ntombi: What makes this family strong nè? Like I can say it's the prayers because we are not far away from God … God really hears our prayers. He really answers to our needs … (2:35). Ulin: *Soos ek vir hulle geleer van kleins af en daai, 'n gebed en alles, en is nie net woorde wat jy sê nie, jy moet glo waarvan jy praat. Jy moet weet waarvan jy praat, en glo dat daai gaan gebeur… en gebede, dit dra jou deur die dag* (6:102). (I taught them from childhood that a prayer is not just the words, you must believe what you are saying. You have to know what you talk about and believe that it will happen. Prayer is the thing that carries you through the day.) Beth: *En as jy op jou knieë gaan vir die Here, vir dit wat jy het, en vir dit wat jy aan bekom het, en ek sê altyd, gebed dra krag. Gebed dra krag, sonder gebed en – somtyds voel jy alleen, dan is jy nie alleen nie* (8:33). (And if you go on your knees in front of the Lord, for what you have and for what you have received, and I always say, prayer has power. Prayer has power, without prayer and … sometimes you feel alone, but you are not alone.) Barbara: *Ek wil net hê Palesa moet klas loop … En ek vra vir die Here elke dag, wanneer ek by die werk is, tree ek in vir haar, ek bid so. Ek sê Here al wat ek verwag van Palesa is net laat sy skool klaarmaak* (12:35). (I just want Palesa to attend school and I ask the Lord every day. When I'm at work, I pray on her behalf, I pray like that. I tell the Lord that all I want is for Palesa to finish school.)
Spirituality as attending church together	Evelyn: *Ons sal maar net saam, miskien TV kyk, en kerk toe gaan … Ons kerk is by die skool* (4:38). (We might watch TV together and go to church … our church is at the school.) Beth: *Sondae vat ek my kinders, dan gaan ons kerk toe* (8:33). (Sundays I take my children, then we go to church.)

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Teaching thankfulness through spirituality	Ulin: *Ek het daai dag iets gevra vir die Here, en kyk, kyk waar is ek nou. Hier ek het dit nou gekry. Dan is jy eintlik dankbaar vir dit, al het dit so lank gevat, maar jy's dankbaar daarvoor ... Het jy gebid vandag? ... Het jy vir die Here dankie gesê dat jy nog kan opgestaan het vanoggend?* (6:102). (That day I asked the Lord for something, and just see where I am now. I have received it. And then you feel grateful, even if it took such a long time … but you are grateful for it. Have you prayed today? Did you thank God that you could get up this morning?) Beth: *Jy sien, sonder die Here is jy niks. Jy kan maar nou dink jy is daai perfekte persoon. Jy's ryk. Jy't het alles wat jy moet [hê]. Jy's niks tekortkomend nie, maar jy't 'n kortkomend, wat jou toekom, is die Here* … (8:33). (You see, without the Lord you are nothing. You might think that you are that perfect person. You are wealthy. You have everything you want. You lack nothing, but you do have a shortcoming, what you need, is the Lord.)
Spirituality as a source of Personal strength to mother and children	Mandy: *Die Here voorsien elke dag ... sukkel, sukkel, maar daar was altyd gewees ... so, ek kan net die eer aan die Here gee ...* (10:6). *As ek moet wegbeweeg van die kerk af, dan dink ek dan sou dinge baie moeiliker gewees het vir my. Ek glo nie, ek weet nie sal ek dit gemaak het nie.* (10:26) (The Lord provides every day … the struggles have always been there. So I can only honour the Lord. If I had to turn away from the church, things would have been much harder for me. I don't think I would have made it.) Barbara: *As jy geloof ... As jy nou geloof in jouself en jy sê vir jouself, Here, ek gaan die kind alleen grootmaak, dan gaan ek hom alleen grootmaak. Verstaan? Deur alles en deur ... Al deur dik en dun sal God jou help. Op die einde van die dag as ons sien, ja maar die kind is nou groot, so is deur my geloof. Ek het geglo in myself. Die kind gaan ek grootmaak en hier maak ek die kind groot* (12:31). (If you have faith … if you have faith in yourself and you tell yourself, Lord, I am going to raise this child alone, then you will be able to raise him alone. Understand? Through the good times and the bad times God will help you. And at the end of the day when your child is raised, it would have happened through your faith. I believed in myself. Through it all I will raise this child and I am raising this child.)

My analysis of the data indicates that all the mothers used prayer as a spiritual practice to support their children and inspire them towards educational success. Not only did they pray for their children, but they also taught their children how to use prayer in order to maintain a sense of hope and perseverance. Beth relayed how Mikyle would often say to her: "Mommy before I write my exam I say to the Lord: Lord, you know the answers, open my thoughts and my brain so that I can think clearly and answer the questions" (8:9).

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Spirituality also provided a way for the mothers and their children to manage their daily struggles, as they perceived prayer and faith in God as a source of strength and hope. For example, Therren stated that prayer helped her overcome life's challenges (3:24). Similarly, Mikyle used spirituality to encourage his mother to envision a better future for their family:

> *Mammie, die Bybel sê, "Daar is sewe vet jare en sewe maer jare. Nou ons leef nog in die sewe maer jare ... maar die Here gaan wonderlik vir ons deurkom." Hy noem dit vir my. Die Here gaan deurbraak maak dat ons ook in 'n sewe vet jare uitkom, Mammie. Ons moet net meer insit vir die Here sodat ons kan uitkry by die Here* (8:40). (Mommy, the Bible tells us "There are seven years of plenty and seven lean years. Now we still live in the seven lean years … but the Lord will come through for us in a great way". He tells me this. The Lord will break through so that we also get to seven years of plenty, Mommy. We should just work harder for the Lord so that we can get more from Him.)

Spirituality therefore shaped the adolescents' outlooks and motivated them towards taking actions that could lead to a better life for themselves and their families. Another example was highlighted by Ntombi's recollection of how Calvin showed great commitment to his responsibilities at church. She described how he would awaken early on a Sunday to prepare for church without any prompting from her. Calvin's sense of commitment was echoed in various ways in all of the adolescents' narratives, especially their commitment towards their schooling and completing their education. The findings therefore indicate that spirituality played a significant role in educational support for the adolescents, both as a motivating factor for the adolescents based on their own spirituality, as well as in the way that mothers used spirituality to find ways to support, motivate and give hope to their children.

5.7 YOUR CHILD IS MY CHILD AND MY CHILD IS YOUR CHILD: NARRATIVES OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORKS

The review of the literature and data gathered in this study indicate that there are still widespread assumptions that the traditional family is the norm and that the ideal family structure consists of two parents and their children. As was demonstrated in Chapter 2, there are many permutations of the family unit, and the single-mother family is more likely to be the norm in South Africa, with traditional nuclear families often found to be in the minority of family units (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Davids & Roman, 2013). One of the most common assumptions held about the single-parent household is that the parent is the sole supporter and

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provider to the child. From the data it becomes clear that all of the families face significant financial constraints, and that the single mothers experience challenges related to not being able to provide for their children's needs. However, the data suggest that single mothers often do not shoulder the full responsibility on their own; they often need to identify individuals who can assist in the responsibilities of child-rearing and supporting their families. The data show that the mothers created a network of support that consist of various people, both within and outside of the family unit.

5.7.1 Forms of educational support within the family

Adolescents' networks of support were often broad and various role players provided different forms of support in their lives. Mothers, grandparents, siblings, extended family, teachers, neighbours and the church community all formed part of the adolescents' bio-ecosystems or networks of support. Table 5.7 illustrates forms of support within the family, as reported by the participants.

Table 5.6: Forms of educational support within the family

Siblings	Calvin: My older brother … he is ten years older than me … he was like a father to me … he supported me all the way (1:20).
Grandparents	Tommy: *Ek vra somtyds my oupa of my ma-hulle, dan help hulle my [met huiswerk]* (5:40). *Daar is iets wat ek nie verstaan nie, dan moet ek my oupa gaan vra* (5:41). *Hulle sê hoe swaar dit [ook al] is, ek kan nog steeds vra vir [hulp]* (5:56). (I sometimes ask my grandfather or my mother and then they help me with homework. If there is something I don't understand, then I have to ask my grandfather. They say it doesn't matter how hard it is, I can still ask for help.) Ulin: *Ek het altyd tyd gemaak, as ek uit die werk uitgekom het en hulle vra vir my, "Ek sukkel 'n bietjie met die", of "Gaan gou oor my huiswerk", of as ek nie hier is, dan sal hy my pa gevra altyd om … Miskien is dit ons wat nou vir hom help. Ons het nooit nee gesê nie, of gesê ons is besig of so nie. Al is ek hoe moeg en saans, ek het altyd gesit en met hulle altwee. "Kom, okay ek gaan jou wys. Kom, ek gaan jou verduidelik"* (6:40). (I always made time for them when I came home from work. They asked me, I struggle with this or can you have a look at my homework or if I wasn't here he would ask my father … maybe it's us who are helping him now. We never refused or told him that we were busy. Even if I was dead tired at night, I always sat with both of them. "Come, okay, I am going to show you. Come, I will explain it to you.") Barbara: *Ouma het haar altyd gehelp. Dit is nou haar pa se ma. Sy't altyd gehelp … Dit is hoekom ek sê baie dae mis ek vir haar. As ek nie*

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	gehad het nie vir die kinders nie, sal sy altyd gestuur het, of as ek vir hulle stuur vir die vakansie, sal sy altyd sê ek moet 'n blaai, 'n lys saamstuur wat hulle benodig en dan sal sy koop en as hulle huis toe kom sal sy saam met hulle stuur (12:25). (Granny always helped her. It is her father's mother. She always helped. That's why I say I often miss her. If I needed something for the children, she would send it, or if I send them for the holiday, she would tell me to send a list of things they need and she would buy the stuff and send it home with them.)
Cousins	Tommy: *My nefies wat al klaar met skool is, hulle moedig my aan … Hulle sê ek moet aanhou met skool, ek moet nie verkeerde dinge doen nie. Ek moet net nie hulle pad volg nie …* (5:27). (My cousins who are finished with school, encourage me … they tell me I should stay in school and not do bad things. I must not follow their example …) Therren: *My niggie … sy gee my altyd daai hoop vir die lewe en sy praat baie met my oor die lewe … Sy is nou ook verby 21, meeste van my niggies het nie 21 gemaak nie, hulle het kinders gekry en sy is die enigste niggie van my wat nog nie 'n kind het nie. En sy't gestudeer en sy sê altyd [vir my], "Moet nooit 'n oukie vat voor jou tyd nie", en sulke goete … "Dink aan jou future"* (3:6). (My cousin … she always gives me hope for my life and talk to me a lot about life … she is older than 21. Most of my cousins didn't make it past 21, they had children and she is the only cousin who still doesn't have a child. And she studied, and she tells me: "Don't take a boyfriend before your time," and things like that … "Think about your future.")
Other family	Calvin: I have an uncle that studied at UCT [University of Cape Town] (13:22). Evelyn: *hy is'n IT specialist, nou hy doen baie … En, soos hy sal nou mos soos copies maak as sy goed nodig het, of dan sal hy dit vir haar print en so* (4:45). (he (nephew) is an IT specialist and he does a lot … for example, he will make copies if she needs them or he will make print-outs.) Mandy: *Die een suster wat hier in die agterkant bly sal baie, sy is ook gelowig, sy sal baie met my praat* (10:25). (One sister who stays here at the back is very religious, she talks to me a lot.)

This data is presented here to motivate for a broader understanding of the concept of family when seeking to understand educational support within single-mother families. The adolescents and their mothers reported on a community of support, which Yosso speaks of as familial capital (Yosso, 2005). According to Yosso, "familial capital is nurtured by our 'extended family', which may include immediate family (living or long passed on) as well as aunts, uncles and grandparents who we might consider part of our familia" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). She also states that "this form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community wellbeing and expands the concept of family" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79).

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This commitment to community well-being is illustrated by the title of this theme, which was taken from Beth's interview when she stated, "My child is your child, and your child is my child" (8:28). This suggests an alternative understanding of the concept of family. An example of this was the fact that Evelyn offered a home for her sister's children. Her niece lived with them during the school year and then returned to live with Evelyn's sister in December for the school vacation. Her nephew also lived with her while he was at school. At the time of the interview, he had permanent employment and had bought a house nearby. She later described how this young man supported Therren in her education. Evelyn created familial capital, a resource which was pooled in the extended family for the educational success of the children of both sisters. Evelyn's nephew clearly recognised the value of this familial capital, which allowed him to offer support to Therren in the same way that he had been supported. Evelyn's actions reflected her determination to uphold the "importance of maintaining a healthy connection to [one's] community [or family] and its resources" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79), and to also act as a resource of support to others.

In addition to the support offered by mothers, the role of siblings, grandparents and cousins were all important as they modelled "lessons of caring, coping and providing" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). For Calvin, his brother stood in as a father figure. Tommy and Therren's cousins encouraged them to finish school. In the homes where grandparents were part of the family unit, they played a very important role as stand-in parents by sharing the parenting responsibilities. The findings therefore indicate that the adolescents experienced emotional, social and educational support drawn from familial capital. The parents draw on these networks or they guide their children towards the significant individuals who can provide support. These are mechanisms in which the single mothers can provide educational support to their children, albeit indirectly, as the mothers strengthen networks and rely on familial ties that can benefit their children.

Yosso (2005) further states that these social contacts can play an important role in helping learners gain access to educational institutions, and even more so to "[reassure] the student emotionally that she/he is not alone in the process of pursuing higher education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Both Therren and Calvin had examples of relatives who had pursued tertiary education. Therren referred to her cousin who had studied at university and Calvin had an uncle at university. These participants thus are presented with the idea that studying at university could be possible for them as well, as their family members' achievements create the understanding

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that someone from a similar background or from the same familial network had succeeded educationally.

In contrast to the other families who had relatives nearby, Ntombi stated that all her relatives lived in the Eastern Cape, which was at least ten hours' drive away. However, the presence of social capital within their lives mitigated their experiences of isolation. The data show that Calvin was able to draw support from friends, neighbours and church leaders. My analysis of the findings therefore indicates that the adolescents were able to draw from familial and social capital towards achieving educational success. The forms of support outside of the immediate family will be discussed in the following section.

5.7.2 Forms of educational support outside of the family

In addition to support within the family, the analysis of the data also revealed forms of support outside of the immediate family. The participants reported support from friends, teachers, neighbours and the church community. The following figure illustrates forms of support outside of the single-mother family.

Friends	Teachers	Neighbours	Church Community
• Emotional support • Homework support • Helpful advice	• Emotional support • Homework support • Material support • Financial support	• Homework support • Emotional support • Material support	• Emotional support • Material support

Figure 5.2: Outside family support

5.7.2.1 Friends

The adolescent participants shared stories of how their friends supported them. Three sub-themes emerged around the three types of support friends provided, namely emotional support, homework support and helpful advice. Firstly, it was evident in the data that friends played an important role in providing emotional support. This was particularly evident amongst the female adolescents. Therren described how being amongst her friends gave her "energy" to do the things she needed to do (3:16). Similarly, Nelly described how her friends "uplifted" (9:22) her when she experienced difficulty in her life. She referred specifically to the times her step

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father abused alcohol and drugs. Nelly added that when one goes through difficult times in life, it is important to have people who can "cheer you up" (9:22). Palesa described how her boyfriend encourages her to persevere at school: "he told me I am going to make it this year, I must just work hard" (11:26).

Friend groups also provided a space for like-minded young people to encourage and support one another in challenging times. Tommy described it as follows:

> *Ons almal hou nie van moeilikheid nie. Almal hou nie van bakleiery en daai nie. As een van ons gesin nou miskien seerkry by iemand, ons almal sal teenstaan. Ons sal [dit nie] net so los nie … ons staan saam* (5:50). (… We don't like trouble, all of us don't like fighting. If somebody hurts one of our family, we will stand together. We will not ignore it. We stand together.)

The adolescent and their mothers noted the role of friends in providing support for homework. The adolescents often made use of study groups to assist them in completing homework and assignments. These groups often came together at the school or local library. The groups also gave the mothers some reassurance that their children would be safe in the unsafe community when they were away from their homes to study. Tommy's description below illustrates the way in which peers can support one another:

> *Ons gee mekaar somme, dan werk ons dit uit. Die persoon wat dit verkeerd het, help ons, verduidelik ons* (5:12). (We give each other sums and then we do them and whoever gets it right, helps the person who gets it wrong, we help, we explain).

Not only did the adolescents' friends provide them with support, but similarly the single-mothers received support from their own friends. Barbara narrated that she has a good relationship with her previous employer and she often asked her employer's daughter to use the internet to find information that Palesa needed for assignments. Mikyle shared a similar story: *My ma het nog 'n vriend wat ook hier bly, sy help ook vir my met my take as my ma nie geld het nie om, om laat ek biblioteek toe, dan help sy vir my* (7:22). (My mother has a friend who is also staying here. She helps me with my assignments. When my mother doesn't have money for me to go to the library, she helps me).

Various community members also played a role in assisting the adolescents to acquire material resources needed for school, or offered other forms of support for adolescents' education. For example, Mandy's neighbour, whose own daughter had started Grade 8 the previous year,

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guided Mandy on how to prepare for her child's transition to high school and informed her of the essential material needs for Grade 8. In this way, Mandy could save money and only buy the most essential items. Similarly, Beth had a friend whom she had met through her interaction with a non-governmental organisation that focuses on victim support. Her friend had bought Mikyle special school shoes that could accommodate his physical impairment. These examples appear to be forms of social capital which Yosso (2005) describes as "instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (p. 79).

5.7.2.2 Teachers

Teachers provided emotional support, homework support and food support to adolescents. Additionally, schools provided financial support to the single-mothers in this study. It was evident in the data that many of the adolescents perceived one or more teachers as supportive. Tommy and Therren describe how their teachers often take the time to encourage their classes to work hard, complete their education and strive for a better life. Mikyle similarly narrates how one of his teachers, who is also the deputy principal at the school, often motivates him: "At school the deputy principal supports me through difficult times and motivates me to strive hard and leave bad things behind me and focus on my education, because it's more important" (13:31).

Ntombi and Ulin also experienced their adolescents' teachers as supportive. Ntombi describes a time when she received a phone call from the teacher informing her that Calvin was late for school. Ntombi then investigated the situation and reported back to the teacher that there had been a shooting at the station and Calvin had returned home. She appreciated this phone call as she is constantly worried about her son's safety, and this personal communication from the teacher was very helpful and demonstrated care for her son. Ulin similarly narrates a time when she felt a teacher made a special effort to support her son:

> *Toe hy TB gehad, moes hy by die huis wees vir drie weke … sy juffrou het altyd vir hom huiswerk gestuur huis toe … elke dag, en toe sit ons tweetjies saam elke aand* (6:52). (When he had TB, he had to stay home for three weeks … his teacher had sent him homework every day and then the two of us would sit with it every night.)

Therefore, with his teacher's help, Tommy managed to stay informed regarding his schoolwork. These narratives illustrate how some teachers show an understanding of the difficulties that families in the community face. In another example, Tommy described how his teacher often

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allowed him to leave his books at school. Tommy experienced this as supportive because he had many school books and had to walk a far distance to reach his home.

Another way in which the families experienced support from teachers and the school was through a feeding scheme and an opportunity for families to be exempt from paying school fees. Beth stated that the school her children attend is aware of the needs of families who are struggling. She is very grateful that her children are able to receive food during the school day. Beth and Barbara also have to apply for an exemption from paying school fees each year. Although they experience a sense of shame for needing to do so, they are very grateful that their children are able to attend school even though they cannot afford to pay the school fees.

5.7.2.3 Neighbours

Neighbours often assisted the adolescents through offering encouragement, information or resources to complete their homework. Calvin described how he asks his neighbour if he can wash her car for extra money, and she responds by asking him if his homework is complete. She tells Calvin: "if you're not going to do your [home] work, you won't wash my car" (1:21). Ntombi adds that when she cannot assist Calvin with his homework, she often sends him to their neighbour, who is a teacher, to ask him for assistance.

Therren, Tommy, Palesa and Mikyle also referred to neighbours who helped them by allowing them to use their computers to search for information that the adolescents needed for assignments. Mikyle described how his neighbour would sometimes search for information on the internet, print the information and bring it to Mikyle. The data thus indicated that neighbours were a form of social capital that the adolescents were able to access to advance their education.

Mikyle and Beth also reported feeling supported by other members of the community. Beth explained: "*die mense in die gemeenskap, hulle prys my kind baie en sy klomp diplomas wat hy nou al het"* (8:10). (the people in the community acknowledge my child and all his diplomas). Mikyle is a diligent student and has received several diplomas throughout his primary school years. He also demonstrates a great sense of care for his community and spends many afternoons and school vacations giving extra lessons to younger children in the community. In an effort to encourage the children he works with, Mikyle provides certificates to them at the end of the year for their participation in the after-school groups. The parents in the community praised Mikyle for his community work. Beth further noted that during a school assembly, the principal thanked Mikyle for being a hard worker and an example to the other learners.

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Community members therefore played a role in providing encouragement to Mikyle in relation to his education, and also provided opportunities for Mikyle to provide educational support to others in his community.

5.7.2.4 Church community

All of the families in this study attended local churches. It was evident in the data that the participants experienced their churches as supportive, especially in providing emotional support and material resources. Church members provided emotional support through offering prayers and words of encouragement for the mothers. Mandy described her experience as follows:

> *Ek kry baie ondersteuning van my vriende, hulle bid vir my of vir my aanmoedig. As dit lyk ek wil miskien swak raak, mismoedig raak, dan sal hulle altyd vir my sê, "Maar jy het dan so ver aangekom, en jy het nog niks oorgekom nie. Die Here was nog altyd daar"* (Mandy, 10:7). (My friends support me a lot, they pray for me or they encourage me. If it seems as though I am becoming weak or despondent, then they will always tell me, "But you have come so far and nothing bad happened to you. The Lord has always been there."

Church members therefore mitigated experiences of depression and hopelessness. In addition to providing emotional support, church members often brought the families parcels of food. Barbara described how on several occasions she would disclose her family's situation to the priest at her church, and a few days later a member of her church would deliver material resources such a food.

The mothers and adolescents in this study were thus able to draw on support within their family network as well as outside of their family network in the broader community. Therefore, while facing significant financial constraints and lacking the cultural capital which is often afforded to middle-class families, these families were able to draw from social capitals as well as community cultural wealth to support the adolescents' education.

5.8 NARRATIVES OF SCHOOL-BASED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

When discussing ways in which the mothers were involved with their children's schooling, the mothers and adolescents focused on home-based forms of support. They focused especially on actions that the mother took outside of formal school events to help their children succeed academically, for example offering encouragement and emotional support, as outlined in the

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above themes. However, the data also demonstrates that the mothers tried to adhere to what the school's value or frame as legitimate parent support. The mothers spoke especially about their visibility in the school space, and that their children's teachers were aware of their involvement. The mothers expressed they viewed the acts of going to the school and being physically present as demonstrations to the teachers that they cared and were interested in their children's schooling.

The data illustrated how the mothers aimed to show the school that they were involved parents who wanted to collaborate with teachers:

> Ntombi: So immediately when he does something wrong, then they call me then I go to school (2:25).
>
> Ulin: *Ek het tyd gemaak om op my eie te gaan … om te gaan praat en luister hoe dit in die klas gaan … Ek wil net weet … Dit wys nou vir hulle ek stel belang* (6:55). (I made time to go by myself. Just to go and discuss and listen to how things are going in the classroom. I just want to know … This shows them I am interested.)
>
> Beth: *My verhouding met die skool is baie goed … die hoof het ook gesê, "Mevrou, ek het nog nooit so 'n ouer soos u teëgekom [nie]. Enige probleem dan is u by die skool. Of u nou moet loop van die huis af … u is hier*" (8:26). (My relationship with the school is very good. The principal also said: "I have never met a parent like you. If there is a problem, you come to school, even if you have to walk from your house. You are here.")

These narratives show how the mothers continue to participate in their children's education in ways that the school valued, such as being present at parent-teacher meetings and attending personal meetings to discuss their children's transgressions.

The mothers' stories also highlight that their engagement with the school was not without sacrifice and challenges. Ulin, for example, had to take a day's leave from work to be present at her child's school, which had financial implications for her family. The aspect of safety was raised by Barbara and Evelyn who shared how their presence at school meetings meant that they had to walk great distances or walk in the dark to the school. Barbara stated that making this sacrifice would show teachers that "you are really interested in your child's school work or interested in what you child does at school" (12:26).

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Making oneself visible therefore often happened at great sacrifice for the parent, due to situational constraints such as a lack of transport, work commitments or distance from the school. These interactions with teachers illustrate what Yosso (2005) refers to as navigational capital, or "skills of manoeuvring through social institutions [specifically those] not created with Communities of Color in mind" (p. 80). The data show that the mothers found resourceful ways to make contact with teachers. For example, Evelyn described how parents would carpool to parent meetings in order to assist those parents without transport. The mothers therefore took advantage of interactions with teachers to build rapport and establish a relationship that would be beneficial for their children, and used these interactions to make it known to teachers that they were investing in their children's schooling.

The adolescents' narratives also spoke of their mothers being visible at school. It was further evident that they perceived their mothers' presence at school events as supportive towards their educational success. However, where mothers made meaning of being visible as an attempt to show teachers that they care, for the adolescents, their mothers' visibility at schools translated into feelings of protection and the sense that their mothers showed interest in them. Besides Calvin, who held the view that parental support at school was not necessary, the other participants welcomed their mothers' physical presence at school. Therren noted that she felt proud when her mother came to support her at netball games, and Mikyle felt supported when his mother came to school to address the bullying he was experiencing.

The findings further indicate that parents' school-based support was a strategy to keep their children in school and away from negative influences in their communities. Tommy shared the view that parents should have clarity around their children's school participation and how they are faring in their studies. In this way, their children were more likely to "stay away from the streets to do bad things" (5:20). My analysis of the data therefore demonstrates that the mothers' school-based support was valued as a significant form of support by their children. The data thus show that both home-based and school-based support are valued by adolescents and could contribute to their success.

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5.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented data that challenge ideas that single-mother families of low socio-economic status are necessarily lacking in the resources necessary for educational support. The data in this study support an understanding that the mother participants engaged in support practices that led to educational success for their adolescent children. The analysis of the narratives focuses attention on several informal and non-traditional forms of support, such as the strong mother-adolescent relationship and the significant accumulation of emotional capital. The evidence included various forms of encouragement, such as the mothers' own stories as well as the importance of spirituality to foster academic success. The participants reported several sources of support within and outside of their family. The data showed many examples of familial, social, aspirational and navigational capital, which the adolescents' access and utilise to advance their education. The focus of this chapter was to highlight the forms of support adolescents who grow up in certain single-mother families experience. In the next chapter, I interpret the findings by answering the research questions and relating the findings to previous research.

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CHAPTER 6:

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to gain insight into the stories of educational support within low-income single-mother families. The main purpose was to explore the adolescents and their mothers' experiences of educational support within these families. My analysis and interpretation of the data was informed by the bio-ecological systems theory, community cultural wealth theory, as well as the concepts of social, cultural and emotional capital. The findings demonstrated the various forms of support that single mothers provide in relation to the education of their adolescent children. As the data show, many of these support practices are often misrecognised as legitimate forms of support. This chapter therefore interprets these findings through the interplay between findings of previously conducted research and the lived experience of the participants in this study.

In this study, the scope was delimited to adolescents in the middle adolescent phase who had grown up in a single-mother family for most of their lives. I explored the views of the adolescents and their single mothers in the form of six case studies. The adolescents as well as their mothers were interviewed, and following these interviews the adolescent participants also participated in a focus group discussion. The purpose of interviewing these adolescents and their mothers was to obtain a view of educational support through the lenses of the people who live it. This is in line with a decolonial, feminist agenda, which seeks to explore the situated experiences of women, as well as foregrounding the perspectives and voices of those who are marginalised and who are in many ways disfranchised, disregarded and oppressed in their societies (Mama, 2011; Olesen, 2011). Therefore, as the researcher I took on the roles of curious interviewer and observer, a position that allowed me to recognise informal and non-traditional forms of support.

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It is also important to acknowledge that the stories presented here do not provide a framework for good parenting practices that result in adolescent experiences of educational success in single-mother families, and the purpose of this study was not to establish a correlation between practices of support and levels of educational success. It is possible that many parents engage in similar forms of support as the mothers in this study do, however their children may not experience educational success due to many different factors. As discussed before, parental educational support cannot be viewed in a vacuum; instead, it occurs within multiple, embedded systems of influence that interact with one another in complex ways (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The purpose of this study was to problematise a discourse of deficit parental support within low-income single-mother families and to foreground the often-marginalised narratives and voices of the single mothers and their adolescent children. Using a wider lens, this dissertation therefore illustrates various stories in which these single mothers from Indigo Village participated in and contributed to their adolescent children's educational success.

This chapter therefore synthesises the empirical findings to answer the study's research questions. In addition, it provides recommendations for practice and suggestions for future research. Finally, I discuss the contribution of this study to advancing understandings of single-mother families in particular contexts, and I conclude with an autobiographical reflection.

6.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS ACCORDING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this chapter the aim is to respond to the research question, which is: What are the stories of educational support in single-mother families? The purpose of this study was to explore these stories from the perspective of the adolescents and their single mothers. I therefore designed the research to give voice to the participants' real-life experiences and to gain insight into their meaning making around practices of educational support. I explored the adolescent participants' needs for educational support, the barriers to educational support and the ways in which the single mothers provided support.

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6.2.1 Adolescents' needs for educational support

One of the main themes to emerge from my analysis of the adolescents' needs for support was the need for a father's support. From an ecological systems perspective, it is argued that poor relationships with a significant person such as a father can directly influence the well-being and scholastic performance of a child; thus I investigated the adolescents' views on male parenthood, specifically their need for a relationship with their fathers.

The adolescent participants' need for a father's support appears to be based on an essentialist perspective regarding the social role a father should play. In other words, the participants seemed to reflect the view that a father should be the provider and protector of the home, and that boys specifically rely on a father to achieve a masculine identity (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). However, essentialising the father is based on the assumption that a mother's care is inadequate (Madhavan et al., 2008) and it centralises masculine roles and male agency, thus maintaining the invisibility and devaluing of women's contributions within the family. In this study the adolescent participants often voiced how well their mothers supported them, yet they still seemed to yearn for the support of a father. This might reflect how they have been socialised by a dominant culture that favours an essentialist perspective of the father.

An essentialist perspective also misrecognises the potential for other significant adults in an adolescents' life who step into and fulfil the role of fatherhood (Madhavan et al., 2008). In this study the participants did not necessarily need their fathers to be physically present in their lives; rather they wanted support in the forms of interest, care and guidance from them as adults. I concur with these authors' statement that "men's contributions to their children involves going well beyond recording co-residence" (Madhavan et al., 2008, p. 661). Furthermore, the term fatherhood should allow for an elastic definition, which includes male adults living in and around the family (Madhavan et al., 2008). My study confirms this finding and further illustrates how different people, such as a grandfather, teacher, neighbour or leaders at church, can perform the social role of father and that father absence is not necessarily the absence of support, as is often assumed in social science research.

In addition, although notions of the essentialist father figure was a common thread in the interviews with adolescents, researchers should be careful not to dismiss such ideas completely in favour of the single mother as "wealthy" in terms of various forms of capital, and should take note of the valid and deep feelings which these children feel around their absent fathers. A form

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of support which could be offered by mental health practitioners is to recognise the feelings of abandonment, longing and sadness which some adolescents voiced around their absent fathers, and to find strategies to allow children to feel loved, worthwhile and important in light of their voiced sense of loss around father figures. The data show that even when children realised that male figures were negative influences in their families, the bond which they felt to absent parents was still present. While the study focuses on the ways that mothers are supportive, this essentialised view of fathers should not be dismissed or discounted as valid, and should instead be incorporated into other forms of support for these adolescents, such as recognising the role which other adult figures, siblings or community members could play as additional support figures in the child's life.

Fathers thus are viewed in essentialist terms in the narratives of some participants; however, this framing of fathers is challenged and the father's centrality is deconstructed by the very narratives themselves, since adolescents frame their mothers' support as adequate and valued in terms of their educational success, and also rely on other significant figures to provide support. While data might show that single-mother families face significant challenges, the essentialist view of fathers might be incompatible with the realities of South Africa where family types are significantly diverse. These narratives thus allow for a more nuanced view of these families which are often viewed from a deficit model, and challenge the centrality of fathers in models of familial support.

The context of the study was the single-mother household, a type of family structure that is common both locally and internationally. The traditional family consisting of two parents of the opposite sex is not the norm in many contexts, including South Africa (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Davids & Roman, 2013), and in addition, countries like South Africa show staggering rates of domestic violence, sexual abuse and emotional or physical absenteeism linked to male figures (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013; Jewkes, Dunkle, Koss, Levin, Nduna, Jama, & Sikweyiya, 2006), creating significant trauma for women and children including some of the participants in this study. These realities and the lived experiences of many people question the status of the traditional family as necessarily being an ideal family structure, and challenge the essentialist view of fathers as providing stability and being a necessary component for healthy development within family units.

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Conversely, in non-traditional families, children might be exposed to supportive and loving parent figures who are not biological fathers. It was clear that participants, such as Nelly and Palesa, showed a clear preference for life without the negative influence of a father figure. In their cases, the single-mother family was seen to be more educationally advantageous than might have been expected based on conventional discourses of the idealised traditional family. My argument thus is that any family structure, whether traditional or non-traditional, can have forms of successful support for children, and that it should not be automatically assumed that the presence of the father will lead to better forms of support or that single-mother families are somehow deficient. The discussion thus seeks to dismantle concepts that fathers are necessarily better providers of particular forms of support, and cautions against the essentialist patriarchal views that would fail to recognise the forms of capital which mothers employ in their child-rearing.

A significant challenge experienced by the adolescents was navigating educational spaces and limited resources. The study distinguished between two forms of support for adolescents around these challenges, namely home-base support and school-based support. The adolescents seemed to prefer home-based support, a finding which is consistent with previous research (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seginer, 2006; Kaplan Toren 2013). However, educational resources were limited within the homes of the participant adolescents, creating constraints and pressures around this home-based support. As the adolescent participants were at a stage in their lives where they cared about their image and how they are perceived by their peers, they experienced embarrassment and self-consciousness due to their lack of resources, and compared themselves to peers who had greater access to educational resources. This sense of embarrassment is consistent with adolescent development literature (Toren & Seginer, 2015).

What was further clear from the data was that these adolescents were navigating their needs for support alongside their needs for space and privacy. This is particularly evident in the way Palesa said that all she needed in her surroundings was some peace and quiet. This finding indicates the significant challenges around having space and privacy that these adolescents faced, impacting on their ability to successfully complete their school work. However, as most of the adolescents had achieved educational success, it further spoke to the resilience and determination they employed towards their education. These findings challenge earlier research that stereotype low-income single-mother families as automatically disadvantaging children in terms of their education (Hampden-Thompson, 2009).

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In addition, similar to Collins and Laursen's (2004) findings, the adolescent participants often requested that their parents decrease their school-based involvement. This finding was interpreted as linked to theories of adolescence as a phase characterised by a movement towards independence and seeking for parents to have less control over their actions (Kroger, 2007). However, this did not mean that the participants wanted their parents to stop showing support or to be involved in their education and in their lives. Therren, for example, enjoyed it when her mother came to watch her play netball, and Mikyle welcomed his mother's intervention when he was being bullied at school. The findings therefore build on research which has shown that adolescents seek independence and autonomy from their parents, but that they continue to value their parents' involvement in their education (Bokhorst et al., 2010).

6.2.2 Barriers to educational support in single-mother families

The findings showed various barriers to educational support experienced by mothers and adolescents within the single-mother families. The most obvious barrier to educational support were the socio-economic difficulties experienced by the families. Financial difficulties mainly affected the mothers' ability to provide material support. For example, it was hard for the mothers to feed their children, pay school fees and buy school uniforms and stationery. However, where previous studies have shown that households with poor financial resources tend to produce children who are less motivated and express lower educational aspirations (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2014; Hampden-Thompson, 2009), the adolescent participants in this study expressed aspirations for educational success and a desire to enter tertiary education. Therefore, in contrast to Hampden-Thompson's (2009) findings that a lack of economic resources within single-mother families is a key factor that has far-reaching effects for children's educational success, the current study indicated that the support they received mitigated many of these effects and acted as a protective factor for the adolescents. Educational support was a method to maintain the motivation of adolescents to stay in school and to achieve educational success, despite the many challenges the family faced.

Similar to the study conducted by Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014), the findings of this study indicated that the families' socio-economic status (SES) was more influential than race and ethnicity in the way in which the single mothers provided support to their children. However, from an ecological perspective, the South African context should be taken into account in considering the relation between SES, race and ethnicity. In this context, the influence of the chronosystem, in terms of South Africa's past of unequal opportunities for different race

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groups, continues to affect the families in this study. For example, poor housing and poverty were part of a vicious circle for the residents of Indigo Village, impacting on the opportunities afforded to future generations and maintaining systemic inequality for the oppressed coloured population that most of the participants were part of. The study's findings demonstrate the mothers' resourcefulness in meeting the needs of their families. However, it is important to note that social inequality significantly influenced the social conditions of these families and made it extremely challenging for the mothers to improve their SES. Communities were segregated under apartheid and communities of colour were severely and deliberately under-resourced by the apartheid state, and this legacy continues to affect many South African communities and families (Heaton et al., 2014). Therefore, although SES appeared to be the most influential factor in determining the outcomes of the learners in this study, it is important to note that SES, race and ethnicity are interrelated in the context of South African families of colour, and that the single-mother families in this study experience a lack of opportunities in ways that are related to their race and ethnicity.

Furthermore, the unsafe environment that the participants were living in had a great influence on the support the mothers provided and on the access to support that the adolescents experienced. For example, the mothers constantly encouraged their children not to mimic the behaviour of delinquent young people in the community. Safety concerns were often evident in the data: participants noted safety concerns or precautions that needed to be taken when the adolescents had to meet with classmates at the library or walk to school, and similarly spoke of their daily exposure to an unsafe environment and how this was cause for ongoing trauma, fear or frustration.

From an ecological perspective, the unsafe community relates to interactions on the macrosystemic level of the bio-ecological model. It has been argued that "issues of trauma and healing are fundamentally connected to the social disparities and injustice which still need to be addressed in order to facilitate macro-systemic change" (Benjamin, 2018, p. 19). Benjamin (2018) states that to facilitate and sustain healing in communities where violence is ongoing, multilevel connection is needed. The findings of this study demonstrate this network of multilevel connection in the way support was provided by many role players. In addition, the connection between mother and child was a strong protective factor in coping with the ongoing trauma, especially when one considers the psychological research that "the healing process is embedded in […] connections" (Benjamin, 2018, p. 19).

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Although the mothers believed in their abilities to support their children, they were socialised in communities that accept a patriarchal view which devalued their single-mother status and therefore viewed their family as abnormal or deficient. This study found that the mothers were keenly aware of their marginal status as single mothers. However, instead of engaging with this framing as a negative influence in their lives, it was seen as a challenge that contributed to their sense of efficacy. By casting a broader lens onto the phenomenon of educational support, I was able to identify several narratives of support that are often misrecognised for their legitimacy and power in fostering positive educational experiences. These mothers' narratives not only spoke of their parental involvement and support, but also identified various sources of support from which the adolescent participants were able to draw.

6.2.3 Ways in which single mothers provide educational support

This study was informed by earlier research that has shown single parental involvement in the education of their children to be limited (Keane, 2007; Mncube, 2009; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). It was also informed by literature that argued that most parents want to and believe that they should be actively involved in their children's education (Daniels, 2017; Epstein, 2011; Hoover-Demsey et al., 2001; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Okeke, 2014). The stories of this study's participants challenge the image of low SES single-mother families necessarily having limited access to different types of capital, and instead highlight several forms of educational support that advanced the educational opportunities for the adolescent participants.

A significant finding was how the mothers used their own life stories and experiences of their own interrupted schooling to foster academic aspirations and to encourage their adolescents to invest in their education. The mothers wanted their children to be educated primarily because they associated education with a better life and with social and financial advancement. These findings build on research that has shown that academic socialisation within low SES families often centres on stories from parents' own experiences, and that these stories act as examples of pitfalls for the child to avoid if he or she wants to achieve success (Lopez et al., 2001; Vega et al., 2015).

My experience of the mothers was that they loved their children deeply, they provided warmth and care, talked to their children and encouraged them regularly. Moreover, the mothers actively inspired their children and engaged in spiritual practices with their children and for the perceived benefit of their children. This finding can be interpreted as the mothers drawing from

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their emotional capital to support their adolescent children's education. This finding appears to be at odds with literature that found single mothers to be detached and less engaged in supportive parenting (Gibson-Davis & Gassman-Pines, 2010). Instead the power of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) seems to be confirmed in the data, where mothers and adolescents use these processes to foster and bring about educational success.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) describe how a key element of the bio-ecological model includes day-to-day experiences that are "emotionally and motivationally loaded" (p. 797). The data showed proximal processes between mother and adolescent that fostered good relationships that eventually lead to positive educational experiences for the adolescents. The mother-adolescent relationship was characterised by open and constant communication to maintain a good relationship. From an ecological systems perspective, I would argue that within the social setting there was a relationship of mutual influence between the mothers and their children. I found that the strong bond the mothers shared with their children had the power to exert significant influence on their thinking and actions. This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of the microsystem in which each member of the microsystem influences other members (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The mutually reciprocal relationships between adolescents and their mothers was a recurring strand in these narratives, but is often one which remains misrecognised in the literature on single mother households.

The findings show that all of the adolescents have a secure attachment to their mothers, and that the mothers provided a secure base from which the adolescents could explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences in life**.** This is consistent with the framework of attachment theory which states that a child needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for healthy social and emotional development to occur (Bowlby, 1979). From the mothers' narratives, their parenting style can be interpreted as authoritative. These findings correspond with those in other parent support research showing that a strong bond, consistent discipline and warmth foster quality relationships between parent and child (Brenning et al., 2012; Knafo & Schwartz, 2003; Musick & Meier, 2010). Therefore, although the adolescents perceived a need for a father figure, the strong bond they had with their mothers often served as a significant form of support in their lives that met many of the aspects that adolescents claimed to need from a father, and most of the adolescents were able to experience wellbeing and educational success.

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The mothers and their children who participated in this study all possessed positive characteristics that strengthened their relationships, and which Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) refer to as positive or conducive dispositions. It was evident from the data how dispositions have the potential to mobilise, sustain, interfere with or limit proximal processes (see Swart & Pettipher, 2011). For example, the sense of understanding that the adolescents had for their families' financial situations played a significant role in promoting positive proximal processes. As caring parents, the mothers were also ecological resources to their children because they supported them emotionally.

The findings on parentification, which refers to the instrumental and emotional contributions adolescents from single-mother families make towards the welfare of their family, match existing research (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005; Ungar et al., 2011). In the families where there were younger siblings, the adolescents took on roles of caring for their siblings and took on more adult responsibilities. For example, Tommy and Nelly stepped into the role of protectors of their mothers' emotional wellbeing, and Tommy had to collect his sister from school and cook for her while his mother was at work. These adolescents seemed comfortable with these roles due to the contribution that they could make to their families under challenging circumstances. This finding suggests that parentification, while often linked to negative outcomes for adolescents such as stress, conflict and poor youth adjustment (Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2005), could also constitute a form of demonstrating agency and of taking on a supportive role in challenging circumstances. The adolescents in this study seemed to be resilient and understanding of their family's situation and maintained positive outlooks in relation to their roles within the family.

When viewed through the lens of Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth, the data contained many examples of familial, aspirational, social, resistant and navigational capital. These single mothers used various resources to support their adolescent children's education, findings that show that the mothers "are involved parents who are engaging with education as an investment in their children's futures", in accordance with the findings by Daniels (2017, p. 6). My findings point to mothers who were deeply dedicated to supporting their children's education, and who engaged with their children's education in positive ways (Murry & Brody, 1999; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). The findings challenge research that single mothers predominantly as ineffective parents who are unable to meet their parental duties due to social and economic pressures (Taylor et al., 2010), as facing a high-risk for low self-esteem,

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depression and anxiety (Affifi et al., 2006; Murry & Brody, 1999) and as doubtful of their importance and ability to support their adolescent children (Hair et al., 2008). While all of these factors were evident in the data of this study, these were not the dominant stories that the mothers told, and these were not the ways that they represented their own lives. Instead, they spoke of resilience and of not allowing internal struggles or external challenges to affect their parenting. Their engagement with educational support practices indicated that they valued education and saw it as a vehicle that would empower their children, and the mothers demonstrated incredible resourcefulness in navigating their challenges.

My observational data further demonstrated the presence of items in their homes that symbolised educational success, or motivated their adolescent children to aspire towards educational achievement. For example, the certificates that Beth hung on their living room wall, and the photographs of Evelyn and her family in their graduation attire, fostered aspirations within the family members to achieve educational success. Education was seen as a necessary component of success, and often as a form of success in itself, and additionally it was framed as a means to improve their lives and the lives of others.

The mothers' use of encouragement is similar to what other researchers have referred to as academic socialisation involving informal, day-to-day conversations (Hill & Tyson, 2009; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). By talking to their children daily about the importance of education, motivating them to work hard and to persevere, and conveying care and support, the mothers engaged in academic socialisation and invested in aspirational and emotional capital, which contributed to their children's educational attainment. Researchers who work through feminist approaches have also described these informal interactions as emotional work in which parents, especially mothers, engage (Hutchinson, 2012; Reay, 2004), a perspective that validates the findings of this study. I support these researchers' call that emotional work should have legitimate standing and should be recognised as a form of capital, especially in single-mother families.

Spirituality was another form of support that was understood to contribute to the overall well-being of the family. The data suggested that spirituality was seen as contributing towards the quality of the mother-adolescent relationship, and that the mother's religiousness also led to self-motivated religiousness among the adolescents, as well as greater sense that they could do something about their children's challenges when they often felt constrained in various ways (Goeke-Morey et al., 2013; Mahoney, 2010). The families demonstrated strong religious

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values, such as faith in God, thankfulness, and a sense of perseverance which they attributed to spiritual fortitude or saw as fuelled by their spirituality. These findings build on literature that has underscored the importance of cultural influences on adolescents' understanding and experience of parental support (Crockett et al., 2009). This supports a call for recognising a broader array of behaviours as signalling parent support, and underscores the often unrecognised forms of parent support offered by marginalised single mothers.

In my analysis, I reflected on the educational interactions that occurred both within and outside of the family unit. These interactions were interpreted as occurring in the mesosystem, an ecological layer that is nested above the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The data reflect the expected microsystems within the mesosystem, but also show other relationships that contribute to the educational support structures of the adolescents. The key implication of this is that educational support does not only depend on capital within the family unit. Instead, the findings show that the adolescents were able to access capital within and outside of their immediate family unit and that these forms of capital contributed positively towards their education. This demonstrates the role of a significant aspect of the ecological systems perspective, namely the importance of mesosystems, and demonstrates how various different actors in a social setting influence one another. The adolescents were influenced not only by systems within their immediate family unit, but also by direct and indirect systems around them, and importantly their mothers were often facilitators of these expanded networks or supported and nurtured these mesosystemic resources. This can be seen in the way that Barbara receives food for her family from her church community, or in the way that Ntombi sends Calvin to a neighbour for help with homework.

The findings of this study also build on the theory of a social ecology of resilience. The findings indicate that the adolescents possessed characteristics that fostered resilience; for example, the adolescents were understanding of their families' financial difficulties, and as a result many of them adjusted their expectations and were willing to make sacrifices. In this way, they demonstrated resilience in the midst of adversity. Similarly, the mothers were resilient. This is especially evident in the way the mothers were able to maintain a sense of optimism and dreams for their children's futures despite the challenges their families had to endure. However, the findings of this study support the argument that a cross-sectional understanding of resilience is not sufficient, as resilience can change as individuals "move between contexts and through time" (Ungar et al., 2011, p. 7). The findings further support a complex understanding of

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resilience in that the quality of the environment, or a "sustainable-stabilising attribute of a system," can likely "exert more influence on outcomes than individual traits" (Ungar et al., 2011, p. 7).

In this study, the mothers acted as sustainable and stabilising factors in their children's physical and social ecologies, which were characterised by a great deal of adversity. These mothers created supportive environments for their children to be resilient through various strategies. These strategies included: using their own stories to build aspirational capital; fostering positive relationships with their children; being resourceful and willing to sacrifice; encouraging their children daily; instilling spirituality and reinforcing their own capacity for perseverance through religious practices; accessing social and familial capital; and finally their strategies to make themselves visible within school contexts. In these multiple ways the mothers nurtured resilience within their children across time, and fostered resilient orientations which were maintained even as their children moved between home, school and the community. Individual traits of resilience were therefore sustained by the quality of the adolescents' social ecology which primarily included their mothers' care and active engagement in their educational success.

6.3 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was delimited to one lower socio-economic community in the Western Cape. The context for the study was a township that was home to a predominantly coloured population. All of the participants were of low socio-economic status, and most of the participants were from the coloured population which allowed the study's sample population to be largely culturally and linguistically homogenous, with the exception of one family who was of African black descent. A potential limitation of the study could be the lack of cultural diversity, meaning that the experiences discussed in the study are reflective of a specific community and context. It is suggested that further qualitative research on this topic be undertaken that investigates South African families from diverse cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds.

This study's unit of analysis was the single parent family. I thus delimited the study's participants to the parents and the adolescent children within these families, and explored their views and experiences of parent support in the family units. For this PhD study, my decision to not elicit the perspectives of teachers and other school personnel was informed by the fact that several studies in South Africa have considered teachers' views on parent engagement

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(Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Michael, Wolhuter, & Van Wyk, 2018; Munje & Mncube, 2018). My goal was to give voice to the adolescents and their single mothers regarding educational support, and to place these voices as central to narratives which could challenge popular discourses on single-mother families. Future research might expand on the perspectives incorporated, and consist of multiple case studies that focus on adolescents, their mothers, teachers and other school personnel. The findings of such larger studies would provide broader datapoints and could potentially grant greater insights about parent support in single-mother families.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS OF MY FINDINGS

This study challenges the dominant view, both socially and in some research, that the single-mother family is a deficient family unit due to the absence of a male parent. The study explored the significant relationships in single-mother families, and the families' engagement with various forms of capital. The study found that these families' collaborations with extended family, neighbours and teachers provided the adolescents access to adult support, and thus these adult figures often could be seen to fill the role of surrogate parents in place of the absent male parent figures (Barnett et al., 2015). In this regard, the important role that grandparents play in supporting the single-mother family, and how they often share in the responsibilities of parenting, was demonstrated in the data. The findings suggest that when intervention programmes for adolescents are offered, that the influences and inputs of grandparents and other significant persons in the lives of adolescents be considered.

Research that has explored teachers' views of parental involvement among marginalised groups has indicated that teachers often do not acknowledge the support practices that parents perform at home, which significantly contribute to their children's educational success (Daniels, 2017), and that teachers are often not aware of the broad range of challenges that children from disadvantaged communities face (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003). Okeke's findings (2014) have shown that the perceptions that teachers have of their learners' parents often have a significant role to play in how involved the parents will be. Visiting the school and being visible to teachers and school administrators is one of the ways that schools expect parents to be involved (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2001; Smit & Liebenberg, 2003). The mothers in this study made every effort to be present within the educational space and to enhance their visibility with their children's teachers. The mothers cared about how they were perceived by role players in the school and wanted to make sure that the teachers knew they cared about their children's education. This

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fostered relationships that were also beneficial to the mothers' self-esteem and sense of efficacy around their children's education, as the single-mothers shared stories of welcoming and praise from school personnel.

This finding contradicts with studies where parents were described as feeling unwelcome at their children's schools or where they expressed negative attitudes towards school-based involvement (Heystek & Louw, 1999; Låftman, 2008; Smit & Liebenberg, 2003). The finding thus has implications for how teachers understand the home contexts of their learners, as well as how teachers negotiate their knowledges and interpretations of parents' involvement. This study therefore underscores the need for constructive parent-educator dialogues and collaborations, which could facilitate a shift in teachers' perceptions of parents being uninvolved in their children's education. Teachers thus should be encouraged to find creative ways to engage with parents who experience marginalisation, especially when the actions of marginalised single mothers position them as active partners in their children's educational success, as evidenced in this study.

The findings demonstrate three types of parent support, namely home-based, school-based and academic socialisation, and highlight that all three forms of support are important for promoting educational success and school engagement. The findings of this study support existing research that shows that adolescents value academic socialisation as the most relevant form of support, and see it as having the strongest positive link to their educational success in schools (Toren & Seginer, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

The findings of this study are compatible with the idea that key to home-based parent support is an approach that communicates interest, fosters aspirations, promotes decision making and encourages the importance of education (Jeynes, 2003; Kaplan Toren, & Seginer, 2015; Wang et al., 2014); however, the findings also provide insight into the informal and non-traditional ways that this cohort of single-mother participants engaged with educational support. My initial assumptions on support were that the actions of mothers raising adolescents would be more distant as the mothers would have to navigate their teenagers' developmental needs for privacy and independence. However, the findings showed that the mothers who participated in this study were incredibly involved in the lives of their adolescent children, they valued frequent and open communication, and they were direct and unreserved in how they offered support.

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The adolescent participants in this study displayed often surprising levels of resilience. Despite the adversities which their families faced, the adolescents had a strong sense of wellbeing and experienced positive educational outcomes (Masten et al., 2009; Theron et al., 2015; Zautra et al., 2010). The adolescents and their mothers experienced protective factors within their bio-ecosystems, that is, within themselves and in the significant relationships they shared with each other and other significant persons. This research shows that it would be short-sighted and indeed inaccurate to view the participants within the deficit model of a culture of poverty that "devalues what they have and [what they] bring to school" (Christie, 2008, p. 169); instead, this study emphasises that a broader perspective is needed and that their informal and non-traditional educational, emotional and familial resources should be acknowledged and given legitimacy within schools.

Overall, my analysis of the data suggests that single-mother families should be afforded legitimacy as a family structure that can offer widely unacknowledged forms of educational support for adolescents, and that these family units have access to significant forms of capital which can uniquely affect the educational trajectories of young people; however, if these families are not engaged in ways that can harness, amplify and nurture these resources, they become even more vulnerable to harms and negative outcomes. One of these important resources is emotional capital, including the bond between mother and child and the resilience which they enact as they work towards securing better opportunities in life, which I argue should become a recognised component of how single-mother families are engaged in South Africa and similar settings.

It is my contention that single-mother families are not broken or incomplete as they have often been characterised. I argue for critical dialogue about how single-mother families are depicted in social discourses as well as within research that explores their lives. Despite such families being the norm in many societies, including South Africa as a whole, research that explores parent actions and contributions within such family structures is limited, and the voices of these mothers and children are largely ignored in policies and educational approaches that affect their lives directly. As a result, educational environments remain uninformed about such families and the parent contributions are largely unrecognised.

I argue for a change in the approach that researchers take in exploring educational support. In line with a feminist perspective, I agree that to understand the experiences of marginalised families, within local contexts, we need to ask them directly, and observe their real-world

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contexts. This requires a lens that centralises the voices of these mothers and children when researchers explore educational support within these single-mother families. In this way, different forms of support can be recognised. Such families have capital and other forms of community cultural wealth that should be recognised as valuable to schools and society, including emotional capital that can foster resilience, hope and stability within families. Qualitative research designs that consider the voices of adolescents and their parents as important and valuable perspectives should be encouraged.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study contributes to a broader understanding of educational support in single-mother families and creates a narrative of involved parents who actively influence their children's educational achievement.

One of the first steps in creating home-school partnerships is to recognise the informal and non-traditional forms of capital within single-mother families. Teachers need to acknowledge these strengths and find creative ways to engage with family units that have a single parent, specifically a single mother which is the most common family structure in South Africa. For example, instead of focusing on the assumed roles of fathers, schools could rather list the responsibilities that parents have, and how best the family unit can respond to these responsibilities based on a range of circumstances and family configurations. This will allow other strategic family and community role-players within the adolescents' bio-ecosystems to support the adolescents in meaningful ways. For example, intervention programmes for adolescents should include the influences and inputs of grandparents and other significant persons in the lives of adolescents. I agree with other researchers that schools need to recognise and capitalise on the strengths and knowledges that learners bring to school, even when they are different to traditional forms of knowledge (Fataar, 2012; Michael et al., 2012; Smit & Liebenberg, 2003; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007).

My research underscores the need for constructive parent-educator dialogues and collaborations, as well as the need to facilitate a shift in teachers' perceptions of un-involvement and to find creative ways to engage with parents who experience marginalisation. This is especially relevant when the actions of parents could position them as active partners towards their children's educational success, as is evident in this study. Teachers need to consider how to better understand and engage with single-mother families in order to tap into these

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unacknowledged resources and to ensure that these mothers feel like their contributions to their children's education are valued. This research further offers evidence that single-mothers' status as partners in education should be enhanced. Therefore, in their engagement with single-mother families, teachers should actively collaborate with single-mothers and their adolescents as equal partners in teaching and learning.

Higher education can also play a pivotal role in preparing pre-service teachers to critically engage with all types of families and to recognise and work with the capitals that these families already have. Pre-service teachers should be encouraged to consider the various forms of parent involvement and the importance of collaboration and equal partnerships with parents. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, as well as Yosso's community cultural wealth approach, provide frameworks for teachers in their engagement with diverse families. By purposefully employing these frameworks, the context-specific types of parental educational support can be understood and nurtured in these families.

The findings show that stereotypes of single-mother families persist and might socialise these families into seeing themselves as inadequate. Steps therefore need to be taken on a macrosystemic level to challenge such viewpoints and enhance the image of single-mother families. The media can play an important role in improving the status and legitimacy of this family structure through offering greater representation and nuancing the limiting discourses around single-mother families.

Future research also has a significant role to play in legitimising and highlighting the multiple forms of support within diverse family structures. This study has shown that single mothers are resilient and resourceful. A participatory action research project that provides an opportunity for the mothers to further empower themselves by gaining skills and participating in constructive dialogue, could offer valuable insights in this area of research. Finally, this research has illuminated multiple forms of informal and non-traditional parental educational support in low-income, primarily 'coloured' single-mother families. Future research can be modelled on this study's research design and explore the forms of support in single-mother families of different ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds.

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6.6 MY CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH

My study approached the phenomenon of educational support within the single-mother family from a feminist standpoint, thereby legitimising the single-mother family as a family unit and giving voice to the narratives of these mothers and their children; this approach was opposed to research that approached these families from a patriarchal and deficit perspective and thus further marginalised the experiences of these families. This research therefore contributes insight into the informal and often misrecognised ways in which support can occur within this context.

My study further enhances knowledge of the possible strategies that could enhance family-school relationships. I argue that pedagogically just education considers all that learners bring into the classroom, not only the cultural capital that schools tend to value. This study has illustrated several forms of wealth that learners can possibly bring into the classroom. It can be argued that successful family-school relationships depend on schools acknowledging these capitals and incorporating them into teaching styles, as well as considering these capitals in understanding the way parents are involved in their children's education.

Finally, my investigation of the concept of community cultural wealth, within the context of South African single-mother families from a low socio-economic community, increases the originality of my study. Although its application to immigrant families in the USA has been explored, this concept and its potential to enhance family-school relationships remain largely unexplored within the multiple forms of family structures in South Africa, and this study contributes to scholarship in this regard.

The findings of my study should expand the existing knowledge for researchers and practitioners in the field of educational psychology, especially role players who seek to promote positive family-school relationships and advance educational success amongst learners.

6.7 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTION

The task of conducting this research has been an invaluable learning experience and a privilege. As a novice researcher doing PhD research, I have gained an understanding of the nature of the research process, especially the often-unexpected avenues of exploration that characterise qualitative research. I have learned that research requires a deep sense of respect and gratitude towards participants who allow you into their lives and share their stories with you. This

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research has therefore given me significant insights, which have assisted me in examining my own professional values and academic identity, and which will further inform my way forward as a researcher.

My intention is to further explore the dynamics of the family structure and its relation to learners' educational success. I want to know what is needed to foster family well-being, support for families and helpful partnerships with families. This will include acknowledging the diversity of the family structure, which means recognising that families have different forms, that all of these forms are legitimate, and that all should be afforded legitimacy and treated with dignity. As a researcher who works from a constructivist paradigm, I endeavour to always seek the untold story.

My experience and what I have come to know has made me reflect on how my colleagues and I can create opportunities for social impact that will improve the status and legitimacy of single-mother families. I have already started incorporating these aspects into my engagement with professional teacher training, especially in how I teach about families and what children bring to the classroom. The research process has therefore encouraged me to value the role that I have in the field of educational psychology and the importance of being a reflective practitioner. It has equipped me with new knowledge about parent support and left me with a wealth of resources from which I can draw to improve the quality of empirical research within this field.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted that conventional discourses of single-mother families undervalue and misrecognise the forms of educational support which take place in these families. The findings cannot be generalised to all adolescents growing up in single-mother families; however, it was particularly evident that the adolescents in this study had positive home-based educational experiences and were able to draw support from within and outside of their families. Single-mother families face various challenges, including financial, social, emotional and educational difficulties, that impact on the support that a mother can provide to her children. However, single-mother families in this study employed various non-traditional or unacknowledged forms of educational support. In their quest to meet the needs of their children, the research found that the mothers harnessed community cultural wealth, especially familial, social, aspirational, resistant and navigational capital, in service of their children's educational success.

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The mothers also wielded their emotional capital to foster good relationships with their children, and relied on networks of support external to their family units which could provide opportunities for their children to succeed in their education. These findings encourage a broader conceptualisation of educational support by the educational sector, especially in the context of single-mother families from low socio-economic contexts. While dominant discourses of single mothers have the potential to misrecognise their agency, undermine their parental support and ignore their voices, this study sought to prioritise and foreground these voices and to afford them with the opportunity to tell a different story, one that does not view their families as deficient but instead views them as having access to significant forms of capital.

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APPENDIX A:

ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

Approved with Stipulations
Response to Modifications- (New Application)

21-Jun-2016
Jacobs, Carmelita C

Proposal #: SU-HSD-001887
Title: Adolescent Experiences of educational support in their single-mother families

Dear Mrs. Carmelita Jacobs,

Your **Response to Modifications** - ***(New Application)*** received on **19-Apr-2016**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **20-Jun-2016**.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **21-Jun-2016 -20-Jun-2017**

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APPENDIX B:

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the research project: Adolescent experiences of educational support in their single-mother families.

Researcher: Carmelita Jacobs

Contact numbers: 021 808 9618 / 072 906 6355

Dear Parent

You are hereby requested to consent to the participation of your adolescent child as well as your own participation in a research study conducted by Carmelita Jacobs, from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, as part of the requirements in completing a doctoral dissertation in Educational Psychology.

Your child has been selected as a possible participant in this study because he/she is between the ages of 15 and 18 and because he/she has been raised by you as a single mother.

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please feel free to ask any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied and that you clearly understand what this research entails and what may be expected of you.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the subjective beliefs and experiences of adolescents who have been raised in a single-mother family. The focus will also be on your child's experiences of educational support within this context. The goal of the study is to produce knowledge that will lead to a broader understanding of how parent support may play out in a single-mother family. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from this study will offer an insight into the invaluable worldview of the individual, and that it will inform parents, educators and counsellors to improve practices that lead to welcoming single mothers and their children as partners in education.

2. PROCEDURES

If you consent for your child to participate as well as for your own participation, I would request the following from your child and yourself:

Participation in a background information interview: Participant and parent (45-60 minutes)

An initial meeting, if possible, with the family to introduce the study and answer any questions any family member may have.

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Personal Interview: Only Participant (Adolescent) (45-60 minutes)

Personal Interview: Only Parent (Single mother) (45-60 minutes)

(Please note that interviews will be audio recorded, and then transcribed as raw data that will serve as the evidence in this study).

Focus group Interview: Only Participant (Adolescent) and other adolescent participants (5-6 hours)

(Participants will be asked to do a drawing activity and then share their experiences, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and opinions with the group. Please note that the focus group interviews will also be audio recorded and then transcribed as raw data that will serve as the evidence in this study).

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Because your child will be required to share personal information, it may occur that he/she may or may not experience discomfort due to certain memories about their experiences. Counselling opportunities will be made available to your child should it become necessary during the course of the study. Mrs L Collair (a registered educational psychologist) has agreed to make herself available should the need for counselling arise. She can be contacted at 021 808 2304 or lyncol@sun.ac.za.

Similarly, because you, as the single mother, will be required to share personal information, it may occur that you may or may not experience discomfort due to certain memories about your experiences. Should you experience the need for counselling, a referral will be made to Hope House, an organisation that provides counselling services in the community. Hope House can be contacted at 021 903 0521 or 0714102091.

Please note that you and your child have the right to refuse any questions that may cause discomfort and that you and your child may refuse to participate in the study at any point.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no expected physical or financial benefits for yourself or your child for participating in this study. However, it is hoped that the content of the research will inform the thoughts and understandings of parents, educators, counsellors and community members regarding educational support and how it plays out in your context as a single-mother family.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No remuneration will be provided for the participation in the study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be used to identify participants will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms. Furthermore, access to raw data containing identifying information will only be accessed by the researcher. Transcriptions of interviews as well as the video/audio recordings of interviews will only be accessed by the researcher and securely stored after completion of the research study. No names of identifying information will be used in presenting the dissertation.

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7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose to participate in this study or not. If you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Furthermore, you may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher further reserves the right to ask the participant to withdraw from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher Carmelita Jacobs (021 903 6136 / 072 906 6355 or carmelitaj32@sun.ac.za) or Prof D Daniels (021 808 2324/021 808 2306 or doria@sun.ac.za) my research supervisor at Stellenbosch University.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You will have the right to listen to recordings of interviews and view transcribed information pertaining to your own interview. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622) at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

.....

DATE

.....

.....

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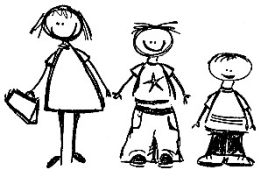
APPENDIX C:
ASSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM



TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: The stories that high school learners tell about being raised in a single-mother family.

RESEARCHER'S NAME(S): Carmelita Jacobs

ADDRESS: Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, GG Cillié Building, Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch, 7600

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 906 6355

What is RESEARCH/ Wat is Navorsing?

Research is something we do to find NEW KNOWLEDGE about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place! / *Navorsing is iets wat ons doen om nuwe kennis te verwerf oor die manier waarop dinge* (*en mense) werk. Ons gebruik navorsingsprojekte of studies om meer uit te vind oor kinders en tieners en die dinge wat hulle lewens, hul skole, hul families en hul gesondheid beïnvloed. Ons doen dit om die wêreld 'n beter plek te maak!*

What is this research project all about? / Waaroor gaan hierdie navorsingsprojek?

This project is about understanding a little more about how things work in a single-mother family. It's about teenagers who have grown up in a single-mother family and hearing what they have to say about the things that affect their lives, specifically their learning experiences. / *Hierdie projek handel oor hoe dinge in 'n enkelma-gesin werk. Dit gaan oor tieners wat in 'n enkelma-gesin grootgeword het en om te hoor wat hulle te sê het oor die dinge wat hulle lewens raak, spesifiek hul leerervarings.*

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project? / Hoekom is ek genooi om deel van hierdie navorsingsprojek te wees? I have invited you to take part in this study because you are a teenager who has grown up in a single-mother family and I believe that the stories you tell about your experiences can provide valuable information to this project. / *Ek het jou uitgenooi om aan hierdie studie deel te neem omdat jy 'n tiener is wat in 'n enkelma-gesin grootgeword het en ek glo dat die stories wat jy oor jou ervarings vertel waardevolle inligting aan hierdie projek kan verskaf.*

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Who is doing the research? / Wie gaan die navorsing doen? I, Carmelita Jacobs, am a PhD student at Stellenbosch University and I will be conducting the research as part of my degree requirements. I have a passion for teaching and working with young people and I enjoy doing research because it offers the opportunity to provide new knowledge that can help us understand the way things are and what we can do to make positive changes. / *Ek, Carmelita Jacobs, is 'n PhD-student aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch en ek sal die navorsing as deel van my graadvereistes uitvoer. Ek het 'n passie om met jong mense te werk en ek geniet dit om navorsing te doen. Ek glo dat dit die geleentheid bied om nuwe kennis in te samel, kennis wat ons kan help verstaan hoe dinge werk en hoe ons kan help om positiewe verandering te maak.*

What will happen to me in this study? Wat sal met my gebeur as ek deelneem in hierdie studie? If you and your mother are interested in taking part in the study, I would come and visit you at your home if that is acceptable. I will tell you more about the study and give you both an opportunity to ask any questions. / *As jy en jou ma belangstel om aan die studie deel te neem, sal ek by julle huis kom kuier, maar net as dit julle so sou pas. Ek sal julle meer vertel oor die studie en vir julle albei 'n geleentheid gee om enige vrae te vra.*

We will then agree upon a time and place that you prefer where I will interview you and then your mother separately. I will have a few questions for you about your educational support experiences. For example, what has it been like to grow up in a single-mother family? How can parents support their children to do better at school? / *Ons sal dan op 'n tyd en plek besluit wat jy verkies. Ek sal dan graag 'n bietjie met jou gesels en dan ook met jou moeder. Ek sal 'n paar vrae vra oor jou ervarings, spesifiek oor jou leerervarings en opvoedkundige ondersteuning. Byvoorbeeld, hoe was dit vir jou om in 'n enkelma-gesin groot te word? Hoe kan ouers hul kinders ondersteun om beter te doen op skool?*

There will also be an opportunity for you to meet the other high school learners who are part of the study. During this opportunity you will be able to hear about their experiences and share your own stories about educational support. / *Daar sal ook 'n geleentheid wees waar jy die ander tieners, wat ook deel van die studie is, kan ontmoet. Tydens hierdie geleentheid sal jy 'n bietjie meer oor hul ervarings leer en as jy so voel, sal jy ook jou eie stories oor opvoedkundige ondersteuning kan deel.*

I am very eager for you to share your ideas and experiences about growing up in a single parent family and how that affected the educational support for you. Remember that both of these activities are voluntary and that you can feel free to stop participating at any time if you do not feel comfortable. / *Ek is baie gretig om van jou idees en ervarings te hoor, spesifiek oor grootword in 'n enkelouergesin en hoe jy opvoedkundige ondersteuning ervaar het. Onthou dat beide van hierdie aktiwiteite vrywillig is en dat jy vry kan voel om enige tyd op te hou om deel te neem.*

Can anything bad happen to me? / Kan iets sleg met my gebeur? No. I will ask you a few questions, some may be easy to answer, and some may be harder to answer such as personal or sensitive questions. Even though I would like you to answer all my questions I will not force you and I would like you to only answer the questions that you feel comfortable answering. I promise to keep whatever you say, confidential, UNLESS that information involves you being harmed or planning to harm anyone. Also remember that everything you tell me forms part of the project and I will be writing a dissertation where I will write about our conversations, but I will not use your name and I will do my best so that you cannot be identified in what I have written. / *Nee, ek sal vir jou 'n paar vrae vra, 'n paar kan maklik wees om te beantwoord, en 'n paar kan moeiliker wees om te beantwoord soos persoonlike of sensitiewe vrae. Selfs al wil ek graag hê dat jy al my vrae beantwoord, sal ek jou nie dwing nie en wil ek net hê jy moet die vrae beantwoord waarmee jy gemaklik voel. Ek belowe alles wat jy sê vertroulik te hou, tensy*

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daardie inligting iemand kan skaad of as jy beplan om iemand leed aan te doen. Onthou ook dat alles wat jy vir my vertel deel van die projek vorm en ek sal 'n proefskrif skryf waarin ons gesprekke deel van die inhoud sal vorm, maar ek sal nie jou naam gebruik nie en ek sal my bes doen sodat jy nie geïdentifiseer kan word deur dit wat ek skryf nie.

However, if at any point you do feel that taking part in this study causes you any distress or anxiety then counselling opportunities will be made available to you during the course of the study. Mrs L Collair (a registered educational psychologist) has agreed to make herself available should the need for counselling arise. She can be contacted at 021 808 2304 or lyncol@sun.ac.za. / *Sou jy egter ter enige tyd voel dat deelname aan hierdie studie veroorsaak dat jy ongemak of angs ervaar, sal beradingsgeleenthede in die verloop van die studie tot jou beskikking gestel word. Mev L Collair ('n geregistreerde opvoedkundige sielkundige) het ingestem om haarself beskikbaar te stel indien die behoefte aan berading ontstaan. Sy kan by 021 808 2304 of lyncol@sun.ac.za gekontak word.*

Can anything good happen to me? / Kan iets goed met my gebeur? Indirectly, yes. Some people enjoy talking to others. By talking one gains clarity on issues that you seldom talk about. / *Indirek, ja. Sommige mense geniet dit om met ander te praat. 'n Mens verkry insig in kwessies waaroor daar andersins selde gepraat word.*

Will anyone know I am part of the study? / Sal enigiemand weet dat ek deel van die studie vorm? The people who will know that you are part of this project, are me, your mom and whomever you choose to tell, and then also my supervisor. She is helping me with this project, therefore I will need to talk to her about our conversations. The other teenagers who form part of the study will also know that you are part of the project, because you will meet them at some point. / *Die mense wat sal weet dat jy deel van hierdie projek vorm, is ek, jou ma en wie ook al jy kies om te vertel, en dan ook my toesighouer. Sy help my met hierdie projek daarom sal dit van tyd tot tyd vir my nodig wees om met haar oor ons gesprekke te gesels. Die ander tieners wat aan die studie deelneem, sal ook weet dat jy deel van die projek is, aangesien jy hulle op een of ander stadium sal ontmoet.*

Who can I talk to about the study? / Met wie kan ek oor die studie gesels? If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher Carmelita Jacobs (021 903 6136 / 072 906 6355 or carmelitaj32@sun.ac.za) or Prof D Daniels (021 808 2324/021 808 2306 or doria@sun.ac.za), my research supervisor at Stellenbosch University. / *Indien jy enige vrae of kommentaar oor die navorsing het, voel asseblief vry om ons te kontak: die navorser, Carmelita Jacobs (021 903 6136/072 906 6355 of carmelitaj32@sun.ac.za) of Prof D Daniels (021 808 2324/021 808 2306 of doria@sun.ac.za) my navorsingstoesighouer by die Universiteit Stellenbosch.*

You will have the right to listen to recordings of interviews and view transcribed information pertaining to your own interview. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. / *Jy het die reg om na opnames van onderhoude te luister en getranskribeerde inligting met betrekking tot jou eie onderhoud te sien. Jy kan jou toestemming te eniger tyd terugtrek en jou deelname sonder enige boetes staak.*

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622) at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University. / *As jy vrae het oor jou regte as 'n deelnemer in hierdie studie, kan jy me Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622) by die Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch, kontak.*

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What if I do not want to do this? / Wat gebeur as ek dit nie wil doen nie? You can refuse to take part in the study even if your mother has given permission that you may take part. This is a voluntary process, so you have a right to say no, even if you initially agreed. You can stop being in the project at any time without getting into trouble with me or anyone else linked to the project. / *Jy kan weier om deel te neem aan die studie, selfs as jou ma toestemming gegee het dat jy mag deelneem. Dit is 'n vrywillige proses, sodat jy 'n reg het om nee te sê, selfs al het jy aanvanklik ingestem. Jy kan jou deelname aan die projek te eniger tyd te stop sonder om in die moeilikheid te beland met my of enigiemand anders wat met die projek verband hou.*

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Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES NO

....

Signature of Adolescent **Date**

Verstaan jy hierdie navorsingstudie ☐ en is jy bereid om daaraan deel te neem?

YES NO

Het die navorser al jou vrae beantwoord?

YES NO

Verstaan ☐ jy dat jy te eniger tyd kan ophou om aan die studie deel te neem?

YES NO

....

Handtekening **Datum**

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APPENDIX D:
INTERVIEW GUIDES

Title: Adolescent Experiences of Educational Support in their Single-mother families

Interview guide for semi-structured interviews: Adolescents

PRE-INTERVIEW INFORMATION GATHERING

- Introduce self
- Purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Format of the interview
- Negotiating the use of recording equipment
- Clarification and questions
- Obtain consent

The purpose of this interview is to gain an understanding of how you are supported in terms of your educational needs and goals

POSSIBLE THEMES & QUESTIONS:

STORIES ABOUT YOURSELF

- Demographic information
- Current age, grade, school, subjects
- Personality, interests, temperament (How would you describe yourself, and the things that you like?)
- Relationships at school
- Let's talk about school. What subjects do you have? Your favourite and why? Favourite teacher and why?
- Parental involvement (Are there any extra-mural activities at your school? Do you participate in any of them? Does anyone encourage you to participate in school activities? Are there any parents involved with these activities? How do you think parents should or can be involved? How is or would you like your mom to be involved?)

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STORIES ABOUT MOTHER-ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP

- Relationship quality
- Let's talk about your relationship with your mom. How would you describe your relationship with your mom? - Conflict; Communication; Trust.
- Perceived responsiveness (Describe a time when you needed help with something e.g. a school project; what role would you say your mom played then?).

STORIES ABOUT FAMILY RITUALS, ROUTINES, NORMS AND VALUES

- What's it like growing up with a single mother?
- How would you describe the strengths of your family?
- How would you describe the challenges you face as a family?
- What type of activities do you do as a family?
- How would you describe these times together?
- Can you describe anything that is unique about your family?
- How would you say any of these things we have spoken about supports you to do better at school?

STORIES ABOUT EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

- Let's talk about educational support. What do you think that word means or should mean?
- How would you respond to the following statement:
- Educational support from parents is not just involvement in educational matters such as homework, school meetings, sport activities, it is much more.
- How do you think parents can support their children to do better at school?
- Do you think that young people your age need the same kind of support or do they have different needs?
- And you?
- Who are the people you depend on, look up to, and go to when you need help?
- Father, Grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends?
- For example: Who do you go to first when you need help with homework?
- Tell me about doing homework? When do you do it, where do you do it, how do you experience doing homework at home?
- And your friends: Tell me about your friends? How would you say your friends support you? Best friend? Supportive?

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- How do you think your mom provides educational support? (When it comes to school, what do you think she expects of you? What do you talk about, that is education related?? E.g. interests, goals, future plans)

Describe the way you would like to be supported?
Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

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Interview guide for semi-structured interview: Single mother

Thank you for choosing to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how your child experiences educational support (in terms of their educational needs and goals).

STORIES ABOUT YOURSELF

- How would you describe your experience of being a single mother raising an adolescent child?
- What are the challenges you face in supporting your child's educational needs and goals?
- From where or whom do you draw support?

STORIES ABOUT MOTHER ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP

- How would describe your child?
- How would you describe conflict in your relationship?
- How would you describe the communication between you and X? What do you talk about when it comes to X's educational needs and goals?
- How would you describe trust between you and X? Would you describe X as being independent? What would you say lead to their sense of independence?
- What would you say is different about supporting your child now compared to when he/she was younger? Is it easier or more difficult?

STORIES ABOUT FAMILY RITUALS, ROUTINES, NORMS AND VALUES

- How would you describe the strengths of your family?
- How would you describe the challenges you face as a family?
- What type of activities do you do as a family?
- How would you describe these times together?
- Can you describe anything that is unique about your family?
- What is important to you?
- How do you communicate this to your children?

STORIES ABOUT EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

- How do you feel about your ability to support your child's educational needs and goals?
- How do you feel that you provide educational support to your child?

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- Who else would you say plays an important role in providing educational support to X?
- Does X have contact with his/her father? How would you describe X's father's involvement regarding educational support?
- How would you describe your relationship with X's school?
- How would you describe your involvement as a parent?
- What impression do you get from X's school about your involvement as a parent?
- Would you say that X has friends who play a role in providing educational support? How would you describe this role?

What are your educational expectations for X? What would X say you expect of him/her?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

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APPENDIX E:
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title: Adolescent Experiences of Educational Support in their Single-mother families

1. Agenda
2. Welcoming
3. Ice breakers
4. Drawing activity
5. Show and Tell
6. Lunch Break
7. Show and Tell continued
8. Open discussion
9. Closing

WELCOMING

- Participants will be welcomed and thanked for participating
- We will play a few ice breaker games to help the participants get to know one another and feel a little more comfortable to participate.
- Thereafter we will discuss the importance of confidentiality and respecting one another's contributions i.e. drawing and verbal contributions

DRAWING ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTION:

Think about your educational journey so far. Make a drawing that describes this journey, especially the people, events and objects which were important to you on this journey.

Resources such as paper, pens and colours will be provided.

The purpose of the activity is to provide the participants with a tool to help them tell their story of the ways they experience support and how their parent supports (or not) their educational journey.

SHOW AND TELL

Each participant will be given an opportunity to show their drawing to the group and talk about the people, events and objects which were important to them on their educational journey.

Participants, as well as myself, will be allowed to (respectfully) comment or ask questions.

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OPEN DISCUSSION

Themes from the preliminary data analysis will be presented during this time, and participants will be encouraged to comment and share their views, beliefs, feelings and experiences. It is further expected that participants may bring new themes to the discussion.

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APPENDIX F:

TRANSCRIPTION SAMPLES

INT: Dankie Bonita vir jou tyd, ek waardeer dit baie. Em, so my eerste vraagie is net, hoe sal jy jou ervaring as 'n enkel ouer met 'n kind in hoër skool, hoe sal jy dit beskryf?

BON: Ek ervaar dit baie moielik vir myself want ek het twee kinders op hoër skool en ek kannie byhou nie.

INT: Mm.

BON: En ek het nie altyd om vir hulle te gee wat hulle moet hê nie, maar ek wil vir hulle die beste gee en em, ek bit maar meeste van die tyd, en em soos nou, daar is nog boeke wat hulle kort en hulle nag elke dag by my en hulle weet ek werk nie maar hulle weet Mammie sal 'n plan maak. Mammie gan 'n plan maak en ek sê oek vir hulle baie keere daar is oek kinders- Hulle moenie dink hulle is die enige kinders wat in daai situasie is nie, daar is hoevele kinders wat in nog meer moelike situasies is, wat se ouers nie kan byhou om die kind op die hoër te hou nie. Maar ek, op my beurt sal ek vir hulle uit my pad uit gaan, ek sal doen vir hulle wat ek moet doen en ek wil vir hulle die beste gee, omdat ek voel hulle moet eendag iets beryk met wat en waarvoor hulle geleur het en vir wat hulle geleur het, dit is hoekom ek vir hulle die beste gee.

INT: Mm. So as jy sê hulle weet Mammie sal 'n plan maak, hoe het Mammie al in die verlede 'n plan gemaak?

BON: Ek sal 'n werkie by iemand vra, of a werkie doen vir iemand, al kry ek ook min geld by die persoon, al is dit ook 'n R100 wat ek kry of 'n R120 dan weet ek kan dan twee of drie, vier boeke koop daaruit vir hulle twee. Ja.

BEING A SINGLE MOTHER IS HARD

PS I always go out of my way
PS I want to give them the best
PS I will do what I must so that they can be educated
RECODE PS Mother takes her role seriously

PS I always make a plan to provide for my family

INT: Er. Okay, okay, okay, nou vertel my van 'n bietjie ... Hoe was dit om op te groei saam met n enkel Ma?

BIA: Ek dink om saam met my Ma op te groei is baie beter vir my.

INT: Mm.

BIA: Want is my Pa net hier is dan is hy baie [ontwins? 1:40], even met my Ma oek en ek hou nie daarvan nie.

INT: Hy's by hoe?

BIA: Rou.

INT: Rou. Okay, okay, okay. Hoe was dit toe it net jy en jou Ma was?

BIA: Was baie heerlik. Ek het dit baie geniet om saam met 'n enkel Ouer, maar aan die ander kant het ek dit nie geniet ie want as ek iets vir haar kan sy oek ie maklik vir my gee nie, want sy is alleen.

INT: Mm, en wat soort te tiepe dinge het jy nodig gehad wat jou Ma nie altyd vir jou kon gee nie?

BIA: Miskien klere, as ek miskien iets sien by iemand anders dat iemand aanhet dan soek ek miskien daai ding dan kan sy it ie maklik vir my koop ie.

INT: Mm.

BIA: Want ons is twee en sy is 'n enkel Ouer dan verstaan ek ma vir haar.

INT: Mm. Mm. Shor, en hoe sal jy jou en jou Ma se verhouding beskryf?

BIA: Ek en my Ma het 'n goeie verhouding maar nou wat my Pa hier is it [lyk ? 2:47] ek en my Ma's se verhouding eintlik nie baie goed 2:47] want hy sê baie goed vir haar en hy defend vir haar binne oor my as hy ... Sy moet dinge doen, like sy moet vir my skel of so, dan doen sy it, maar voorheen was it nie so nie.

Challenge father problems

Adol Understanding for Family Finan Situation
Challenge my mother could r
Needs for MATERIAL SUPPORT

Challenge father problems

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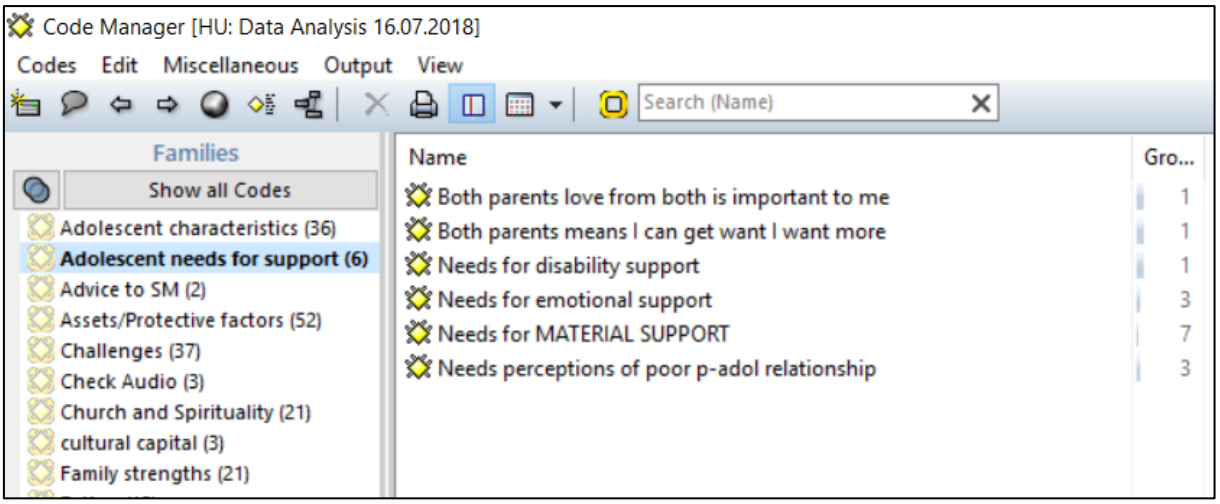
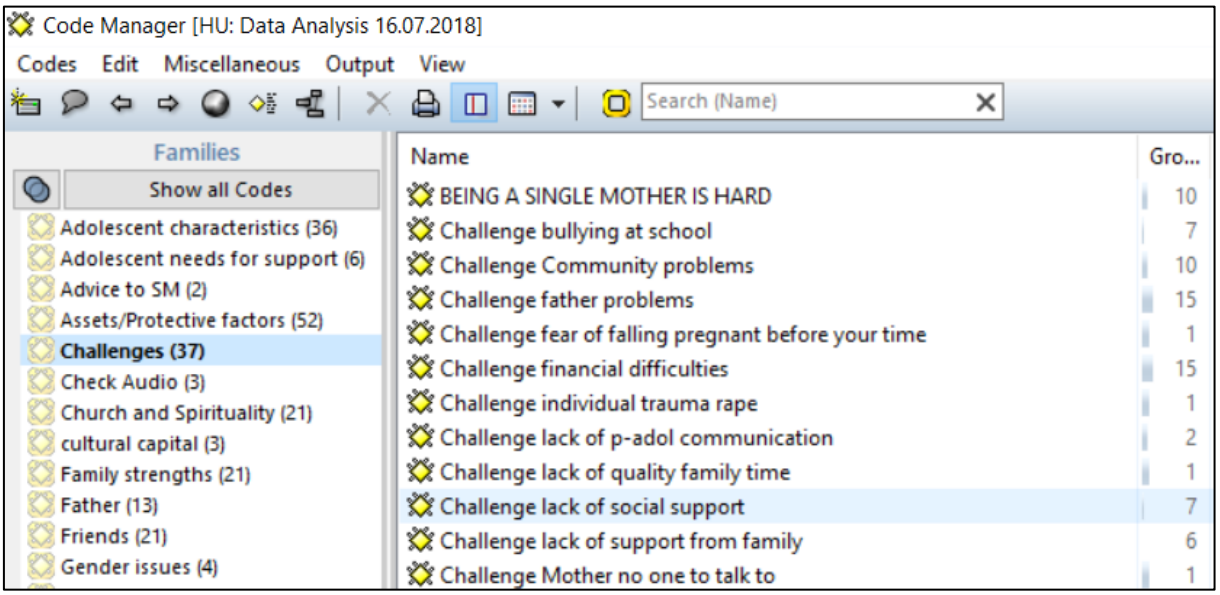
APPENDIX G:

CODES LIST SAMPLES