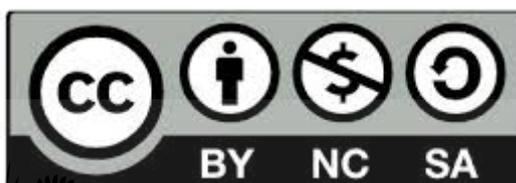




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*Meaning Making of the Gendered Experiences of African
Adolescent Girls from Child-Headed Households within their
Educational and Social Contexts*

by

CHARMAINE PETRO LEATHAM

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the full requirements for the degree

DOCTOR EDUCATIONIS

in

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY



in the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR: Prof. J. Pillay

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr. H. Dunbar-Krige

2013

DECLARATION

I, Charmaine Leatham, declare that this thesis is my own original work, conducted under the supervision of Prof. Jace Pillay and Dr. Helen Dunbar-Krige. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor Educationis in Educational Psychology at the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg. No part of this research has been submitted in the past, or is being submitted, for a degree of examination at any other University.

Charmaine Petro Leatham



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December 2013

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all of the participants from the child-headed households who are courageous in their will to survive and succeed, who shared their wisdom and knowledge with me.



And

To all the girls and women who have influenced my life, and who inspired me:

“... to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others”

(President Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom)

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- ❖ Professor Jace Pillay as my supervisor and Doctor Helen Dunbar-Krige as co-supervisor, for their patience, guidance and warm-hearted support;
- ❖ The South African / Netherland Programme for Alternative Development (SANPAD) in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg in providing me with the opportunity to conduct the research;
- ❖ Andrew Graham for the meticulous editing, support and encouragement;
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- ❖ My parents, Blom Leatham and Brian Leatham (RIP) for their love, gentleness and support throughout my life. I thank God for blessing me with your love and care;
- ❖ My friends, colleagues and research team members Fatima Adam, Nadia Louw and Cheryl Wright who provided me with encouragement, support and Cheryl Wright specifically for providing me with private work space;
- ❖ To the dedicated and passionate Ms Carol Dyantyi who acts as the director for the non-governmental organisation as well as her supporting youth workers, caring for so many children and their families within the community. Thank you for your support in identifying possible schools and research participants;
- ❖ To all the research participants, without whom this research would not have been possible. A special thank you for sharing your life experiences with me.

ABSTRACT

Child-headed households are becoming increasingly prevalent in the absences of parents, especially in township and rural communities. Parents become absent for different reasons, such as needing to find employment away from home or falling ill and dying. Many extended families can no longer financially afford to care for the children within their own homes. Often different family members will take in siblings as they are unable to accommodate them all in their home due to lack of space or financial resources. As a result siblings would be scattered within the extended family. Child-headed households have become a solution whereby siblings could keep living together as a unit as well as staying within their known environment. Often, however, the responsibility of managing the households would be placed on the adolescent girls due to gender-role division. This could leave the girls vulnerable to the possibility of dropping out of school as managing a household, caring for younger siblings and keeping up with academic responsibilities places adolescent girls under intense pressure. The research focused on the gendered experiences of African adolescent girls from child-headed households in Orlando-West, Soweto. A qualitative research approach was used and the study was conducted by means of a hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design. Feminism, as a paradigm and main theoretical orientation, framed the study and findings. The data collection methods included two focus group interviews, one group of girls and one of boys. Three specifically selected girl participants living within the contexts of a child-headed home were selected. Over eight months and by means of individual interviews, the completion of a booklet and photo-voice activities the participants shared their gendered experiences with me within the contexts of a child-headed household. The findings of the data analysis indicated that adolescent girls from child-headed households specific to this study had to make meaning of their lives whilst still being influenced by patriarchal cultural practices and traditions from the past. The division of household chores in the home as modelled by parents was an instrumental factor in initiating gender inequality. The second theme related to the adolescent girls' daily struggles in adverse circumstances as they had to make meaning and continually adjust to living arrangements that were not always stable. By virtue of their gender, dangers from the community were persistent. Living as a girl within a child-headed household also meant being confronted daily with the socio-economic hardships that influenced being able to attain academic support at school, and purchasing toiletries, food and daily necessities for their families. The adolescent girls

needed to work through many emotional experiences, struggle to stay motivated at school as well as caring for their younger siblings. Despite these living difficulties and oppressive socio-cultural patriarchal influences they made meaning and were united in their pride of being female. Higher education qualifications and the possibility of a career were seen as a means of transcending their socio-economic hardship, proving their value in being female and obtaining independence. The research contributed to a deeper and more thorough understanding of the gendered experiences of African adolescent girls from child-headed households within the South African urban context. Taking into consideration the themes an intervention programme was developed to address the various themes with endarkened/Black feminism as an underpinning theoretical orientation. By means of the intervention programme the non-governmental organisation who supported the research project by identifying participants and providing the necessary guidance within the community received a tangible intervention instrument. The programme is designed to be user-friendly and utilised by the schools involved in the research. The research participants were inspiring and raised my awareness as researcher of the inner-strength and resilience they had in terms of their daily living and utilising their resources within the community. Working within diverse communities provided a richer perspective of South Africa's diversity and instilled in me a cross-cultural respect and competence.

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CHAPTER ONE

RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Globally and nationally the number of children living on their own within the social context of a child-headed household are increasing, due to parents becoming absent as a result of war, death to the Aids pandemic or seeking employment in other regions (Bonthuys, 2010; Maqoko & Dreyer, 2007; Meintjes, Hall, Marera & Boulle, 2010; Sloth-Nielsen, 2004). Child-headed households¹ are a solution strategy arising from the need that siblings have to remain together as a family, and because extended families can no longer carry the socio-economic burden of added family members due to the unemployment rate in South Africa.

Learners from child-headed households are vulnerable to discrimination, abuse, dropping out of school, harassment and exploitation, as usually no caregivers or adult supervisors are present to protect them against criminals and exploiters (Leatham, 2005; Pillay & Nesengani, 2006). The gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households are still vastly unknown, except for basic assumptions and generalisations. Conducting research could assist in obtaining a clearer understanding of their daily gendered experiences and so assist in providing more effective and appropriate support.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Having worked as an educational psychologist in the district-based support team in the Northern Free State for 11 years, I observed that due to gender-role division the responsibility of managing the household was being placed on adolescent girls. Taking

¹ Although the study was specific to adolescents the term 'child-headed household' will be used so as not to distract from the importance of the phenomenon. Adolescents are still a sub-group of 'children', and where applicable reference will be made to 'adolescents from child-headed households'. I prefer to include the term 'child', as Van Dijk and Van Driel (2009) explain that developmental agencies are more likely to provide support to 'children'. The term 'child-headed household' is also the most widely used term, thus broadening the academic knowledge base regarding the phenomenon.

over the responsibility of a household may possibly lead to their being prevented from effectively functioning within the schooling system, losing their childhood and ultimately raising the possibility of them dropping out of school (Leatham, 2005). Often it is the girls from child-headed households who exclude themselves from school to provide for the family and allow the boys to remain in school (Bray, 2003; Dannerbeck & Muriuki, 2007; Mofolo, 2010; Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). This in turn becomes a community problem regarding unwanted teenage pregnancies and the socio-economic circumstances of the girls worsen.

Traditional gender roles favour males for leadership, even though a study by Ayieko (1997) indicated that the girls actually do more of the household chores and decide on the major issues to be dealt with in the home. Often girls are ridiculed when they do not perform to the expectations of the community and discrimination causes both psychological and economic harm to the girl child (Ejoyi & Ayo-Odongo, 2006). As noted by Ejoyi et al. (2006), girls in Africa are particularly vulnerable due to gender inequity, socio-economic conditions and the cultural conditions prevailing in their communities. Ewelukwa (2005) explains that economic deprivation of female children is culturally entrenched due to the difference in valuing the male and female children of Africa. The implication thereof is that less investment is made in their education, skills development, health and general wellbeing. They run a severe risk of not attaining their potential due to their poor socio-economic circumstances and expectations of the community (Sloth-Nielsen, 2004). A study by Mosiane (2006) regarding the lived-experiences of middle female adolescents in Grade 10 indicated that they still confirmed the social stereotypes and cultural expectations of a community that is more supportive of boys studying while the girls have the 'opportunities' to marry early. Furthermore, it is argued that members from child-headed households are in need of emotional care and support from others and that adolescent girls are especially prone to emotion-focused coping skills in order to be accepted and belong in their community (Leatham, 2005). Adolescent girls from child-headed households run a higher risk of dropping out of school to go and live with a boyfriend from whom they receive the initially necessary emotional care and support, exposing themselves to health-risks such as HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy. This is also supported by the findings of Pillay et al. (2006) and Lutyia (2010) that they would resort to sexual favours for men in exchange for a false sense of safety, security and financial gain. The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001) states that gender

discrimination and stereotyping is reinforced by the way schools are organised as more men are in positions of authority while women are under-represented in management positions. The tendency within the classroom is still to encourage girls to take the 'softer' learning areas, such as arts and social sciences, while boys are seen as intellectually stronger in taking learning areas such as mathematics and science. Within the rural areas of South Africa girls have high levels of absenteeism as they have to fulfil other domestic and childcare duties. The Manifesto also states that girls are discriminated against within the education system through violence and abuse, ranging from verbal degradation to physical harassment and rape. Thus, despite efforts such as sexuality education being an integral part of the school curriculum and each school having a safety plan, more education and development needs to take place within educational and community contexts in order to free the potential of girls through equal access to education, even more so that of adolescent girls from child-headed households who are vulnerable to gender inequality and discrimination.

From my observations and reading I gather that adolescent girls from child-headed households in Africa exhibit great courage and resilience. In an African traditionalist setting child to child care is seen as part of valued human development ability (Nsamenang, 2009; Serpell, 2011). Sibling care-taking is an important care taking strategy to free up some time for mothers to take part in other productive tasks and is a vital part of children's socialisation in familial responsibilities and cultural values (Evans, 2011). Ewelukwa (2005) states that the female children of Africa have for centuries engaged in a struggle for survival, often carried out in silence under exploitative conditions and in an environment fraught with ridicule. The Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies (2001) acknowledges that not all local traditions are to the benefit of females, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), male child preference, early marriages, women- and girl-battering and other forms of domestic violence, as they all contribute to the cultural subordination of girls and women. There is thus a need for a more inclusive re-theorising and reconstruction of experiences to account for the voices of African women and vulnerable groups. Child-headed households and thus specifically the girl children are vulnerable to exploitation and violation by members of communities by virtue of their gender. Sloth-Nielsen (2004) highlights gender-based discrimination as often leading to gender division of labour, such as caring for the sick, elderly and/or pre-school siblings. Orphaned girl children are thus frequently deprived of adequate educational opportunities

and subjected to child-labour, and are vulnerable to the possibility of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Thus, in an attempt to explore and understand the value African adolescent girls in the child-headed household have within the South African context it is important to investigate how they make meaning of their gendered lives within their educational and social environments. Gaganakis (2006) explains that dominant discourses are mediated through the lived experiences of families, neighbourhoods and schools. Those of African adolescent girls need to be explored within their various educational and social contexts in order to provide appropriate support that they may need. This may infer an adjustment in educational policies and practices accordingly.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of the study was to analyse how South African adolescent girls from child-headed households make meaning of their gendered experiences within their educational and social contexts. The findings were compared with the literature after which an intervention programme in the form of a practical guide was developed in accordance with the main themes identified from the study. Taking this into consideration the study addressed the following research questions within the two phases of the research project, respectively:

- How do African adolescent girls from child-headed households make meaning of their gendered experiences within their educational and social contexts?
- How can the above findings be used to develop an intervention programme to provide support for African adolescent girls from child-headed households with regard to gender issues within their educational and social contexts?

A theoretical framework serves as an important foundation in terms of discovering the complexities involved within the phenomenon of gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households within the South African context.

1.4 THE THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

A theory is useful in research as it provides a set of organised principles that when combined with contextual knowledge can provide more insightful realisations (Swart & Pettipher, 2005) regarding the topic. For Merriam (2002), much of feminist research draws on critical theory, whilst Martin (2002) believes that critical theory and feminist theory

both focus on social and economic inequalities and both have an agenda of promoting systemic change. These two fields of inquiry have developed separately. Critical theory, in terms of this study, deals with theoretical underpinnings of the power differentials that are the legacy of South African's past political, economic and social injustices. Adolescent girls from child-headed households often live in poverty and in socio-economically deprived areas, affected by cultural ideologies informing the notion, for instance, that men hold power over women. Critical research principles help to identify the ideologies that may prescribe the power and value differentials existing in child-headed household, despite the girls taking on most of the household responsibilities. Critical theory principles provide an insightful introduction to feminism, which serves as the main theoretical orientation for this research study, *about* adolescent girls, *with* adolescent girls and *for* adolescent girls, in an attempt to identify and explore gender-related issues within their living experiences of child-headed households.

Critical theory, as posited by neo-Marxists, is concerned with social inequalities and oppression, not merely aimed at interpreting and describing the social world but actively orientated to transforming society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Visser, 2007). It is concerned with the power differentials (Visser, 2007) that still exist within a democratic society, such as South Africa, even though people are presumed to be politically equal before the law. Critical knowledge helps to uncover interests, power and ideologies in order to make social change (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). I employ its underlying principles in relation to feminist theory in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.1) but focus specifically on the latter as the more informative theory specific to this research. By positioning myself as researcher within a feminist critique I hope to come to a greater understanding of the gendered concerns and possible power imbalances experienced by the girls. Gender theory was also included to acknowledge the different perspectives on gender experiences and development. Resiliency theory, interrelated to feminism, illuminates the inner strength the girl child exhibits through daily living and survival.

Feminism, as explained by Kiguwa (2008), is a quest to address issues of gender and women's oppression and is centrally committed to the studying of gender relations and how gender as a cultural construct can be employed as a mechanism of oppression or domination. Men are generally viewed as being able to hold positions of social power over women and girls, and feminism should be considered as an action or behaviour in terms of an extension of feminist theory, as feminist practice is not only about studying gender and

gender relations but also about trying to change those constructs and relations that are seen as reinforcing women's subordination to men. Feminist research aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and examines the social roles, experiences and politics of women. By means of the study the aim was to understand the nature and the meaning African adolescent girls within child-headed households made of their gendered experiences as well as to identify the social roles, experiences and politics of power that present within their lives.

Feminist theory focuses on analysing gender inequality and the promotion of women's and girls' rights, interests and issues. Depending on the theoretical orientation, feminist theories differ on what is considered to be the causes of women's oppression as well as the means by which such domination can be eradicated (Kiguwa 2008). By reading the literature on feminism it became clear that various theories have developed and that many differences exist among feminist researchers. I considered it more appropriate to this research study to acknowledge and incorporate the principles of radical feminism and endarkened feminism, the former in examining the role patriarchy plays within the domination of males over females (Kiguwa, 2008). According to Shefer, Stevens and Clowes (2010) understanding masculinity in African context is an important factor as it is underpinned by discourse and material conditions that reproduce patriarchal, sexist and hetero-normative social conditions, leading to psychosocial problems such as violence and unsafe sexual practices. Gender roles and gender power inequalities are strongly influenced by patriarchal community values. Shefer et al. (2010) argued that patriarchy is dangerous for women and girls but can also be damaging to boys and men. Endarkened feminist thought stresses the critical nature of subordinated women's and men's knowledge as legitimate foundations to realise social justice (Dillard & Okpalaoka, 2011), and according to Dillard et al. (2011) is located in the intersection of race, gender and class. It arises and informs the historical and contemporary contexts of oppression and resistance for African ascendant women and, specific to this study, girls. The paradigm calls for more specific knowledge and lived experiences of African/Black ascendants and fits within intersectionality (pertaining to age, race, gender and class) as supporting feminist theory to highlight the experiences of adolescent girls marginalised by the aforementioned social categories (Dillard et al., 2011) within the South African context.

Seedat, Duncan and Lazarus (2001) write that the various feminist theories share four common themes as identified in the literature (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Bozalek & Sunde,

1994; Harding, 1987; Hammersley, 1992; Jayaratne, 1993; Mies, 1993; Neuman, 1997; Usher, 1996a). Firstly, gender is a crucial aspect of life and should be taken into consideration in any research conducted. Its social construction is taken as a central focus of social enquiry and the correction of the male-orientated perspective that dominates the development of social sciences. Secondly, the subjective experiences of women, and in my study of girls, are taken as indicator of the reality against which hypotheses are tested. Thirdly the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the research participants are rejected as the research relationship is seen as reciprocal and both the researcher and the participants' views are open to constructive criticism. The relationship between the researcher and the participants should be well established and trustworthy for participants to express their everyday realities freely. The researcher is included in the research process as his or her beliefs and behaviours also affect the research process. Fourthly, the goal of the research is not only the production of knowledge but also action towards the emancipation of woman/girls. By raising the awareness and understanding (knowledge) within the adolescent girls, development towards social justice and equity may be initiated. According to Thomas (1993, as cited in Bransford, 2006), emancipation refers to the process of separation from constraining modes of thinking or acting that limit perception of and action toward realising alternative possibilities. Gaganakis (2003), however, warns that although adolescent girls are aware of gender inequality they are apprehensive of the possibilities of changing structures and social practices.

Gender is a very influential and complex system of categorisation that influences the lives of people on a daily basis. Clarke and Braun (2009) write that there are various ways of theorising gender and many are even at times contradictory. In psychological research, as within the educational psychology field, there are two main interrelated levels of concern regarding gender: The first is the social, on which gender is a social categorisation system, explained by Clarke et al. (2009) as informing individuals about the importance of gender and its origin and providing information about ways to live as gendered people. Gender, or becoming male or female, from a social constructionist perspective is conceptualised as a social process that is learnt through culture as practiced in the family, school and through social interactions in general. Furthermore, the notions of gender are not fixed but may change over time and place (Pattman & Kehily, 2005). Gender can be described as socially constructed sets of assumptions about behaviour, attitudes and the roles of woman and men (Trull, 2005). The second level consists of the individual's personal experience and

expressions of gender, including sense of self as gendered being and enactment of life in a gendered way (Clarke et al., 2009).

Gender is a critical social issue that is associated with a variety of social inequalities, exclusions and the experiences of abuse. For Clarke et al. (2009) it is a significant indicator of how behaviour is judged and how much of peoples' time and work are valued. Critical social issues related to gender would include the role of women in heterosexual families still performing the majority of domestic and parenting work, despite a move towards equality. Another critical social issue would be violence (Clarke et al., 2009; Lutya, 2010; Mofolo, 2010). These gender dimensions of who is privileged and who is marginalised also intersect with other social categories associated with inequality and exclusion such as race, class and sexuality, which refer to intersectionality (Clarke et al., 2009). Gender development is influenced by the different social interactions that take place within the various socio-cultural settings that may influence how South African adolescent girls from child-headed households construct meaning of their gendered life-worlds. Feminist theory explains and illustrates how the complex interrelatedness of socio-economic, historical and cultural values influence family life, gender formation, gender-roles and subjective gendered experiences.

Supportive here is resiliency theory as it provides the underlying principles of the personal and community assets influential in the girls' ability to continue their daily living. Resiliency theory in relation to endarkened/Black feminist theory supports the principle of communal unity and the individual's growth and development as benefitting the community in return (Dillard et al., 2011). The indigenous relational worldview of motherhood, sisterhood and friendship (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010) also interlinks with the importance of interpersonal relationships as a protective factor within resiliency theory. Resiliency is generally seen as the "process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990, p.426; Masten & Tellegen, 2012). Masten et al. (2012, p.348) write that the latest view on resilience is that it is seen as the "capacity of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant threats to its stability, viability or development". Three key features of resilience theory refer to i) viewing resilience as a process influenced by culture, individual attributes and life changes; ii) the family viewed as the primary context in which development takes place; and iii) that the environment supports the development

of resilience by means of societal institutions, friendships and being within the extended family.

Resiliency theory was considered appropriate as the focus is on strengths exhibited by individuals and communities and it takes into account the reciprocal relationship between the person and the social and physical environment. Adolescent girls from child-headed households are influenced by social relationships as they interact with friends and family within a specific cultural and socio-economic context. Within these contexts they also negotiate their way through difficult circumstances, relying on their interpersonal and intrapersonal resilience. According to Jenson and Fraser (2011), common protective factors contributing positively to resiliency would be found on the environmental, interpersonal and individual levels. These could include opportunities for education, caring relationships with adults or extended family members or social support from non-family members within the community. Interpersonal and social factors, for instance caring relationships with siblings, belief in pro-social norms and values, as well as attachment to parents also attribute to protective factors for childhood and adolescents. It would be my assumption that although the parents of the participants may be absent or deceased it was the nature of the parent-child relationship before their absence that played a supportive role in their resilience. Supportive intra-personal attributes that would positively influence the promotion of resilience would include being comfortable with social and problem-solving skills, having a positive attitude, temperament and have adequate to high cognitive abilities and skills. Tying together feminist theory and resilience theory I believe that both have underlying emancipatory features as both ultimately explain the principles that underlie the value and resilience of adolescent girls from child-headed households.

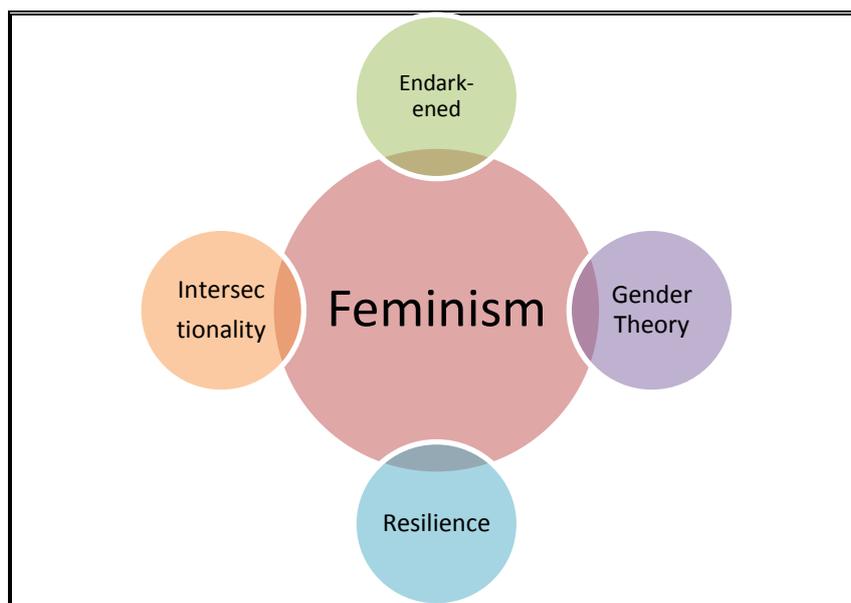


Figure 1.1: Diagram of the research study’s theoretical orientation

The following Section will provide an outline of the research design and methodology used to research the gendered experiences of the adolescent girls within their social and educational contexts.



1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Feminist qualitative research, according to Olesen (2000), is highly diversified, dynamic and thoroughly challenging to practitioners, followers and critics, as competing models of thought, divergent methodologies and analytical approaches participate. Olesen (2000) further states that feminist inquiries are dialectical as different views merge to produce new syntheses that in turn become grounds for further research praxis and policy (Nielsen, 1990b, p.29; Westkott, 1979, p.430, as cited in Olesen, 2000). Ontologically, most feminist approaches recognise the nexus of person and society and emphasise the concept of subjectivity in context (Teo, 2009). Epistemologically, Teo (2009) suggests a connectedness between the researcher and the participants which includes researching the authentic experiences of participants and thus supports qualitative research methods. The concepts of ontology and epistemology will be discussed in further detail in Section 2.2.

Using a feminist qualitative research paradigm I drew on an interpretive qualitative perspective to explore and understand from the position of the research participants how

they experienced and interacted with their social world and the meaning their realities had for them (interpretive perspective), as well as to identify how the broader social and political contextual factors affected the way in which they have made sense of their realities (critical perspective). I proposed the feminist paradigm as I believed that the lived experiences of the adolescent girls from child-headed households were characterised by complexity. Although critical qualitative research is more concerned with the influence of broader societal factors, the more personal and subjective lived experiences of the participants were of concern to me as an educational psychology researcher. I took into consideration the broader societal factors but from the participants' gendered experiences as a vantage point. The contextual factors, such as economic, cultural and social circumstances, as well as the intersection of race, class and gender, affected and formed the lived experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households who participated in this study.

The focus of the study was on the co-constructing, interpretation and application of local knowledge obtained in collaboration with African adolescent girls from child-headed households, forging a partnership between the researcher and the participants illuminating gender-related experiences in their everyday lives. A hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design (Figure 1.2, below) was used in this study as informed by interpretive hermeneutic philosophy and case study design principles.



Figure 1.2: Hermeneutic phenomenological case study design

In Figure 1.2 the image in the first frame, regarding phenomenology, illustrates the wide lived horizons of experiences of each person. The hermeneutic figure illustrates that people understand new things through the prism of their own knowledge and history, while the

third, an illustration of a group of women, symbolises the case study as a bounded system. I present a brief background on the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology as well as case studies, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. McManus Holroyd (2007) explains that within the interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological research tradition, the intent is not to develop a procedure for understanding but to clarify the conditions that can lead to understanding. The term 'hermeneutics' concerns itself with interpretation, and according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) it refers to an approach that stresses how prior understandings and prejudice shape the interpretive process during data analysis, and emphasis the understanding of meaning (Teo, 2009).

According to McManus Holroyd (2007), interpretive hermeneutic understanding developed from the realisation that all human experiences are both rich and complex and it draws particularly on the philosophical writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The common feature of all human science research is the desire to explore and become more familiar with the human life world, as it reflects a way of being and the structure of meaningful relationships that are created in it. Van Manen (1990) explains that research is thus prompted by encounters, life worlds and meaning and the primary concern of hermeneutics is the philosophy of understanding, clarifying the conditions whereby understanding takes place. Furthermore interpretive hermeneutic understanding is rooted in an historical encounter and concerns itself with personal experiences of being 'here in this world' (Van Manen, 1990). In addition, language and understanding are viewed as inseparable structural aspects of a human-being-in the world (Lavery, 2003). Language is central in shaping all situations and experiences. Grondin (2003, as cited in McManus Holroyd, 2007) explains that to understand the unique experiences of each individual participant involves not so much a mental or intellectual process but rather a way of being, a way of behaving in existence which is not taught but formed and cultivated through one's own unique experiences. The culmination of my own experiences as an educational psychologist working with learners, educators and parents in rural and township settings, as well as with dynamic and assertive female colleagues, cultivated my own experiences and interest with regard to the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households. Furthermore, experience through a stance of openness and being the researcher is intended not to know *more* but rather to know *differently*, to surrender what is currently known and be open to the potential of being transformed. McManus Holroyd (2007) uses parenting as an example of a person having an intellectual understanding of

parenting before becoming a parent, only to surrender prior conceptions or attachment of what he or she thought parenting would be through the life world of experiencing it.

I incorporated case study design as illuminating views of the lives of three purposefully selected participants by virtue of their gender, as well as their lived gendered experiences as adolescent girls from child-headed households. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004), a case study design is incorporated to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning into the lives of participants as part of a bounded system. It is further explained that the focus of the research would be rather on the process than the outcome, on context rather than specific variables and in the discovery rather than the confirmation of the phenomenon. A case study entails the intensive description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system (Henning et al., 2004) such as, for instance an individual, a programme, community or group. Such applied to this research study as the gendered experiences of three adolescent girl representatives from child-headed households were explored, interpreted and described in detail. Henning et al. (2004) explain that the aim is not simply to describe the case but to try and see patterns, relationships and the dynamics that provide merit and reason for the study. The data collection methods within the qualitative paradigm inherent to the 'case' included photos, in-depth interviews and written materials which were analysed descriptively and interpreted indicative of an interpretive, hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design (see Section 2.2.4 for in-depth discussion).

By means of hermeneutic phenomenological case study design I aimed to understand the essences of the gendered lived experiences of the participants as well as the meaning they made of their gendered experiences. In addition, I aimed to come to an understanding of their life worlds as influenced by contextual factors and intersecting social categories. Hermeneutic phenomenology and case study methodologies were employed to understand the life worlds of the research participants, to uncover the restraining socio-cultural aspects of thinking and acting of the participants (adolescent girls from child-headed households), to explore the meaning they made of their daily lives as girls and to provide an in-depth account of the manner in which deeply held beliefs and ideologies maintain the devaluing of adolescent girls within the South African context.

The above discussed hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design is indicative of what Seedat et al. (2001) regarded as feminist research in which various methods are employed to reach into various disciplines, making an eclectic approach

highly appropriate. Wadsworth (2001) explains that the researcher will develop methods and preferences that yield the best results for women and, in relation to this particular study, girls.

1.6 THE TWO PHASES OF THE RESEARCH

As one of a group of four doctoral research students from the University of Johannesburg I was also supported by the South African Nederland's Partnership on Alternative Development (SANPAD) in an initiative to conduct research together with adolescents from vulnerable backgrounds, such as child-headed households within the South African context (see Section 2.4 regarding Setting and Context). The research was conducted in two phases, as follows.

1.6.1 Phase One: How African adolescent girls construct meaning of their gendered reality within their social settings and school community

The first phase served to provide an insight into the meaning African adolescent girls made of their gendered lived experiences as it is socially constructed and culturally bound over time within the ecological settings they interact.

1.6.1.1 Selection of participants

The participants were purposively selected in collaboration with the non-governmental organisation (NGO) specifically involved with the research, situated within Orlando-West, Soweto. They provided support to children and families affected by HIV/AIDS as well as those experiencing other socio-economic deprivation and needs (more contextual detail is provided in Section 2.4). In terms of selecting participants for the study the NGO supported us in identifying participants who came from child-headed households and lived in vulnerable circumstances. The participants needed to be comfortable in expressing themselves in English and were selected from Grades 8 to 11 from one identified school, which according to the NGO could benefit from interest and support for their learners. This particular school initially appeared to have the most possible girl participants who could volunteer to become part of the research. However, after conducting two focus group interviews with a group of girls and a group of boys (see Section 2.5.2 for an explanation regarding the inclusion of a boys' focus group) as well as conducting eight

individual interviews, only two learners were identified as being from a child-headed context. The NGO provided me with more learners but only one from another school adhered to the criteria.

The criteria for selecting the three specifically selected participants were that they would be adolescent girls who were looking after themselves and/or their siblings or own babies. They would sporadically be without the live-in support of an adult caregiver, or be living without the financial and emotional care, support or interest of a live-in adult.

The focus group interviews were used to provide a backdrop to the contextual circumstances and societal views of the gendered lives of adolescent girls and those from child-headed households specifically. The timeframe for the purposeful selection of collaborative participants and data collection stretched over one year.

1.6.1.2 Data collection

As part of the initial planning phase, Nieuwenhuys (2005) suggests that the inquirer who is committed to collaboration in knowledge generation starts with defining problems and concepts with the participants in order to reflect the experiences of the people concerned. Various data collection methods were discussed with the participants so as to select those methods that complement the way of life of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households and how they construct meaning of their gendered lives.

Based on a hermeneutic phenomenological case study design the research employed focus group interviews, in-depth individual interviews and the completion of an activity workbook, which comprised a family drawing 'before and now', 'peaks and valleys of my life' on a timeline, 'my dreams and fears', 'my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats', incomplete sentences, 'my life at school', and a photo-voice activity (see Section 2.7.1.3). These activities were used to obtain rich descriptions of how a purposefully selected group of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households constructed and made meaning of their gendered lives. The focus group interviews were used to obtain an idea of the adolescent girls' general perception of gender and to clarify concepts. Due to the sensitive nature of gendered experiences, no in-depth personal accounts were elicited from the participants during the focus group interviews. Formal interviews were incorporated to include open-ended, semi-structured questions that would provide the participants with an opportunity to give accounts of their personal and subjective gendered experiences. All interviews were conducted until the point of data saturation was reached.

Other methods of data collection included on-site participatory observations at the school as well as at the identified NGO site in the community. This however took the form of informal chatting, walking and visiting instead of using formal research instruments as suggested by Nieuwenhuys (2005). During this time constant observational notes were taken.

The participants were given the opportunity to write or tell their own live histories of how they constructed meaning of being a girl within their different ecological settings. Furthermore the specifically selected participants were provided with instamatic cameras in order to take photographs of everyday life within their social contexts. These were then developed and discussed by using phenomenological interview strategies by which they provided verbal explanations of their realities. The three specifically selected participants were also asked to complete the research booklet in which they expressed their life world experiences, their gendered lives and what possible changes they hoped for. Permission was obtained from the participants to video- and audio-tape the various interviews and discussions without revealing their identities. No participant could or shall be identified from the photographs as faces and identifying features have been blocked out. All the texts were transcribed and examined for historical and cultural precedents, contexts and conditions surrounding processes of gendered power relations.

1.6.1.3 Data analysis

According to Lavery (2003), hermeneutic phenomenology takes an approach different from data analysis, involving one of co-construction of the data with the participants as they engage in a circle of understanding. The researcher and participants brought to life the gendered experiences of the adolescent girls, through the use of the hermeneutic circle and attention to language and writing. Hermeneutics, according to Koch (1995, p.835, as cited in Lavery, 2003, p.21):

... invites participants into an ongoing conversation, but does not provide a set methodology. Understanding occurs through the fusion of horizons, which is dialectic between the pre-understanding of the research process, the interpretive framework and the sources of information.

Gadamer (1960/1998, as cited in Lavery, 2003) understood hermeneutics as a process of co-creation between the researcher and participant, with the production of meaning

occurring through a circle of readings, reflective writing and interpretation. In this process the search is towards understanding the experience from particular philosophical perspectives, such as feminism as well as the horizons of participants and researcher. According to Hertz (1997, as cited in Laverly, 2003), hermeneutic research demands self-reflexivity, a continuing conversation about the experience and living in the moment, actively constructing interpretations of the experience and questioning how these came about. To me, the data analysis had already begun mentally during the data collection process, as also part of the continuing conversation between myself and the participants over the one year period of exploring and interpreting their gendered experiences. The analysis was thickened by the use of field-notes, the inquirer's reflective journal and memos. After transcribing all the verbal texts and including the written texts, the conversations with the participants were analysed by means of *Atlas-Ti*, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis and research software tool, in order to determine the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households and the driving knowledge that underlay their realities of meaning.

Content analysis as part of the data analysis process was used to uncover the 'meaning units' that reflect various aspects of the experiences of the South African adolescent girls from child-headed households, thereafter integrating the 'meaning units' in collaboration with the specifically selected participants into typical experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). By using the hermeneutic circle I reflectively moved between the 'meaning units' identified and the broader context of the research study as illustrated by Figure 1.3. According to Van Manen (1990), insight into the essences of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively appropriating, clarifying and making explicit the structures of meaning or themes of the lived experience. Meaning is also multilayer and multi-dimensional, and human science meaning can only be communicated textually by way of an organised narrative.

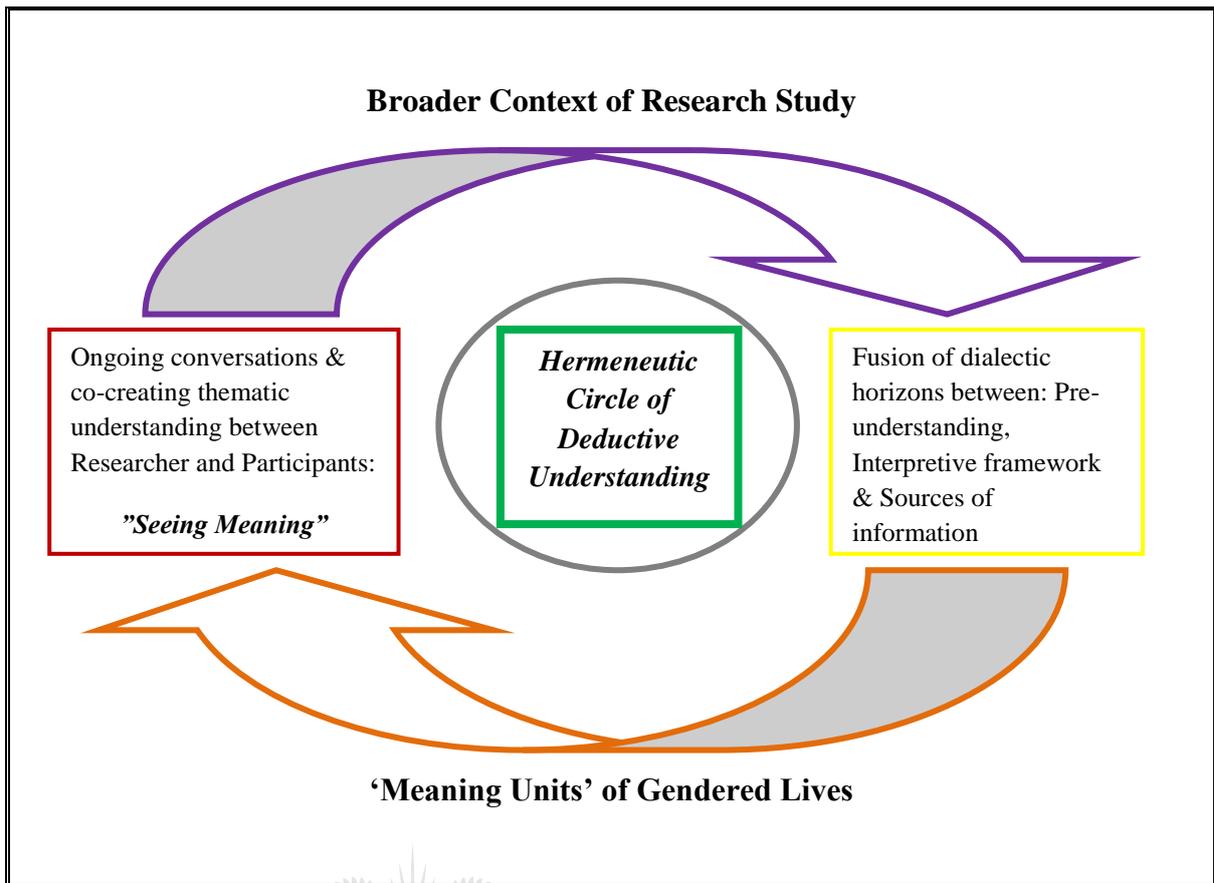


Figure 1.3: Hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis

Van Manen (1990) suggests that in order to make meaning of the structures of the text it is helpful to approach the phenomenon described in the text in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning or themes. Making meaning of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning refers to a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure, whilst grasping and formulating a thematic understanding which is not a rule-bound process but a free act of “seeing” meaning. Phenomenological themes are experiential structures that give control and order to research and writing.

Van Manen (1990) further explained that lived experiences and structures of meaning (themes) that describe and interpret the lived experiences of participants constitute the immense complexity of the life world. Multiple and different life worlds are experienced by different human existences and realities. However, Van Manen (1990) mentions that at the most general and grounding level of the life world, human existence may also be studied in its fundamental thematic structures which are termed ‘existential’ themes. The four fundamental ones are *lived space*, *lived body*, *lived time* and *lived human relations*,

which probably pervade the life worlds of all human beings, regardless of historical, cultural or social circumstances. Although I did take cognisance of these existential themes I preferred to focus my attention on the more *particular themes* of the phenomena (Van Manen, 1990) of my study regarding the specific gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households. Instead of applying the existential themes I preferred to approach the data, co-constructed in collaboration with the participants, deductively.

The explication of the data drew from phenomenological and hermeneutic principles and the methods are specific to my research study and context. Further discussion on how these steps were implemented is explained in Chapter 2, (see Section 2.9).

1.6.1.4 Trustworthiness

The most common strategies in qualitative research to ensure the trustworthiness of findings, according to Merriam and Simpson (1995), are member checks, triangulation (crystallisation) and an audit trail explicitly detailing all data collection and analysis. In order to strengthen the trustworthiness, the model suggested by Merriam (1998) was used in which the inquirer used multiple methods of data collection as agreed upon with the participants in order to arrive at the findings (triangulation). Member checks were conducted whereby the findings were discussed and clarified by and with the participants in order to ensure their voices are heard within the documented research. Long-term participatory observations were conducted and regular inputs given regarding peer examination requirements, as the inquirer was part of a research group who met at least twice a month to discuss and reflect on the research process.

The inquirer was committed to working within a participatory framework, involving the participants in the data collection and saying how they would have liked the findings to be interpreted and reported, and contributing to an intervention programme that addressed the identified gender experiences important to the participants. Full cognisance was taken of possible biases at the outset of the study and throughout, clarifying my assumptions, worldview and theoretical orientation. I aimed at being reflexive throughout the study, documenting it and sharing my thoughts and ideas regarding the research topic and process with the participants. Trustworthiness will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.10.

1.6.2 Phase Two: Intervention programme and support strategies

The second phase of the inquiry focused on the development of an intervention programme for supporting African adolescent girls from child-headed families with regard to gender issues within their educational and social contexts, ultimately providing support and alternative ideas in terms of continuing with the social change that had already taken place as identified by the participants.

Identified gender concerns and lived experiences raised in Phase One were addressed by means of raising awareness and confronting individual and community perspectives regarding the value of adolescent girls from child-headed households. It was thus important to support the participants through the principles of feminist research to address the challenging lived experiences and possible dominant power relations within their own thinking as well as within their social contexts.

Nelson et al. (2005) explain that problems identified very often go beyond one person's scope of action, although the repercussions are often felt deeply at a personal level. In providing feedback to the participants regarding the findings, a collaborative approach was taken to develop an intervention programme that could be utilised by the specific NGO staff and schools to support adolescent girls from child-headed households in terms of managing gender concerns as well as strengthening their personal resources. This is intended ultimately to help bring about social change and emancipation from internalised dominating patriarchal influences.

While conducting Phase One, it was important to identify the participants' assets in order to build on their resilience, strengthening the process of enhancing their wellbeing on personal, relational and collective levels. Nelson et al. (2005) warn, however, that people's needs are greatly determined by the context of their lives. Due to the nature of the study these needs were not predetermined and were identified from the research findings in Phase One.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the inquiry includes adolescent girls from child-headed households it was important to obtain, in collaboration with the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Johannesburg, written permission to include the participants in the study as

they often did not have live-in guardians or their parents had died. Due to the participants' involvement with the NGO the coordinator provided us with the guardian consent needed to conduct the research under her supervision. Thereafter, the written permission of various role-players was obtained, beginning with the Gauteng Department of Education, the site managers and involved community leaders. The participants' written assent was also attained. In accordance with the Professional Board of Psychology (Form 223) it was my responsibility to inform the participants of their right to withdraw from the inquiry at any time and for me to give relevant feedback to them regarding the research process. Separate consent letters were given to the participants to sign, as well as to provide consent regarding audio- and video-recordings, to be kept safe for two years after completion of the research. The transcribed data is to be kept securely for six years after completion of the study.

The participants were not asked to share their personal life experiences during focus group interviews due to their confidential and sensitive nature. During the participant selection phase and photo-voice discussions of their life worlds they were supported emotionally, as needed, by myself as a trained educational psychologist. When required, I also requested the support teacher at school and caregivers working for the NGO to follow up on the participants after my weekly visits with them. The National Health Care Act, South African Constitution, and the Children's Bill of Rights Bill were regularly referred to and served as a guide during the research process.

In carrying out research with children and adolescents it is important to confront the generational issues as the researcher may be seen as being in a more powerful position due to age and superior knowledge. Although this may be the case in some areas of life, such as research methodology, the adolescent girls from child-headed households were the experts on their own lives, as stated by Mayall (2000, as cited in Robinson & Kellett, 2005). As the research inquirer, I took cognisance of the following aspects regarding research with children and young people, as suggested by Jones (2005): (i) to ensure the tasks that were identified were appropriate and practical; (ii), to take into account the adolescents' contributions, views, age and abilities as well as relevant social and cultural factors; (iii) to ensure that the language, methods and processes of research were made accessible to those adolescent participants.

The inquirer provided the necessary support at a practical level regarding skills and knowledge, as well as reflecting on issues such as power, rights and perspectives. Due to

the sensitive nature of gender relations it was important to me to negotiate the research methods and activities with the participants so as to ensure that they were not subjected to harm, exploitation, coercion or adult manipulation. Within a collaborative approach these actions were discussed and agreed upon with the participants.

1.8 THE RESEARCHER AS PRIMARY INSTRUMENT IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Merriam (2002, p.5) states that the researcher as primary research instrument should become aware of biases or 'subjectivities' and monitor them to track how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data. In phenomenological research, self-reflections are necessary for a researcher to become aware of biases and assumptions in order to bracket them, or set them aside in order to interact without preconceived notions about the possible findings (Colazzi & Polkinghorne, 1978 & 1989, as cited in Lavery, 2003). The principles specific to hermeneutic phenomenology suggest that I should be aware of my own biases and identify them as they possibly influenced the research process and findings co-constructed in collaboration with the participants. Freedman and Combs (1996, as cited in Visser, 2007) suggest researchers engage in constant reflexivity and transparency in order to become aware of their own ideas and values as not coming from a neutral perspective. Writings and observations in my notebook helped me with continuous reflection.

As the primary instrument of data collection and data analysis the researcher also has the responsibility to make the necessary adjustments and should be responsive to changing contexts and situations in order to adapt the research process accordingly. It is thus important to mention some of the skills and personality characteristics that could assist the researcher as human instrument within the research process (Merriam, 1998). Within the research field I did experience that it was important to have a high tolerance of ambiguity, as the lack of structure with regard to the best way to proceed during the research is not always obvious. In general terms, designing a study may also be stressful to researchers who prefer structured planning and predictability. Due to the responsibilities and changing life circumstances of the participants my planning regarding certain meetings or activities to be completed by a certain timeframe was not realistic and the participants determined

the pace of the research process. This then gave rise to being sensitive and able to use one's intuition during the research process.

Sensitivity is an integral part of the skills a researcher should have as he or she needs to be sensitive to the context, physical settings, the people, alternative agendas and the participants' non-verbal behaviour. I do not consider myself a good expressive communicator, but I do know that I have a natural tendency towards empathy for people. Through being empathetic and warm I aimed at establishing a good foundation of rapport with the participants, trying to establish a safe and comfortable research atmosphere. I used listening as a very important skill as it was also important to me to listen for strengths and forms of resilience that I could bring to the fore during our co-construction of the data. Listening is also important, as the researcher has to look and listen to many participants and to various points being raised, for instance during the focus group interview.

Merriam (1998) explains that class, race and gender contribute to the sense of power in one's life. The power in the research process fluctuates from one situation to another, as the researcher may hold the academic and practical power in terms of the knowledge of the research process but the participants may also have their own control and power. They are seen as being the experts of their own life in terms of their experiences and how much of it and when they are willing to share with the researcher, according to their own responsibilities and time structures. The researcher's and participants' interaction can be a complex issue as both parties bring biases, predispositions, attitudes and physical characteristics that influence the interaction and the data the respondents share (Lavery, 2003). I was thus aware of my class, race and gender and how these may have added to the complexities of the research process. The participants and I were from different ethnic, cultural, language, socio-economic backgrounds, and, in the case of the boys' focus group, from different gender groups.

In conducting the research I was apprehensive about the possibility of the girls labelling me as a 'White female' coming from an average economic environment and so being able to 'save' them from their circumstances, making their lives instantly better as they become part of the research. This was not a possibility, which may have caused the participants to be disillusioned and disappointed by 'another White person', taking into consideration the political legacy of the country. Realistically, it may not have been important physically or practically to the participants that my psychological working philosophy was based on

viewing clients as being resilient, with inner strengths and attributes that make it possible for them to relatively survive their circumstances. During the research, however, I personally did not experience any hesitation on their part to interact with me at any stage of the inquiry due to my race. I experienced the rapport established with the participants as positive and comfortable. For example, after conducting and thanking the boys' focus group for their time and expressing my sincere gratitude, one of the participants said "No, thank you for this opportunity to be able to spend some time and talk with a White person". Within the township community I perceive that children have little exposure to discussions or 'chats' with White people, except perhaps on visiting one of the larger malls in and around Johannesburg.

In relation to my gender, I believe that it contributed positively to the research process, partly due to my non-threatening stature, dressing in a way more relaxed and appropriately showing empathy and care within the context of the research.

The following research assumptions as discussed by Visser (2007), as taken from authors such as Gergen (1999, 2001), Freedman and Coumbs (1996), further informed the inquiry. Firstly, language does not represent objective truths about life but rather is the means through which people construct realities. Within the South African context, different cultural groups speak different languages which leads to different socio-cultural 'truths' being constructed. It is important to note that the participants and I were from different cultural and language groups, ranging from Zulu-, Xhosa-, Tswana- and Sesotho-speaking backgrounds, myself being from an Afrikaans- and Irish-English speaking home. During this study I needed to take cognisance of the implications as well as ethical considerations when carrying out cross-cultural work. Working over a year, as well as on a one-to-one basis with the participants, gave me the opportunity, continuously throughout our discussion, to clarify how they would like me to understand the co-constructed data, taking language constraints into consideration.

Secondly, reality is constructed through social interactions and the meanings groups attribute to world developments. This implies that the adolescent females from child-headed households, through their interactions with various groups and individuals within their social contexts, have incorporated certain meanings of how to make sense of the world. At the onset of this enquiry I assumed that South African adolescent girls from child-headed households would have life experiences they would like to explain and

clarify so as to provide more specific detail of their living circumstances and conditions. I further assumed that all participants were aware of the different gender roles that are assumed within the child-headed household, as modelled by their elder community members and influenced by social interactions. It was further a connecting assumption that the adolescent girls from child-headed household have their own unique experiences related to their gender that they would like to share with the inquirer and within the research findings. Furthermore, I assumed that their gendered experiences would be affected by gender inequalities within cultural and social circumstances.

Thirdly, people give form to their realities through narratives. As White and Epston (1990, as cited in Visser, 2007) explain, life experiences become culturally meaningful when they are connected coherently over time in the form of narratives or stories. Some stories gain more importance over time while others from less dominant groups are discarded. I was under the impression that adolescent girls from child-headed households were undervalued within their communities. The responsibilities and tasks they had were not seen as being important, for instance cleaning the house, looking after their younger siblings and cooking in the home. I thought that they did not realise their own value within community contexts, and this was a contributory reason for the importance of letting the 'less heard' voices of female adolescent learners from child-headed households be heard through this inquiry.

Fourthly, by means of re-constructing otherwise unheard stories of strength and resilience, the future of these learners can be framed within their own personal abilities and interconnectedness with community resources.

1.9 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In order to continue with the research description it is important to clarify the meaning of certain concepts within the appropriate context.

Adolescence: When exploring adolescence it is important to take into consideration not only age but also socio-historical influences. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood that involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes (Santrock, 2010), with transitional changes that include puberty, increase in abstract thinking then a

sense of becoming more independent in terms of planning future tertiary studies and considering possible careers, as well as embarking on intimate relationships.

African: The terms ‘African’ or ‘Black’ will be used interchangeably as they refer specifically to the historically indigenous people of the African continent. As stated in the Constitution of South Africa, different language, cultural and race groups are entitled to be treated with dignity and enjoy equal opportunities in a non-racial and non-sexist society (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No 108, 1996). However, this study specifically focuses on ‘African’ adolescent girls within the feminist paradigm, and aims to widen the research and academic inclusivity of South African indigenous knowledge.

Child-Headed Household: According to a Department of Social Development (2010) document regarding the National Guidelines for Statutory Services to Child-Headed Households a household is child-headed under several conditions. Firstly, the parent, guardian or caregiver of the household is terminally ill, has died or has abandoned the children in the household. Secondly, no adult family member is available to provide care for children in the household. Thirdly, if a child over the age of 16 has assumed the role of caregiver in respect of the children in the household. Lastly, it is in the best interest of the children in the household. Section 137 of the Children’s Act No. 38 (2005) states that a child-headed household must function under the general supervision of an adult, as perhaps designated by a children’s court, an organ of state or an NGO. The NGO coordinator supportive of this research study was the supervising adult responsible for the participants and one who provided the necessary consent for those participants who volunteered to be part of the research.

Culture: The participants were from different cultural groups but shared common cultural attributes, elaborated upon in Chapter 3. According to Loustaunau and Sobo (1997, p.10, as cited in Louw, 2004):

A culture is all the shared, learned knowledge that people in a society hold. Culture guides how people live, what they generally believe and value, how they communicate, and what are the habits, customs and tastes. Culture prescribes rituals, art forms, entertainment and customs of daily living.

Feminism: This is an umbrella term for a large and diverse body of work that broadly explores women's subordination in male-dominated societies. All feminist work has in common the goal of challenging gender power inequality (Hook, 2008).

Gender: I appreciate Clarke et al.'s (2009) explanation of the term 'gender', not just from a social constructionist point of view but also taking into consideration the individual experiences of gender. At the social level, gender relates to a social categorisation system, dividing humanity into 'male' and 'female'. At the individual level, it is the experience and expression of oneself as 'female' or 'male', or neither of these (Clarke et al., 2009).

Ideology: In each community and society there are the unwritten and underlying ways of life that prescribe people's acts of living and decisions. The participants' lives are formed and informed by specific ideologies' therefore it is important to take cognisance of what ideology means. It is the ways in which meaning serves to create and sustain relations of power and domination (Hook, 2008).

Patriarchy: I understand patriarchy to be still deeply rooted within South African society as a whole and also within the diverse communities developing and shaping individual people through daily acts of living. Patriarchy, according to Visser (2007), refers to the societal system in which men hold the dominant power and women and children are seen as submissive to men. Kiguwa (2008) defines it as the personal, physical and institutional power that men exert over women. It takes many forms and is universal, however, it is important to take into consideration the cultural, societal and political diversity between patriarchies, and that women primarily experience oppression because they are women.

Vulnerability: Drimie and Casale (2009) write that there are many definitions for vulnerability (for example, Kelly & Adger, 2000; O'Brien et al., 2004; Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon & Davis, 2004), but that the most commonly accepted definition is provided by Chambers (1989, p.33), as

... exposure to contingencies and stress and means for coping with them. Vulnerability thus has two sides; an external side of risks, shocks and stress to which an individual or household is subjected and an internal side which is the means for coping without damaging loss.

Bohle (2001, as cited in Drimie et al., 2009) explains that the 'external' vulnerability refers to structural dimensions, while 'internal' dimension focuses on coping and action to

overcome or to mitigate the negative effects of economic and ecological change. Some children and adolescents have remarkable ability to cope with the adversities with which reality confronts them, while implementing strategies to manage hardship. Eloff, Ebersohn and Viljoen (2007) argue that even the most vulnerable children may have or are able to develop self-esteem, a sense of purpose, interpersonal skills and other resources which can contribute positively to the endurance of complicated circumstances.

Having an understanding of the different concepts applicable to this research study allows for the demarcation of the research to follow.

1.10 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The Chapters of the study have been arranged as follows.

Chapter One has presented the reader with the background and contextualisation of the study, stating its purpose and aims. An overview of feminist theory as theoretical framework was outlined, after which the research design, data collection methods and analysis were provided. The assumptions of the researcher prior to the hermeneutic phenomenological study are also included.

Chapter Two elaborates on the research design and methodology with regard to the hermeneutic phenomenological study, explaining the methods of data collection chosen as well as described the analysis and interpretation of the data. The study will be assessed in terms of the ethical considerations of qualitative research with regard to accountability for the research process.

Chapter Three presents an in-depth discussion of feminism and feminist theory as well as the literature consulted which grounds the study academically. In doing so the gendered experiences of the participants as spokespersons of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households will be clarified.

Chapter Four comprises a discussion of the themes and the subsequent findings provided by the research participants and the inquirer.

Chapter Five presents an intervention programme based on the findings co-constructed by the research participants to address some of the concerns raised by the adolescent girl participants from child-headed households.

Chapter Six provides a perspective on the limitations of the research and possible suggestions for future research within a similar context. The current investigation contribution to knowledge, policy and practice are included.

1.11 CONCLUSION

Little research specific to South African adolescent girls is available, even less regarding girls managing child-headed households. Chapter One has provided an overview of the research study in terms of contextualising the need for this specific research to contribute to the South African indigenous knowledge base, specific to adolescent girls from marginalised groups. Having established the background of the study and a foundation for the research I now present the methodology employed in addressing how the adolescent girls made meaning of their gendered experiences within their specific and unique child-headed households.



CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Van Manen (1990) states that a person does not pursue research for the sake of it but that one approaches it with a prior interest. During my masters' degree study participants living in child-headed households from both genders were included. It was however the girl participants who left a gentle, quiet, almost mysterious impression in the back of my mind, resulting in the following questions: How do adolescent girls 'live' in child-headed households? What are their realities and how do they make sense of their 'life worlds' as girls? My impression of Black adolescent girls is that they are valuable and this is the reason why I wanted to conduct the research. By conducting research one questions the world's secrets and intimacies, which in turn bring it into being for and in society (Van Manen, 1990). Adolescent girls from child-headed households have in their uniqueness and diversity a narrative to share in terms of wisdom and resilience, survival and overcoming adversities. In context of the country's political history, little effort was made to know much about Black lives, preferring to make generalisations and assumptions from which policies were derived. In particular, little research has been conducted into the lives of adolescent girls from a South African perspective, even less on adolescent girls from child-headed households. Moletsane, Mitchell, Smith and Chisholm (2008) explicitly state that studies of girls in developing countries such as South Africa specifically are scarce, and rarely take into account the unique situations of girls in these contexts. More considered studies of girlhood are necessary to understand how these adverse living circumstances impact on their lives which can also offer unique perspectives to the international literature on girlhood. I concur with Van Manen (1990) that research should be a caring act which serves a purpose for those one cares about. It is my aim through this research study to raise awareness of the value of adolescent girls from child-headed households and the support that they need. However, whilst sentiments may be a powerful motivation, research needs to be carried out with a solid theoretical framework, adhere to a valid design structure and employ an appropriate methodology.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain the concept of *research methodology* as the process, data collecting methods as well as procedures used in a specific inquiry. It specifically

refers to the group of methods used to collect the data and present findings according to the research purpose. It is my intention to argue the value of the methods I have chosen as well as why I have chosen them in lending credibility to the inquiry. They define *research design* as the end product and all that it includes in order to reach the findings, including the methodological issues.

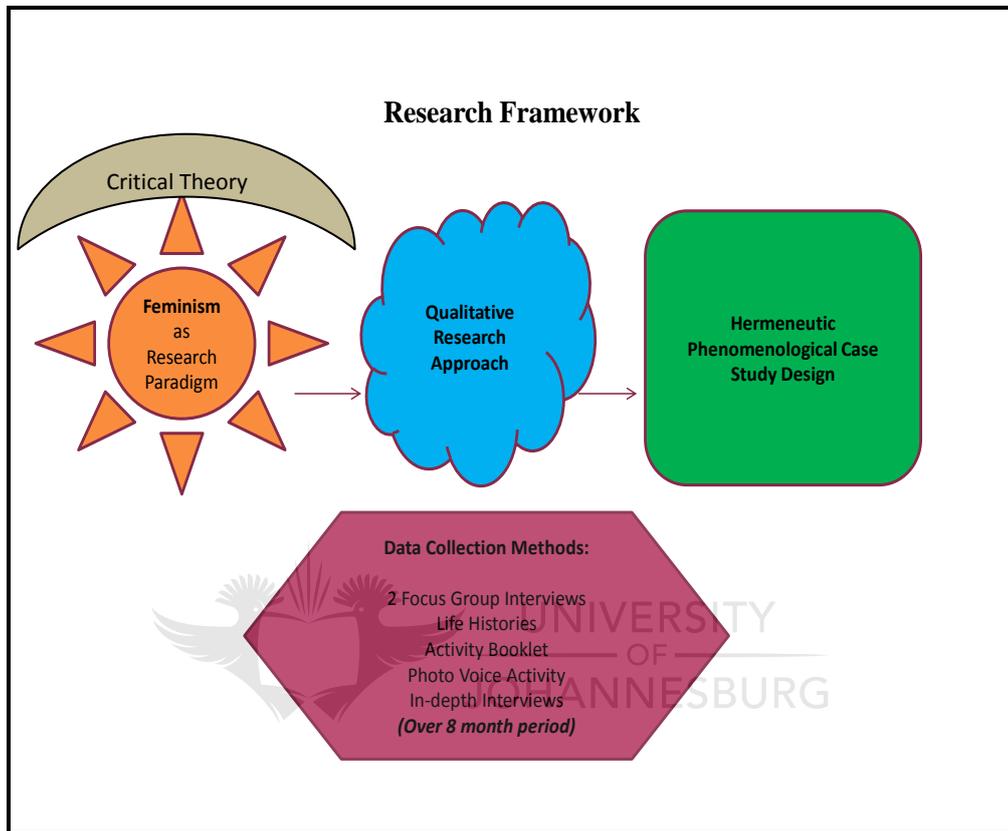


Figure 2.1: Illustration of the research design

In this chapter, as illustrated by Figure 2.1, I provide a thorough discussion regarding the research design and methodology, which could enhance our understanding of the gendered lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households in the South African context. Firstly, feminism as supporting paradigm with regard to the research design was discussed. Although critical theory was not the main paradigm a section was dedicated to the acknowledgment of critical theory in relation to feminism as it may sensitise the reader to the political, economic and cultural emancipation of undervalued groups, such as the one at the centre of this study. Subsequently, interpretive qualitative research as research approached was discussed. A qualitative research approach would provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and gendered meaning-making of adolescent girls

from child-headed households' lives. In addition, a discussion follows regarding the hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design as incorporated to inform the study's research methodology. Lastly, a thorough discussion regarding the research methodology I incorporated is provided.

2.2 FEMINISM AS SUPPORTING PARADIGM TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Denzin et al. (2011) equate a paradigm to an 'umbrella' that contains the researcher's philosophies regarding ontological, epistemological and methodological principles. These "highly abstract research principles" (Bateson, 1972, p.320, as cited in Denzin et al., 2011) combine beliefs about questions such as: What is the nature of reality? (ontology), What is the relationship between the researcher and the known? (epistemology) and How do we know the world or gain knowledge about it? (methodology). Ontology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with what the nature of social reality is, what exists, what it looks like and how these units interact (Blaikie, 2007). Epistemological assumptions are concerned with the nature of human knowledge. Blaikie (2007) explains epistemology as the theory of knowledge, providing a philosophical foundation for what kind of knowledge is possible and deciding how it can be judged as being legitimate (Crotty, 1998). The question then arises, 'How can social reality be known? This stems from epistemology as the philosophy of how we come to know the world is the research methodology used during the research process. Research methodology as explained by Henning et al. (2004, p.15) refers to the more practical methods used during research "to come to know".

The philosophical principles regarding the social world provide a figurative lens through which qualitative researchers view the world and how it should be understood, which implies that all research is interpretive (Denzin et al., 2011). Thus a paradigm, worldview or interpretive framework refers to a "basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990a, p.17, as cited in Denzin et al., 2011). According to Denzin et al. (2011), the four major interpretive paradigms within qualitative research are: positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical and feminist post-structural. The worldview applicable to the study, relates to feminism, of which there are several versions, notably Afrocentric, cultural, ethnic and endarkened, as well as Western-Asian.

According to Blay (2008), Afrocentricity implies that Black African experiences are worthy of intellectual pursuit and that the cultural, historical and contemporary experiences of African descended people are unique. Denzin et al. (2011) provide an explanation of the various forms, including cultural studies, which involve an examination of how the history people live are reproduced by structures handed down from generations before them, and is concerned with lived experiences, cultural texts and the articulated relationship between them and daily life. Endarkened feminism embodies cultural and spiritual understandings, which links to Africa and the African diaspora. It intersects with historical and contemporary contexts of oppression of African ascendant women. The Asian paradigms extend qualitative research into non-Western cultures which focuses on the social research in Asia, continually being shaped by imported Western logical positivism. Olesen (2011) identifies the three major strands of feminist research as mainstream empirical, standpoint and cultural studies, and post-structural, postmodern studies. Afrocentric and other models of race are placed within cultural studies and postmodern categories. The binding focus of all the various branches of feminist research is however the strong commitment to changing the status of women in societies (Sarantakos, 2012). Figure 2.2, (on p.34) provides an illustration of the research philosophies within a feminist framework.

Denzin et al. (2011) explain that feminism privileges materialist-realist ontology, as the 'real world' makes a material difference in terms of race, class and gender. Feminist research, according to Sarantakos (2012), assumes that the world and social reality is socially constructed and that the powerful (usually men) dominate social life and ideology at the expense of the weak (women). Women have different perceptions of life due to their social status within society carrying equal value. In an African context, reality and the world is viewed in relation to the wellbeing of the community which supports the individual. The African notion of *Ubuntu* promotes the notion that "I am because we are", contrasting the Westernised concept of focusing on individualism (Dillard et al., 2011), thus it was important for me working within a South African context and from a research perspective to keep in mind the importance of the community as one with values and practices that should be respected as that contributed to the reality and context of the findings.

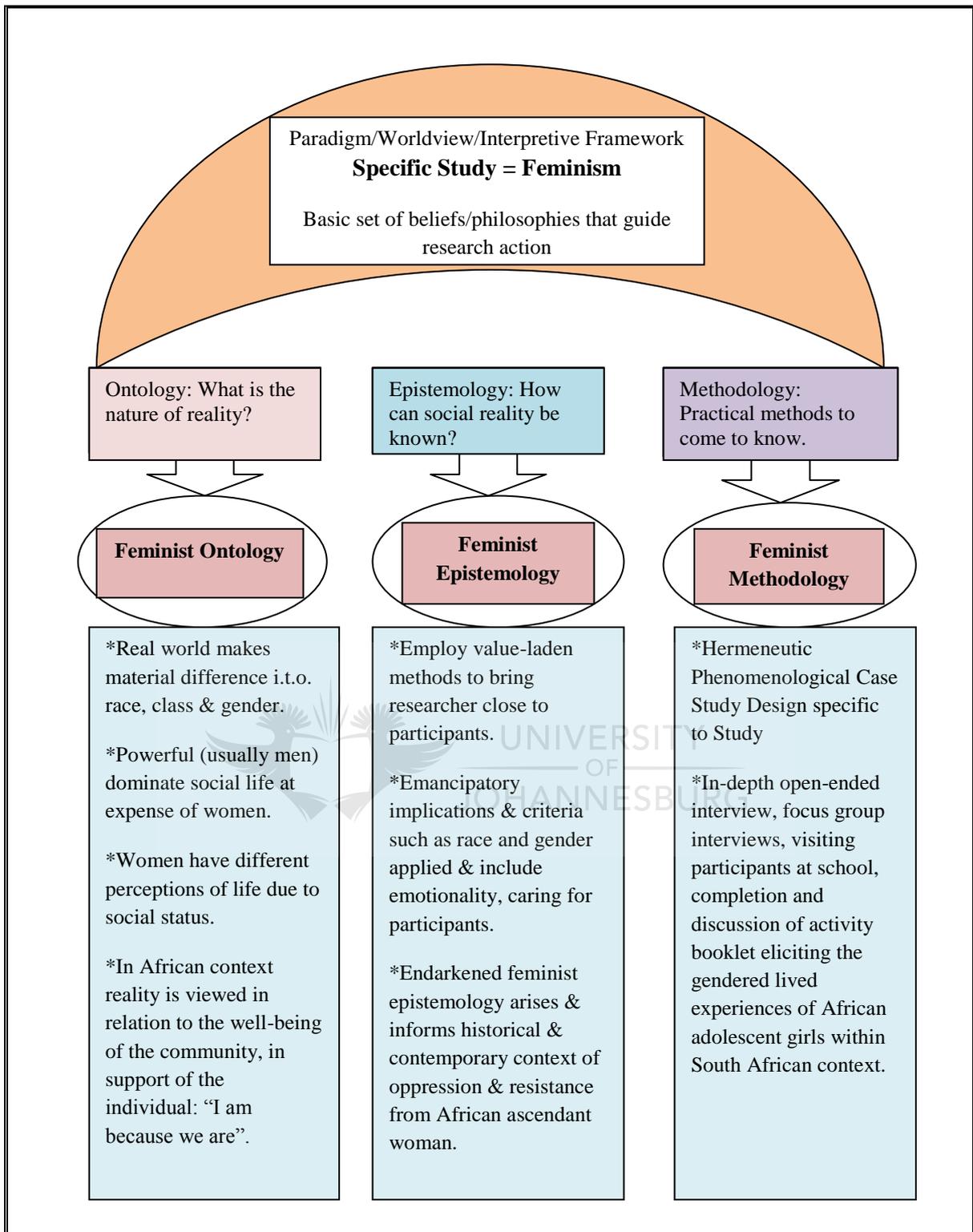


Figure 2.2: Research Philosophies within a Feminist Framework

Epistemologically, Sarantakos (2012) explains that feminist research employs value-laden methods and procedures that bring the researcher close to the participants. In conducting research I acknowledge that subjective principles of research are employed and taking sides and personal commitment to the research is encouraged, as complete objectivity

during qualitative research is not a realistic aim. Denzin et al. (2011) further explain that subjective epistemologies and naturalistic methodologies, such as ethnographies and phenomenological studies, are used to gather information regarding the social world. Theoretical arguments and empirical materials are evaluated in terms of emancipatory implications and criteria such as gender and racial communities are applied that include emotionality and feelings, caring for participants, personal accountability and dialogue. Due to the various strands of feminism, tensions may exist between humanistic cultural studies, which stress the lived experiences of participants, and a more structural cultural study that more on the structural and material determinants and effects of race, class and gender in terms of lived experiences. The aforementioned is also more specific to South African feminist thought and endarkened feminist epistemology as explained by Dillard et al. (2011), which can be understood as being different in its cultural standpoint from mainstream (White) feminism as it is located in the intersection of culturally constructed notions of race, gender, class and national identities. Endarkened feminist epistemology arises from and informs the historical and contemporary context of oppression of and resistance by African ascendant women. It further moves away from the metaphor of conducting research to fix a problem to one that centres on a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched, between the knowing and the production of knowledge.

Research should be approached as a responsibility, answerable and obliged to the participants and the communities engaged in the inquiry (Dillard et al., 2011). Endarkened feminist epistemology acknowledges the wisdom and spirituality of Black women's ways of knowing. To Dillard et al. (2011, p. 156) this requires the researcher to be conscious of the 'spirituality' and inter-connectedness of one's work and recognising that consciousness is a transformative force in research. The research is also approached with 'sacredness', serving as a way that describes how the research needs to be honoured and embraced as it is carried out. According to Dillard et al. (2011), women of African ascent share experiences with a form of oppression characterised and related by class, race or gender experienced as women. It is often a version of or a belief in spirit that has allowed them to stand in the face of hostility and degradation.

Research methods, according to Denzin et al. (2011), are used strategically to understand and provide resistance to local structures of domination. Open-ended interviews, in-depth interviews and participant observations can be used as data collection methods.

Wadsworth (2001) explains that feminist researchers will develop methods and preferences for techniques depending on their definition of feminism, ultimately providing the best results for women. Feminist researchers who prefer quantitative data collection methods would use standard surveys, and collect numerical information to, for instance, determine the extent of women's position in relation to men. They may also undertake secondary analysis of documentary material and policy papers to develop more updated policies and determine the impact thereof on the position of women. Feminist researchers, as was also my choice, who prefer qualitative interpretive research approaches may want to hear the stories from women and girls directly, using in-depth interviews, recording verbal information and writing up the data for publishing.

In terms of the study it is thus important to realise that although the participants and I were socially co-constructing knowledge and clarifying the meaning of their realities, internalised processes of re-thinking and re-understanding also took place. The research process and discussions may have contributed to emancipated internalised realisations of their realities and their own realisation of their resilient forces within themselves as well as within their communities.

The foundations of feminist research are related to critical theory as both feminism and critical theory are critical and emancipatory in essence.

2.2.1 Critical theory's shared values in relation to feminist theory

Bohman (2005) explains that critical theory in philosophy, as well as in the history of social sciences, refers to the generations of German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition. They considered a theory critical when it sought human emancipation: "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982, p.244, as cited in Bohman, 2005). Many theories have developed from this broad understanding to explain and change the oppressive circumstances of people as identified by many social movements. Viljoen and Eskill-Blokland (2007) provide a summary of the socio-historical context regarding the development of critical theory. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was of the opinion that the Western philosophies did not offer the working classes that emerged from the Industrial Revolution any hope, arguing that: "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it"

(Marx, 1845/1983, p.158, as cited in Viljoen et al., 2007). Marx conceptualised society as divided into the exploiters (sometimes referred to as the middle class or bourgeoisie) and the exploited (workers alienated from their own means of production). The working class, he argued, could gain more control in the form of revolution with a utopia or classless society as the ideal outcome. A well-known example was the Russian revolution in 1918, after which a group of philosophers formed the Frankfurt School, including Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas. They critiqued the social structures and processes, at the time also trying to understand why the post-utopia in Russia did not materialise, and as neo-Marxists then proposed a new appraisal of Marxist theory, now known as critical theory. The goal was to establish a just society in which people would have political, economic and cultural control of their lives (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011), thus associated with the feminist view that woman have strived to acquire equal value in their own lives and as a group, regarding political, cultural and economic liberty. In a broader sense, a philosophical approach with similar practical aims, such as seeking human emancipation in circumstances of oppression, could be a critical theory, for instance feminism, critical psychology, critical race theory and some forms of post-colonial criticism.

Before discussing feminism that draws on the underlying emancipator principles of critical theory I pay attention to critical psychology (Hook, 2008), which as an educational psychologist would motivate and inform my professional approach to clients as well as to the participants of this research study. Critical psychology also draws from the work of neo-Marxism to formulate its critique of mainstream psychology in general. Critical psychological principles are also practiced within educational psychology in terms of research as well as being more aware of and sensitive to the power relationships that may form either in the research process, therapeutic intervention or even on personal levels regarding the clients' lives, as well as that of the psychologist. A broad overview of critical psychology is given subsequently.

2.2.2 Critical psychology

Critical psychology represents multiple critical perspectives regarding the uses of psychology and should be seen as an approach or orientation towards psychological practice and knowledge as well as to the relations of power in general. Hook (2008)

explains that critical psychology questions the relationship between power and psychology, as the latter has been and remains an influential political instrument of power. The politics spoken about in critical psychology does not refer to government politics, but to the relations of power in terms of relationships of control, authority and subordination, political by being continuously involved in everyday life's duplication and expansion of relationships of power and control. In summary, critical psychology is involved in critiquing oppressive uses of psychology as well as revealing, questioning and changing the imbalances of power in relationships, whether personal, institutional, community or professional (Hook, 2008). Mainstream psychology is grounded in Western culture and ideology which originated from Europe and North America, and is more likely to present the values of the Western world, not taking other ways of life as valid or serious. Western culture prefers the values of individualism and knowledge produced by means of 'scientific' methods, also then contributing to the idea that the psychologist is the 'expert' (Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009; Viljoen et al., 2007). Taking into consideration the abovementioned, I as the researcher wished to be aware of the possible power imbalances within the research process, so it was important to explain as well as interact with the participants as adolescent girls in a way where they themselves also understood that their knowledge, experiences and time were of invaluable importance to the research process. It was also very important to me to respect that they held the power regarding how much information they would feel comfortable in contributing to the research knowledge base.

In terms of valuing individualism, the politics of subjectivity involves leaving out the processes by which individuals become the subjects of an ideology. The individual is isolated from the social sphere; the intra-subjective from the ideological and the psychological from the political. Hook (2008) writes that isolating the individual from the social precludes the possibility that it and the political power may lead to or even constitute the subject. In traditional psychological discourse, the opposite takes preference when the self-contained individual is taken as the primary and the socio-political as well as cultural and economic power is secondary to the individual. The position of the individual over the social context as well as the division between the two has historically stood firm in the development of psychology. I argue that the individual is very much influenced by cultural, historical and economic factors that cannot be ignored in terms of research and constructing knowledge specific to the research concern and the participants as co-constructors informing wider society of their reality.

In the broadest sense, critical psychology is thus concerned with the ‘taken for granted’ assumptions concerning reality, human nature and knowledge as prescribed and reflected by psychology (Hook, 2008). It is important, as psychological knowledge is produced by a certain group, in certain ways and for certain interests, thus, as Hook (2008) asks, who is producing psychological knowledge and for whom? During the research process the participants and I were co-constructing knowledge regarding the gendered experiences of adolescent girls, in terms of providing authentic and real live accounts to inform a suitable intervention programme and relevant policy developments regarding children, then specifically adolescent girls from child-headed households.

In the past the knowledge generated mainly in Europe and Northern America has been generalised to the rest of the world and assumed to be universal. Hook (2008) writes about the imperialism of Western psychology, which within the African context and in terms of developing indigenous psychology may be less relevant, and the African cultural context, concepts, beliefs and worldviews need to be more critically incorporated. Mainstream psychology ignored the political contexts of culture, economic and social power and how poverty, culture and economic marginalisation influenced the lived experiences of people who were previously marginalised within developing countries. The study regarding the gendered experiences of adolescent girls within the South African context would be influenced by the broader social powers of poverty, culture and economic marginalisation. This would then also include the reason and interest of my study, as well as how the girls’ experiences are influenced by these broader social powers.

The feminist paradigm gives rise to the process of interpretation and interaction between the researcher and participant, shaping these experiences into more or less informed knowledge within the qualitative research approach.

2.2.3 Using a feminist qualitative research approach

In the current so-called ‘information age’, in which research occurs in fast changing global and local contexts, Cox, Geisen and Green (2008), argue that poverty and social exclusion of individuals, groups and communities of people are rife around the world. This influences the outcome for qualitative researchers as there are a continuous range of lived-experiences (Van Manen, 1990; Cox et al., 2008) that need to be understood and to be

made visible in supporting and contributing to improved social change. The reason I chose a feminist qualitative research (Olesen, 2011) approach is to come to a more thorough understanding of the lived-experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households. According to Cannella and Manuelito (2008), feminist research epistemologies have played a very important part in the conceptualisation of qualitative research, and more so in critical qualitative research regarding the purpose and methods used. As part of social justice and equity for women, scholars and activists have also focused on the problematised construction of gender. Feminism as a theoretical orientation emphasises the societal inequality constructed and based on gender. Theories and languages developed by people concerned with gender and oppression have influenced qualitative research to include multi-vocal, fluid and hybrid understandings of co-constructing knowledge. According to Blaikie (2007) and Alvesson & Skoldberg (2005), science in the past has been based on a masculine way of interpreting the world (androcentric) and omitted, distorted or made to regard the experiences of women as less important. Recognising the androcentric features of science led feminist researchers to search for an appropriate epistemology in both the natural and social sciences. According to Wadsworth (2001), the central reason for feminist research is to understand the harm woman as a group sustained through being placed by societal practices in a subordinate position because they are female.

Henning et al. (2004) write that the distinction between the qualitative paradigm and the quantitative paradigm is in the quest for an in-depth understanding. The focus of a quantitative study will be on the control of all the components in the actions and representations of the participants as well as focusing on how the variables are related. Chesebro and Borisoff (2007) illustrate that the quantitative paradigm is strongly influenced by the objectivist or positivist approach, in which a systematic set of methods are used that can ultimately lead to the discovery of truth about the reality. The researcher stands apart from the research as an observer, recorder and analyst of the data. Rich data is worked into categories that are privileged over experiences and reliability and validity can be achieved, allowing for the study to be replicated. The qualitative paradigm in turn provides a more comprehensive account of participants' experiences as they have a more unrestricted way of giving their views and demonstrating their actions. Henning et al. (2004) explain that when we refer to qualitative research the qualities, the characteristics or the properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation.

Following the qualitative approach as explained by Chesebro et al. (2007) allowed me to interact with the participants contributing to the emergence of concepts and categories. I could function as an observer as well as participant in collecting and co-constructing the data provided by the participants. I appreciate that the data could include the feelings and interpretations of what the participants revealed both explicitly as well as tactically. The nature of qualitative data usually remains at a more intuitive and impressionistic level.

According to Chesebro et al. (2007, p.9), all forms of qualitative research share five common characteristics:

- a. **Natural Setting:** The study and data collection were conducted in a natural setting, time and set of rituals determined and at times controlled by the research participants. The environment was authentic to its original purpose (for instance a school) and not constructed for the purpose of the research and data collection. By using the qualitative research approach it was thus important for me to be able to engage and interact with the research participants within their natural settings in which they went to school as well as meeting at the pleasant and inviting surroundings of the NGO's offices close to the Hector Peterson Memorial in Orlando West, Soweto. I also had an opportunity to travel through Orlando West with one of the auxiliary workers to visit one of the focus participants at home. This gave me a good sense of the community and the environment within which the participants conducted their daily lives.
- b. **Researcher as participant:** The researcher was perceived by the participant as a co-participant in a significant way. Although the investigator was known as the researcher the non-verbal and verbal actions were not perceived as overly distant or controlled. Over the year of meeting and visiting within their natural settings the relationship between me and the participants was open and comfortable, allowing them to discuss aspects about their gendered lives freely. Together we would co-construct meanings in our discussions and reflect on what strengths were identified from within their being able to survive on a daily basis.
- c. **Participant (subject-based) communication:** The participants were allowed to identify and determine topics of communication, provide transitions from one topic to another and provide any information they saw fit within the context. The

researcher's objectives and research questions did not generate or guide communication topics or transitions. In collaboration with the participants we compiled a booklet with activities of their choice which they could complete. Through the use of focus group participation as well as individual interviews and discussion the participants could also decide what information they felt comfortable in sharing as applicable to the research concerned.

- d. Participant (subject) intentionality: The researcher sought to capture and preserve the communication and use of symbols by the participants as they understood and intended them. When compiling the research report the voices and meanings of the research participants were provided before adding the supporting literature and the interpretations of the findings. The voices of the participants were captured, keeping the reported research findings as authentic as possible.
- e. Pragmatic: The specific results obtained had immediate utility and/or produced direct and instant insight into ongoing social processes and outcomes, the research analysis addressing an existing social problem. It may or may not contribute to theory development. Even while we were busy discussing their lives and gendered lived experiences, as a trained educational psychologist it was practical to elicit through the art of questioning the participants' realisation of their determination, internal strengths and abilities to identify community resources, whilst already addressing different means of understanding and realisations of their realities.

In relation to researching adolescent girls in their life-worlds, Cole (2010) mentioned that several changes in the past two decades had helped to shape the notion of research *with*, rather than *on* children. By means of collaborative activities I hoped to include the participants more in the research process than of only being passive reporters of their own lives and gendered experiences. Taking a feminist perspective, Sprague and Zimmerman (2004) write that when researchers and participants begin the research process as equals, the research process can be organised in such a way that the skills of the participants are developed and their dignity affirmed. Researchers who make use of collaborative activities are trying to change the power relations and ensure that co-ownership of the research is achieved.

Within the South African context, research conducted in previously disadvantaged communities has frequently involved significant differences in power and social status, which could have influenced the 'knowledge production' negatively (Wallerstein, 1999; Viswanathan et al., 2004, as cited in Van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009). According to French and Swain (2004), participatory methodologies have risen from qualitative research approaches that aim to reflect, explore and disseminate the views, concerns, feelings and experiences of the research participants from their own perspectives. Participatory research activities invite people to co-create knowledge about themselves (French et al., 2004). Keeping this in mind it would be important that knowledge be co-created within the South African context *by* and *with* the South African people in terms of adding to the global move towards indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. According to Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson and Sookraj (in press, as cited in Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p.x), indigenous methodology "can be defined as research by and for indigenous peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions and knowledges of those people." Due to the movement towards co-creation of indigenous knowledges, critical methodologies could add to the liberation and emancipation of persons living in post-colonial situations of injustice such as, among others, Black South African girls (Denzin et al., 2008, p.x). According to Smith (2005, p.87, as cited in Denzin et al., 2008, p.3) indigenous scholars are leading the way in developing "methodologies and approaches to research that privileged indigenous knowledges, voices, and experiences." Appropriate methodologies are also necessary to contribute to girlhood research. Moletsane et al. (2008) are of the opinion that methodologies that draw on the social sciences and humanities such as anthropology and philosophy have the potential to provide bottom-up accounts of lived histories, realities, beliefs and practices.

Merriam (2002) and Henning et al. (2004) also strongly view the researcher as the main instrument of research, making meaning from the interactions with the research project which will then be presented in the findings. To avoid losing the 'voices' of the participants the researcher presents the findings as 'thick descriptions', supported by ample evidence and complimented by a strong theoretical base as well as a coherent convincing argument based on the researcher's understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

2.2.4 A hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design

The philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of hermeneutic phenomenology explain the manner in which the research was conducted in collaboration with the participants. According to Blaikie (2007), 'hermeneutics' literally involves making the obscure plain, which generally is seen as 'interpretation'. For Laverly (2003), hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived, focussing on illuminating details and trivial aspects within experience that are taken for granted in order to create meaning and achieving a sense of understanding. The existential phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre (1956) and the hermeneutic phenomenology of Martin Heidegger (1962), although differing somewhat from existential phenomenology, share the central element of investigating the essence of human experience (Denscombe, 2010).

Various philosophers have contributed to the development of hermeneutic phenomenology, with classical hermeneutics developing in the seventeenth century in Germany. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) provided the foundations of modern hermeneutics as he saw it as a science for understanding any utterance of language. He saw understanding as having two dimensions: grammatical interpretations, which refers to the linguistic aspect of understanding and sets the boundaries within which thought operates; and psychological interpretations, which reconstruct the creative act that produced the text or social activity (Blaikie, 2007). Psychological interpretation would thus involve me as researcher trying to place myself in the mind of the research participants in an attempt to know what was known or experienced by them as we engaged in discussions using language to give meaning and understanding to their experiences.

Attempting to place myself in the position of the participants is the reverse of the process which produces a text or conversation, as it starts with the finished expression or activity, for instance working through the activity booklet and discussing it, and goes back to the mental activity of its production as participants reflected mentally on their lived experiences to be able to complete the activities within the booklet. It then also involves the laborious process of attempting to construct the life context in which the activity took place. This process then refers to the 'hermeneutic circle' in attempting to take hold of the unknown whole in order to understand the known parts:

By extension, an individual concept derives its meaning from a context or horizon within which it stands; yet the horizon is made up of the very elements to which it

gives meaning. By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular (Palmer, 1969, p.87, as cited in Blaikie, 2007, p.118).

According to Blaikie (2007), Dilthey (1833-1911) then started the transition by which hermeneutics was seen as a core discipline that provided a foundation for understanding all great expressions of human life, whether cultural or physical. He argued that 'human sciences' should be based on the method of understanding (*verstehen*), grasping the subjective consciousness of the participants, while the study of natural sciences should seek causal explanations (*erklaren*). Dilthey argued that phenomena are situated within the larger whole of which it derives its meaning and the whole is given meaning by its parts, which also alludes to the hermeneutic circle of understanding. Dilthey insisted that the foundations of understanding human beings lie in life, the human world, that is, social, historical reality itself.

The most fundamental form of human experience was seen by Dilthey as lived experiences, first-hand, primordial, and unreflective, consisting of a series of acts which include willing, feeling, thinking, imaginative and creative human beings who interact with the physical environment, with other human beings, and in the process create their world. The 'objectification of life' or residues of one's thoughts in cultural achievements and physical objects can be understood through the inner process of *verstehen*, or hermeneutic understanding (Blaikie, 2007, p.119). The lived experiences of the adolescent girls from child-headed households could thus be understood by providing first-hand accounts of their feelings, thoughts and meaning given to their interactions within their physical environments. By sharing their lives they provide an understanding of the most fundamental forms of their day-to-day lived experiences.

Parallel to the establishment of hermeneutics as an intellectual tradition, Husserl (1859-1938) established phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) explains Husserl's (1965, pp.5-6) transcendental phenomenology as emphasising subjectivity and the discovery of the essences (invariant meanings) of experience. The reason I included the following transcendental phenomenological concepts was to further my own understanding of how I could 'be with' and 'interact with' the research participants in a reciprocal relationship as suggested by a feminist research paradigm. Husserl developed the concept *epoche* to refer to the removal of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt.

From the Greek word implying to refrain from judgement, abstain or stay away from the everyday way of looking and perceiving things, I aimed to achieve *epoche* in the way of being non-judgemental and ‘innocent’ in my interaction with the participants as well as in working with the data, refraining from jumping to any of my own conclusions even before specifically listening to how and what the participants were sharing with me. I aimed at being ‘innocently’ interested in their everyday lives, which brings me to the following concept of ‘life-world’.

According to Moustakas (1994), Husserl introduced the concept ‘life-world’ in his writings as well, referring to the way a person lives, creates and relates in the world, the concrete fullness from which abstractions in terms of sciences are derived. The life-world is the locus of all ‘givenness’ and a perceptual experience, and phenomenology is the study of lived experiences or the life world (Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Laverty, 2003). It refers to what one experiences pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorising or conceptualisation and includes the knowledge we take for granted or would view as common sense (Husserl, 1970, as cited in Laverty 2003). As researcher it was my specific intention and interest in their everyday lives, their lived experiences, with the difficult and mundane tasks and meanings, that I needed to explore before embarking on a collaborative interpretation of their lives.

The concept ‘intentionality’ is central to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, and refers to consciousness, the internal experience of being conscious of something, its act and object being intentionally related (Moustakas, 1994). Another key concept would be ‘intuition’, which refers to the inborn ability to “produce solid and true judgement concerning everything that presents itself” (Descartes, 1977, p.22, as cited in Moustakas, 1994). Seen as the start of deriving knowledge of human experience, it is free of everyday sense impressions and having a natural attitude. Important when describing what presents itself to the conscious mind, I intended to use mine to perceive the lived experiences of the participants, as far as possible without pre-judgement, from their vantage point and perspectives. Using my intuition also came into play as I needed first to describe the lived experiences of the participants before interpreting, while moving to and from within the hermeneutic circle, the whole of the research data to the detail and back again.

In my doctoral research study I felt the need not just to describe phenomena but also to include interpreting phenomena, so I focused on the principles of hermeneutic

phenomenology which fit with my research perspectives as well as with the research process I followed during my studies.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), influenced by the work of Dilthey and Husserl, focused more on hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger and Husserl, according to Laverty (2003), differed in the way the exploration of the lived experiences took place, and Husserl focussed on understanding beings or phenomena, being interested in the acts of attending, perceiving, recalling and thinking about the world, and viewing people primarily as knowers. Central to Heidegger's work, however, was that understanding is a mode of 'being' rather than a mode of knowledge. To Heidegger it was more about how we exist in the world (*Dasein*) and not about how we establish knowledge. In taking this position, Heidegger moved away from Dilthey and Husserl's positions regarding understanding, seeing it as an ontological problem rather than an epistemological one. Understanding is embedded in the fabric of social relationships whilst interpretation is simply making it explicit in language. Understanding is also seen by Heidegger as being temporal, as it is not possible for people to step outside of history or their social world. According to Heidegger, prejudgements shaped by culture and historical context are the only tools one has for understanding.

According to Heidegger (1927/1962) (Laverty, 2003), consciousness is not separate from the world but is a formation of historically lived experiences. He understood understanding as the way we are and not the way we know the world. Husserl and Heidegger viewed individuals as capable of grasping consciousness directly, the essences of whose structures being seen in intentionality and bracketing (Polkinghorne, 1983). Heidegger, however, was of the opinion that any distinction between the individual and experience did not exist, interpreting them as co-constituting and depending on each other. Heidegger saw bracketing as impossible, as one cannot stand outside the pre-understanding and history of one's experience (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Heidegger emphasised the 'history' of understanding as one's background or situatedness in the world. It would include a person's history or background, including the culture into which a person is born and the passing down of information in an attempt to present a way of understanding the world. Heidegger viewed people and the world as related in culture, social and historical context (Munhall, 1989, as cited in Laverty, 2003). Within hermeneutic phenomenology, interpretation is seen as critical toward the process of understanding. According to Heidegger (1927/1962) each encounter involves an interpretation influenced by a person's

background and historicity, whilst for Polkinghorne (1983) the interpretive process involves concentrating on historical meanings of experiences and the development of cumulative effects on individual and social levels. This is also how I see my position as researcher as I could describe the essences of the participants' lived experiences but should go further in terms of interpreting the meanings their experiences have to them. I argue that a person cannot bracket his or her history completely from the research process, but acknowledging it and previous experience with the phenomena provides a framework from which unique and relevant meaning can be attributed to the lived experience of the participants, which in collaboration with their own history and experience in turn also supports a deeper understanding of the phenomena.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was further developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer and focused on the study of lived experiences and on interpreting the 'texts' of life (Van Manen, 1990). The difference is that the researcher actively takes the role to move beyond description to interpretation in explaining the participants' meanings. Hermeneutics, as an interpretive process, tries to bring understanding of phenomena through language (Annells, 1996). Kvale (1996, as cited in Lavery, 2003) goes further to explain that hermeneutics is the study of human cultural activity as text (written, verbal, visual and music) with the aim of interpreting to find intended or expressed meanings. Gadamer (1960/1998) stated in agreement with Heidegger's view that language and understanding is inseparable structural aspects of human 'being-in-the-world'; that "language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs and understanding occurs in interpreting" (1960/1998, p.389). Gadamer viewed interpretation as a fusion of horizons, an interaction between the expectation of the interpreter and the meaning of the 'text' (Polkinghorne, 1983). The interpretive process in hermeneutics is achieved through the hermeneutic circle approach, in which the researcher moves from the parts of the experience to the whole of the experience, back and forth to increase the depth of engagement with and understanding of the text (Lavery, 2003).

Through language, talk, discussion, and the participants sharing photographs of their lives which were discussed and clarified, the participants and I moved from the whole of the research topic (the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households) to the parts of the study (daily life experiences and routines) and in turn back to the whole to illuminate our understanding of their lived experiences. Language is the tool of coming to deeper understanding, which was really an important process as the

participants and I were from different language groups. This implied that we really needed to clarify and recheck our mutual understanding of their descriptions and meanings given to their gendered experiences within child-headed households.

I prefer a hermeneutic phenomenological research design and thus agree with Lester (1999, p.1, as cited in Butler-Kisber, 2010) in saying that phenomenological study is a powerful way of “understanding subjective experiences, gaining insights into people’s motivations and actions and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom”. Hermeneutic phenomenology was used as I hoped to be able to explore the participants’ experiences with further abstraction and interpretation based on my theoretical and personal knowledge (historicality). As explained by Crotty (1998), hermeneutics adds the interpretive element to clarify meanings and assumptions in the participants’ texts that participants themselves may have difficulty in articulating.

According to Van Manen (1997, as cited in Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007), communication and language are entwined and hermeneutics provides an approach in comprehending such experiences captured through language and in context. Hermeneutic phenomenological research design gave me a way of being with the research participants, attempting to understand their lived gendered experiences through the relationship established between me and the participants. I as researcher also took cognisance of their life worlds in terms of their related African cultural background and social and historical contexts which influenced their day-to-day living. Keeping the historical, cultural and social background in mind also aided me in understanding the more detailed accounts of their daily living and thus moving within the hermeneutic circle of understanding the detail within the context of the whole, back to the detail again.

Case study design is a complementary and collaborative partner to this hermeneutic phenomenological research study as the data sets included two focus group interviews as well as selecting three specific adolescent girl participants living in child-headed households as they provided in-depth gendered experiences. According to Stake (2005), if case study research is more humane or transcendent it is because the researchers are so and not because of the methods. The case could be studied analytically or historically, by repeated measures, hermeneutically, organically or culturally, but with focus on the case. Creswell (2012) explains a case study to be an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, such as an individual, process, activity or event, based on extensive data collection.

‘Bounded’ is clarified as being a case separated out of the research in terms of time, place or physical boundaries. Cases that qualitative researchers often study and that would be applicable to this research study include:

- A single individual, several individuals separately, or a group, a programme, event or activities. In my study I collaborated with three specifically selected adolescent girls who were not part of a group but separate individuals making meaning of their lives living as members of a child-headed household.
- A case may be selected due to being unusual and has merit in and of itself. When a case is of interest in itself it is called an *intrinsic case*. Alternatively, it is mentioned that a qualitative study may focus on a specific issue, and thus is called an *instrumental case*, as it illuminates particular issues. *Collective cases* refer to multiple cases which are described and compared to provide insight into an issue. The case study was also instrumental as I focused on a specific issue, namely the gendered experiences of the adolescent girls within their child-headed households. It could also be seen as collective as I provided an in-depth account (descriptions and comparisons where relevant) of the participants’ lived and gendered experiences.
- Researchers aim to develop an in-depth understanding of the case by collecting multiple forms of data, such as pictures, videotapes, scrapbooks and e-mails for instance. Only a few cases are studied to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. During the study I made use of photo-voice as an activity, a booklet with various activities to facilitate the discussions and in-depth interviews as well as the focus groups to obtain valuable contextual information.
- The case is also situated within the larger context of, for instance, geographical, political, social or economic settings. The gendered experiences of the adolescent girl participants specific to this study are very much situated within cultural, gender, racial and economic context, as these social classifications all intersect and influence their daily survival and how they make meaning of their lives.

The above-mentioned information gives a clear indication of the merit of this hermeneutic phenomenological study being complimented by a case study design. I would like to proceed in discussing the collaborative relationship of feminist qualitative research within a hermeneutic phenomenological case study design.

2.2.5 Feminist research and a hermeneutic phenomenological case study design

Feminist research and knowledge is dedicated to bringing about change and improvement in the lives of woman and girls. Phenomenological and feminist research starts with the essential ‘experiential’ (phenomenological) step, moving towards ‘how can we explain these experiences?’ and then towards ‘how can we move or influence things towards more desirable and improved experiences?’ Within the feminist, hermeneutic phenomenological (‘*Verstehen*’ or ‘understanding’) approach (Wadsworth, 2001), I attempted to understand how the girls saw and comprehend their life world, in their own way and using their own words. This essentially involved a communicative and collaborative relationship between myself as the researcher and the girls as co-constructors, as it also increasingly involved the exchange of perceptions, communicating their own positions and collectively constructing their own understanding of their own lives. As mentioned by Jansen and Davis (1998) and Smith and Watson (1998) as cited in Davison (2004), research on sensitive topics that prioritise the subjective experiences of devalued individuals from marginalised groups is well suited to a feminist interpretive inquiry. My feminist hermeneutic phenomenological research focused on listening to the stories of girls, *from* girls and *about* girls to try and understand their lives on their own terms.

Feminist researchers may count on many methods and preferences in terms of yielding the best results for woman and girls. I concentrated on directly hearing their stories through in-depth interviews, recording information and writing it up to be published. During feminist research it is important to use techniques that are natural to women and girls in terms of data collection, such as conversations, group discussions, story-telling and participant-observation and photographs. Wadsworth (2001) writes that the use of multiplicity of techniques reflects the multidimensional nature of women’s experiences.

I also argue that a hermeneutic phenomenological case study design interrelates well with endarkened feminism (Dillard et al., 2011) within the South African context. Both hermeneutic phenomenological research, as well as endarkened feminism, value understanding as an ontological notion as being influenced by ‘how we exist in the world’ and that understanding is related to the reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched. The research should be conducted in a very respectful and ‘sacred’ way and a person’s historical background, culture and social contexts are influential in the research process (Dillard et al., 2011, p.149).

Another very important element of feminist research is being aware of the power difference between the researcher and the participants which “constitutes an uneasy relationship” (Wadsworth, 2001, p.5). I was very conscious of this matter and adjusted my data collection methods to lessen the impact of power imbalances by opting more for collaborative methods. By making use of focus group discussions, incorporating a photo-voice activity as well as making use of an activity booklet the participants could complete and come to our get-together sessions with some ideas of what they would like to discuss, and reveal the depth of the information they preferred to share with me.

2.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The purpose of the study was to analyse how South-African adolescent girls from child-headed households made meaning of their gendered experiences within their educational and social contexts. The findings as co-constructed by the research participants were compared with the literature and interpreted. Guidelines for the possible enhancement of care and support strategies by means of an intervention programme were developed to provide relevant support to them with regard to gender concerns within their educational and social contexts. This intervention programme can thus be utilised by the NGO, as well as by teachers within the schooling system to provide support and guidance.

In the subsequent sections a detailed account will be given regarding the research process as it unfolded through the two years of gaining entry and collecting data. First, however, it is important to set the stage within which the research project took place.

2.4 SETTING AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

I was to be part of a team of four doctoral research students being supported by the University of Johannesburg and the South African Nederland’s Partnership on Alternative Development (SANPAD). Our focus was on conducting research together with adolescents from vulnerable backgrounds, such as child-headed households. The participatory philosophy of the project was initially developed by one of our co-researchers who developed a research relationship with the NGO in the previous year. Due to the nature of the research, as well as knowing that at some time we as a group would not be working within the community for more than approximately four years, it was advisable to go into a

partnership with an organisation that already had community-based support structures in place for the children. Another benefit would be that the University would form a continuous supporting relationship with the organisation. The, director of the NGO who acted as many of the participants' guardian, was then also able to provide us with the necessary consent in terms of conducting research together with the adolescents who wanted to become part of the research project.

This local AIDS Ministry community service was situated in Orlando West, Soweto, and the organisation was close to the Hector Peterson Memorial, behind the Mandela Sisulu Health Care Clinic. The NGO shared premises with the offices of the Department of Social Development, and its director and her team had built up the NGO to include a venue in which people could exhibit their creations and artwork. They employed a social worker, with a playroom for pre-primary and primary learners filled with storybooks and games, as well as a few administrative offices. Through the NGO we were provided with the names of schools and the children that they supported, and were able to assist us with entering the schools as research sites. Once a week, on a Wednesday afternoon, I would use the playroom to meet one of my specifically selected participants to explore her life experiences with her.

Photo 2.1: NGO playroom with educational games and resources



With the activities and people, the playroom was one of the more private venues to use in terms of personal discussions during the research. Before coming to the NGO in the afternoons at three o'clock I would go to the school where most of the other participants were at twelve o'clock. I was allowed to meet with them at twelve o'clock during break time so as not to interrupt their academic time. I would then be able to meet another participant directly after school for an hour before going to the NGO.

The secondary school was also situated within the Orlando West region, having about 400 learners of whom a hundred were supported by a feeding scheme run by a relief organisation from the United States of America (USA). A private service provider also ran a tuck-shop on the premises of the school in which learners can buy some food during breaks. The school had some dilapidated netball courts, a computer centre with a heavy safe door, which had been burgled, and a separately situated principal's office.

Photo 2.2: School entrance



Photo 2.3: Computer centre



The feeding scheme during break times was also run from one of the windows in the staffroom by a volunteer. The staffroom was also used by teachers to meet with parents from time to time, but due to the lack of facilities was not very private. Every week I was also met by an elderly man who worked at the school as the grounds person. At the school they also had a teacher who was concerned for and cared for the learners and taught Life Orientation and English. She supported me every week by arranging the various participants and a venue in which I conducted the focus group interviews and the individual interviews. Using the one classroom during break times and after school was not however possible in the long term, so I was offered to use the computer centre. Unfortunately we could not use it as it was also used as the copying room and we were interrupted regularly. The specifically selected participants and I then decided that my car, parked underneath one of the large shaded trees, would be the most private venue in which they could share their life/lived experiences with me.

Gaining entry and being able to work at these two venues with the participants was an extensive process.

2.5 FIELDWORK PROCESS

In 2007 a few students were invited by a team of academics and supervisors from the University to become part of the SANPAD project. After taking the opportunity the University arranged for us to visit various sites with which the University already had formed some support and collaborative relationships. We spent much of 2008 attending the workshop on conducting research, provided by the University as well as going through the process of getting the research proposals approved by the University's Ethical Committee and the Higher Degrees Committee.

2.5.1 Gaining entry (2009)

At the beginning of a new year our research group set out to arrange and meet with officials at the two district offices responsible for the schools in which we wished to conduct the research. This was also an attempt from our side to liaise with other members from different departments to broaden the support networks available to the schools and the learners. Each school within the South African context is also supposed to have a School Based Support Team (SBST) in order to assist the learners, staff, parents and community with some care and support structures within the schooling context. The meetings that were held with officials from the two District Offices responsible for the schools provided us with some perspective on the possible functioning of the three schools in Orlando (Soweto).

On 25 February 2009, with the help of the NGO, we met all the learners from the schools who were involved and supported by them at a nearby school to explain the research project and to introduce ourselves as well as the involvement of the University. During March 2009 we conducted a workshop over three Wednesday afternoons regarding basic counselling skills (Photo 2.4 and Photo 2.5) with representatives from the various schools' SBSTs, as well as with some community and religious organisations invited by the NGO's director. All the educators provided the team with permission to take photographs to be used in our research reports and presentations, and we have permission to show their faces (see Appendix F1).

Photo 2.4: Counselling skills workshop



Photo2.5: Educators and myself at workshop



The counselling skills workshop enabled us as a research group to acquaint ourselves with some of the community members and teachers from the schools in which we would be conducting research. This also provided us with an opportunity to build up a working relationship with the teachers, and to have a staff member we could support in a consultative manner regarding building support networks for the learners at school who may need some emotional care. During this time I met with the principal of the school in which I conducted most of the data collection as well as with the coordinator of the SBST to explain the research and to request the written consent of the principal and the School Governing Body (SGB) to work at their school. We had already received permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE).

2.5.2 The participants

As qualitative research aims to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants it is important to select those from whom the most can be learned (Merriam, 2002). According to Patton (1990, as cited in Merriam, 2002), it is important to select information-rich participants as they are the people from whom a large amount of specific knowledge and meaning regarding the phenomenon can be learnt. The term 'purposeful sampling' is used to describe the particular method of involving specifically selected participants, for the purpose of this research adolescent girls living within a child-headed context to help co-create specific knowledge of their gendered lives. The criteria used to identify the specifically selected participants were; adolescent girls who looked after themselves and/or their siblings or own babies, sporadically without live-in support of an adult caregiver, or living without the financial and emotional care, support

or interest of a live-in adult. For Henning et al. (2004), these ‘desirable participants’, representing a theoretical population, are seen as spokespersons for the topic of this particular research and are however not representative of a group of people as the findings may not necessarily be generalised.

In the middle of March 2009 I met with the 14 learners with whom I would be working at the purposively selected high school, including female and male adolescents as I did not wish to exclude the boys who were included by the NGO co-ordinator in the general meeting held on 25 February. The purpose of the meeting was once again, in a smaller group setting, to explain the research and to find out if they would like to be involved. The group of 13 participants respectively formed the girls’ and boys’ focus groups regarding their informed experience and observations on the lived gendered experiences of adolescent girls in vulnerable circumstances.

The following seven girls from the purposively selected school were part of the initial focus group discussion (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Girls’ focus group participants

<i>Pseudonym</i>	Grade	Age	Background
Londy	12	18	Living with grandmother and grandfather and three brothers since birth. Her mother dead. Grandparents old and ill. Gets support from extended family members. Has a hearing problem and she wears hearing aids. Reads lips.
Beyonce	9	15	Grandmother as guardian. Living with grandfather (75) and grandmother (63). Sisters in 40s, 30s & 29, and two male friends in 20s. Parents separated. Both parents dead. Social workers helped her get a birth certificate.
Rhiana	10	16	Both parents still alive. Mother not working. Brother in 20s and sisters are 10, 12 and 14 years old. Parents separated. Biological father dead. Mother ill. Stepfather’s friend raped her.
Natasha	12	17	Lives with mother, sister and aunt. Father dead. Eight in household. Mother ill. NGO, director knew her father and supported the family with needs. She continues being part of NGO.
Chantelle	9	16	Does not live with guardians, shares responsibilities with brother when he is available, feels he abandons her at times. Parents separated. Both parents dead.
Michelle	9	15	Ten people in household. Brothers and sisters, eldest brother is 28 years old and the eldest sister is 24 years old. Does not know father. Mother is ill. No one works so she became part of the NGO.
Mbali	8	14	Living with father, stepmother and two older brothers in their 20s, sister and cousin. Mother dead. Mentions that after mother died the family took everything and left since that day.

I thought it would be acceptable and applicable to include the boy’s focus group in the research study, as one of the ethical dilemmas I faced during participant selection was that

boys were also invited to the original research introduction meeting by the NGO co-ordinator. My research focused on the experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households, and in the meeting I decided that the adolescents afforded me their time and energy, and that working in vulnerable communities to show my respect was to also include the boys in the research process. Thus, the boys were witness to the lives of adolescent girls in their families and communities.

Wadsworth (2001) points out that a man can however come to realise that women are oppressed on grounds of gender through their own experiences as well as observations, and that they collectively have benefitted from the oppression of women and can take a position against it, as will be seen in the discussion of the focus group findings. The boys' observations in this research study provided additional information in formulating the backdrop of what socio-cultural contexts girls are faced with in communities. From an additional vantage point the boys' observations corroborated some of the lived experiences of the girl participants. From an endarkened feminist point of view, males and females are the halves that form a whole and in unity the oppression of girls should be addressed as such (Dillard et al., 2011). The following five boys were included in the focus group, concerning their understanding of the lives of girls and to explore their understanding of what they saw in their everyday observations within their community (Table: 2.2). The boys were outspoken and had good insight into what girls from vulnerable circumstances went through from day to day.

Table 2.2: Boys focus group participants

<i>Pseudonym</i>	Grade	Age	Background
Themba	10	16	Themba and his family members are also supported by the NGO but not part of the original meeting where they could fill in the biographical questionnaires. He did however come at a later stage and requested the permission and assent forms as he wished to be part of the focus group discussion, which he brought back signed to the focus group meeting.
KG	12	19	Living with grandmother and nine brothers and sisters. One parent died after parents separated. NGO supports grandmother, helps with school fees and food.
Immanuel	11	17	Lives with foster parent. Shares responsibility with his brother. Seven in household, two sisters, cousin and two nieces. Both parents dead. Feels unwanted and became part of NGO.
Jason	11	15	Living with grandmother. Eleven people in household and uncles between ages twenty-two and thirty as well. Both parents dead. Grandmother applied at NGO for help.
Sipho	8	14	Lives with grandfather. Nine people in household. Mother part of household, parents divorced. Became part of NGO because he wants to stay out of trouble.

After conducting the focus group interviews as well as the individual life-history interviews I realised that I still needed to find specifically selected participants from a child-headed household. Most of the participants with whom I had the life-history interviews were from vulnerable living conditions but not necessarily from a household in which they had to look after themselves. After a very long and drawn out process, as shown in Appendix G, three adolescent girls were ultimately selected to become the core specifically selected participants who were distinctively representatives from child-headed household contexts (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: The specifically selected participants

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Background Information</i>
Chantelle	16	9	Does not live with guardians, shares responsibilities with brother when he is available, feels he abandons her at times. Parents were separated. Both parents dead. Chantelle, at the time of the research was not involved with any NGO organisation and received some food, when she was willing to go, from the school's feeding scheme. The only other caring adult in her life was a grandmother neighbour who gave her some food and clothes from time to time.
Thandi	17	11	Thandi lives on her own with her one year old baby girl. They live in her mother's house. She left Thandi when she died three years ago. She does not know who her father is and became part of the NGO in 2008 Her baby's father is involved but does not live with them as the NGO does not allow for it as they pay her school fees and provide her with necessities and food as much as possible every month. Her baby's father lives in Johannesburg city centre and was 23 years old at the time of the data construction.
Nthombi	17	12	Nthombi takes care of her younger sister, 15 years old, as well as her niece (10 years old) and her nephew (11 years old). Her parents separated when they were younger. Her mother died as well as her older sister. Her aunt was the only extended family member who mostly tried and supports them financially. Their living arrangements fluctuate as they did not always live with her or might live in their mother's house she left for them. When this happens the aunt does try and find a carer to live in with them but in the past the carer they did have was never around and was abusive towards Nthombi and the younger siblings. Nthombi took care of the younger ones herself without the support of the carer. She reported it to the school and the school requested the aunt to come for an interview. Subsequently the carer left and Nthombi together with her siblings were living on their own for a while again.

During the research and development I took cognisance of the ethical considerations and principles that guided me throughout the research process.

2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Guillemin and Gillam (2008) identify two major dimensions of ethics in research, namely procedural ethics and ethics in practice. These two dimensions provided me with a

structural framework in terms of positioning and better understanding the different elements of research ethics as a doctoral student. They argued that procedural ethics could not be held accountable for all the processes and experiences in ethical research and thus called on reflexivity as a resource and an ethical notion. Procedural ethics involved the approval from the various Ethics Committees and the managers of the sites in which we conducted the research. ‘Ethics in practice’ refer to the everyday ethical issues while doing the research, interacting with the participants or relevant stakeholders.

In terms of obtaining procedural ethical approval from governments and professional bodies, professional codes protect participants involved in research studies. There is also a specific code of conduct for educational psychologists regarding research conduct. Ethical approval was obtained, after submitting the research proposal, from the University’s Ethics Committee (see Appendix B). The head of the Educational Psychology department at that stage thereafter obtained permission on behalf of our research group to work in the three chosen schools from the GDE, as the schools were situated in Orlando West, Soweto (see Appendix A). At my chosen school the principal and a member from the SGB then granted me signed permission to work in their school with the participants identified by the NGO (see Appendix D).

Procedural ethics, as suggested by Guillemin et al. (2008), continued over into the practical ethics, and the notion of reflexivity encapsulates this. When the responsibility of ethical conduct during the research process then falls to the researcher the procedural ethics provides a framework which the researcher can reflect on and use as guideline in terms of practicing good qualitative research. Mason (1996, p.6, as cited in Guillemin et al., 2008, p.181) writes of reflexive research that: “The researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their ‘data’”.

Reflexivity is an active, continuing process that saturates every stage of the research, that supports us in being ethical and cognisant in our interaction throughout the research process, continually asking “What do I know?” and “How do I know what I know?” This also ties in with the hermeneutic circle of generating knowledge with the participants as live histories and previous experiences support reflection on generating and co-constructing the knowledge based on gendered lived experiences. Harding (1986, 1987, 1991, as cited in Guillemin et al., 2008) writes that social and political locations influence

the research, so I needed to be mindful, as I mentioned of historicity, the socio-economic situations of the participants as they also influenced the ethical boundaries between us and the participants. Reflexivity is thus critical reflection on the kind of knowledge that is produced as well as how the knowledge is generated and our situatedness as researchers influences every aspect of our research, from the research design, selecting participants to the dissemination of the information. In being reflexive during and after each interaction with the participants I aligned myself with the Ethical Code of Conduct for Educational Psychologist in South Africa (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2004) as well as ensuring I did no harm and kept in mind the best interests of the participants.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2007) note the important elements of ethical conduct regarding human science, namely informed consent, maintaining participant confidentiality, consequences of the study as well as the role of the researcher. For French et al. (2004) the nature of research with vulnerable communities can include gaining access to the research site, unequal power relations between the researcher and the participants, and obtaining informed consent from the participants who would like to undertake the research. The research process can be detrimental to research participants as research is bound up in social inequality issues (gender) and political forces (regarding political decisions that could be detrimental to communities), and the researcher should be aware of these. The researcher should be careful not to raise further discrimination and prejudice, and I was very cautious not to cause any discrimination due to the participants being involved in the gendered research by keeping discussions confidential and separate from the school communities' observations.

The ethical considerations established at the beginning of the research were built on the existing procedural ethical guidelines regarding qualitative research, such as protecting the participants from harm through establishing procedures regarding anonymity and confidentiality, and explaining aspects such as informed consent.

a. Informed consent

Informed consent, according to Sim (1986, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007, p.620) is “the voluntary and revocable agreement of a competent individual to participate in a therapeutic or research procedure, based on an adequate understanding of its nature, purpose and

implications.” It is divided into four constituent elements, which I discussed thoroughly with the participants during our initial meeting at the school, firstly, that the participants were provided with adequate information in terms of the nature of disclosure and that it was advisable for them not to disclose personal information during the focus group discussions. They were told that they were welcome to share personal information they were comfortable with disclosing, during our individual and confidential interviews. Secondly, I requested the selected research co-ordinator at the school to translate into their language the details of the study in order to make sure that they understood the information. Thirdly, I was confident that the participants were competent to make rational decisions, and, fourthly, I stressed that their participation was on a voluntary basis and that they could choose to pull out of the research at any stage.

b. Confidentiality

As explained by Visser (2007), confidentiality regarding the participants’ identities was needed in order to protect their right to privacy and not to expose them through the research process. Each one of the participants from the focus groups as well as the three specifically selected participants chose their own pseudonym. I also adhered to the principle whereby the data was used in the best interest of the participants and with their consent, especially regarding the research findings obtained to inform policy and decision-makers.

c. Do no harm

According to Brinkmann et al. (2007), the consequences of a research study should take into account the possible harm the study may do the participants as well as the benefits that may accrue from it. The benefits to the participants as well as the importance of the knowledge gained outweighing the possible harm or risks to them help the researcher to decide to continue with the research. I was very sensitive and aware of the impact that the gendered study may have on the participants, specifically the two participants I saw within the school context. When teachers, for example, inquired I mentioned that the research was to broaden the indigenous knowledge regarding adolescent girls within the South African context. I also made sure not to divulge personal or specific information regarding gendered experiences which might implicate or cause discrimination against them for assisting in the research.

d. Role of the researcher and ethical difficulties

Sammel (2003) states that within the hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm the researcher takes the role of a co-learner and wants to be educated by the participants involved in the study. The researcher can then be involved in a learning cycle in which it is possible to reflect on one's own individual and social pre-understandings, and for this reason my own assumptions of the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households were given (see Chapter 1, Section: 1.8). Guillemin et al. (2008) suggest that adopting a reflexive research process involves not only a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation of the methods and the data obtained but also being critically reflective of the researcher, the participants and the research context. As stated by McGraw, Zvonikovic and Walker (2000, p.68, as cited in Guillemin et al., 2008, p.184): "Reflexivity is a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge."

In terms of ethics in practice, Guillemin et al. (2008) write that the awareness a researcher has about interacting with participants in a humane and non-exploitative way is important and that the researcher should be mindful of the role of a researcher. It is only when interacting with the participants within their life worlds that the researcher may be confronted with ethical dilemmas, difficulties or tensions. These arise when there are situations in which there is a choice between different options regarding the participants' wellbeing, and each choice has similar convincing ethical advantages and disadvantages. Guillemin et al. (2008) incorporate the term 'ethically important moments' when the approach taken or decision made has important ethical consequences and at times the researcher knows how to respond but there is still something ethically important at stake. Ethically important moments are, for instance, times when the researcher notices that the question seems to be uncomfortable for the participant or when participants do not want necessarily to assume a pseudonym. An ethically important moment during my research, for instance, occurred when my co-constructer became emotional and a little embarrassed when she told me that she asked neighbours to look after her baby at times when she needed to study or do an assignment for school. I then immediately re-explained the purpose of the research and the term 'confidentiality', reconfirming that it was by no means my intention to use this information against her or her baby's wellbeing. For a moment she thought that the information could be used to have her baby taken away from

her, which would not be the case by any means as she and her baby were happy together and what she did in terms of finishing school was to better their future lives.

Working with vulnerable and often disadvantaged people within the psycho-educational research context can be ethically complex at times as it poses certain risks and difficult situations. Wolcott (1994, as cited in Davison, 2004) notes that qualitative research and therapy share the aim of empowering the participants, but although feminism, multiculturalism and postmodernism have promoted political awareness, being personally grounded and utilising reflexive practices is not without difficulties when working with practices such as collaboration and empowerment (Davison, 2004). Hertz, (1997) and Goffey (1999) as cited in Davison (2004) is of the opinion that conflicts of personal experiences, ethics and morals will impact through the whole process of research from planning through to final results.

In relation to the aforementioned I discuss some of the ethically difficult moments I experienced specifically relating to my own reflections during the process of gaining entry and selecting participants. Thereafter I will discuss my specific personal journey when I started working at the two data collection sites, namely the school which I visited in the mornings and the NGO which I visited in the afternoons.

2.6.1 Ethical difficulties experienced within the context of the research group

Rowling (1999) and Davison (2004) argue that the focus of ethical conduct in the past was on 'protecting' the participants but not the researcher. When working with sensitive issues and with vulnerable, undervalued communities the emotion and meaning can be challenging for the researcher and not just for the participants. As a team we initially travelled together, which afforded us the opportunity to debrief or reflect on the day's experiences as we travelled home in the afternoons.

Participant selection in terms of the research group was challenging as I was confronted from the start with my own expectation of being able to select the participants for my study. After going through the list of schools as well as the learners being supported by the NGO, one of our co-researchers contacted the coordinator of the NGO to support us in organising a meeting and venue to meet potential participants. The names of the three schools as well as the learner's names were given, and in the meantime we set out to

compile snack packs for the approximate 30 invited potential participants. My selection of potential research participants was planned around the experiences of adolescent girls who were able to understand and converse in English from Grades 8 to 11 from one of the specific schools. I did not want to include Grade 12 girls as I did not want the research to interfere with their preparations for the exams at the end of the year. I also needed to keep in mind that the data construction and collection might stretch over a two-year period. On the afternoon of the meeting many children occupied the venue as the NGO coordinator wanted to inform as many as possible learners about the research project. It was my expectation as researcher that upon providing a clear description of the participants required the children invited for the research project would meet the provided criteria. Many of those present were also not necessarily from child-headed households but from vulnerable circumstances and overcrowded living arrangements. I was expecting many children but was also upset as it possibly created expectations with the children that we as a research group and I as a researcher would not be able to adhere to it.

Within the African cultures, as many people who wished could join a wedding or attend a funeral from the community. In my working within the psychological support services of a neighbouring province for 11 years I have also experienced that not only the invited will arrive at functions or meetings. I was upset because, in explaining the possible involvement in the research, that in itself creates some expectations with people in general and the possibility of hope. Then I was faced with the generation of hope and possible change that people who live in vulnerable and severely difficult circumstances desperately need and the perception that the research might change their lives dramatically. From my master's research I knew that even if we conducted the research in collaboration with the children and with the best of intentions, and it did influence peoples' lives in small ways and inform policies, the change would not necessarily be significant or profound.

Nearing the end of the meeting we were also confronted with the expectations of teachers, as one enquired whether there would be payment to them after the research had been published as magazines pay writers for articles. We then immediately had to explain that according to the ethical guidelines it would not be possible to provide monetary support or payment. As a researcher I felt very uncomfortable, anxious and guilty, because we did receive a bursary and some money from SANPAD to be able to conduct the research and, due to the political and economic injustices of the past, the perception and stereotype is that Whites are rich and Blacks poor. Globally, and locally, the world economy at the time

(2009) was at a low, so it also influenced individual households significantly. Within the group we however decided that we would provide the participants of our respective sites with snacks and cool drink, as many of the children were vulnerable and living in underprivileged communities, and they often went hungry due to poverty and a lack of adult supervision. Human compassion took precedence over prescriptive guidelines. At times, however, we were also confronted by helpers at the NGO who eventually also expected to be given a snack on our arrival at the venue.

During our research it also became clear that although the participants willingly and with good intentions signed the assent and consent forms, for instance to be present at meetings, completing tasks and providing relevant information to the research, at times it was difficult for them to make the meetings, especially if it was arranged after school hours at the NGO. The participants themselves had multiple roles and responsibilities at home, as well as at school. At times their fleeting living arrangements also made it difficult for them to come to the research meetings. This brought myself as researcher back to reality in terms of pacing myself according to the research participants and the research process.

The participants perceived the research setting as an opportunity to seek support and help from the researchers as psychologists. This in turn challenged the researcher with the dilemma of remaining objective and detached from the children as opposed to being an empathic psychologist. The choice of displaying empathy as a natural reaction to traumatic news unfolded an additional dilemma of the child expecting the researcher to listen to the story and to rectify society's injustices inflicted upon them. This instilled additional anxiety as the researchers were within the research settings first as researchers, and long-term therapy needs were not realistic. However, I continually discussed with the participants the resources within the community and possible additional community members and teachers they could identify as support.

This dilemma of the various roles that I as researcher was expected to take on in the research setting provoked conflict and anxiety regarding my positioning in relation to the prescribed guidelines and the realities of the participants that would assist us with the research. From the start we were confronted with issues relating to attachment and detachment as it was expected the researchers would remain professional and to an extent emotionally detached from the participants. However, the following excerpt illustrates how difficult it was to restrain one's emotional response of care and affection:

Reflection: Before starting the research and still exploring various organisations in terms of selecting specific research settings the University and the research group visited different organisations to support us as students to decide at which research sites we would be able to work regarding our specific research topics. The Village supporting children who are affected by AIDS was one such organisation: While approaching the baby section at the Village I became overwhelmed with emotion, thinking to myself: “I cannot go in and in a few minutes leave again – it is not right!!” How does this world work, babies not privileged to the love and care of their mothers? After composing myself, I went in and saw this little sunshine, her name is Nelly! I keep thinking about Nelly, the little baby at the Village I held. Did I make it worse by picking her up? Again the affection we want even from such a small age. Putting her cheeks next to mine and wanting our faces close together. Looking into each other’s eyes - the nurturing component of early childhood development is so important. In the back of my mind I also know that my husband and I are also trying for our own baby. My own emotionality is ever-present and I am very aware of it. Then, after that short spell of togetherness we had to move on to the next phase of our tour of the Village, so I had to put her back into her cot and leave. How it breaks your heart.

Attachments is something I will be very conscious of and there will need to be set boundaries right from the start with the adolescents, there are always expectations no matter which way we cut it at the end! I do not want to create false hope in my interaction with the adolescent girls or disappoint them in some way...! I will need to be compassionate, professional and effective in approaching the research topic without complicating their lives further – I hope to facilitate the empowerment process in such a way that it would be to the participants benefit even if it is in small sparkling ways. It is like travelling without knowing the end destination - it can be exiting and scary. I read something earlier that states: Destiny is not the chances we take but the decisions we make – I better make good ones in my research and interactions with the participants!!

From our previous experiences as researchers working with vulnerable children we were aware of our assumptions related to the attachment issues of orphaned and vulnerable children. We were wary that we did not want the participants to become dependent on us for significant emotional care. The possibility of attachment issues and emotional

boundaries might have lead the adolescents in vulnerable circumstances to see the researcher as a significant other, a concern complicated by the nature of this research in which participants disclosed past but very personal experiences of their lives. While this process of self-disclosure might provide rich descriptions and deepen the content of the research, it also influenced the research relationship as the participants expected deeper emotional care.

2.6.2 My empathetic, interested distance – aiming at being alongside, not in nor out

A close professional research relationship between the researcher and the participants enhances rapport and enriches research findings. Tewksbury and Gagne (1996, as cited in Davison, 2004) are however of the opinion that a strong positive relationship is not only necessary but will intensify if the research involves a sensitive topic or a stigmatised population. Oakly (1981) and Kirsch (1999) as cited in Davison (2004) also warn against shifting from being an interested researcher to appearing to become like a personal friend to participants. Striving to do the least harm or not to harm at all I tried to balance the hope for more real personal gain for the participants. Throughout and during the interview process I aimed at eliciting through my discussions and interviews the built-in potential regard empowerment (Davis & Srinivasan, 1995; Massat & Lundy, 1997, as cited in Davison 2004) of the participants.

In terms of my role as a researcher and as an educational psychologist I was able to use my skills and therapeutic orientation to ask questions as we discussed their activity booklets, for example: “What does this say about you?”; “What does this say about you and your abilities, your strengths?”; and “What strengths and abilities do you already have to be able to do this?” Coyle and Wright (1996, p.434, as cited in Rowling, 1999) argues that the use of counselling skills during an interview will “create conditions in which the interviewee can derive therapeutic benefit”. Nadeau (as cited in Rowling, 1999, p.173) however writes that the concept ‘therapeutic experiences’ allows for “transformative or growth-producing moments” but does not necessarily imply that the participant will experience growth or healing as would be the aim during therapy.

I enjoyed using my skills as an educational psychologist but was continually and throughout the research aware of the possibility that they may be expected to take

precedence over my role as a researcher at the school in which I conducted most of my data collection. I aimed to adhere to my ethical practices when I initially gained entry to the site by explaining and reminding them that my role would be as a researcher, in order to collect data, and that I would not be able to provide continuous counselling as I also worked on a full-time basis at a different school as an educational psychologist. I did however offer my services as a consultant on the school's SBST, which was not realised as they did not have any meetings during the months I was on site.

Reflection: "The teacher comes in and calls a boy in the group out and she takes me to the side as well. She explains that he has been caught selling dagga at school this morning and she wants me to speak to him. I explain my position as the researcher and that it is important that my role should be clear to the participants. No she wants me to speak to him as a mother. I am thinking but many teachers here at school can do that. I explain that I do not want to become involved in disciplinary matters and what does the school's code of conduct say in this regard, she becomes upset and says that he will lose his sponsorship at NGO and that I need to speak to him as a mother. I am not his mother and that needs to be clear in my role as a researcher in order for the participants to have confidence and speak with openness with me in the research relationship. I remind her of my agreement with them that I am happy to be involved on a consultative basis when learners are referred to the support team. She turns around and starts walking away".

While some researchers may interview participants once or twice, I had the opportunity to be alongside (Rowling, 1999) the co-constructing participants of the research for eight months. Empathy, according to Polger and Thomas (1995, p.112, as cited in Rowling, 1999), is an important part of the researcher - participant relationship, as the researcher attempts to understand the participant's meanings and experiences. The researcher is not to be detached, neither 'out nor in', meaning enmeshed in the participants' experiences. For most of the research I was able to stay alongside the co-constructing participants.

As suggested by Rowling (1999) I could find the appropriateness in deciding for myself to maintain an 'empathetic distance', as I knew that I would not be part of their social world for long. I would also assume that my gender in terms of being female also lessened the 'distance'. I appreciated Davison's (2004) argument that researchers should also value their personal emotional responses as this challenges the traditional claims of neutrality

and the ‘inevitably’ more powerful researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Burgess, 1984; Olesen, 1994). As it views the researcher - participant relationship as a set of shifting boundaries which respond to the identities, I add the roles of the two participants of whom the researcher is only one (Foucault, 1980; Reissman, 1994, as cited in Davison, 2004). This view rejects the inevitability of unyielding hierarchical positions and presents a more equal analysis of power relations on both sides as the research process is fuelled with ‘knowledge’ negotiated through honest interaction between researchers and the participants accepting the possibility of vulnerability and tension from both sides. I had to be cognisant of the fact that as a White middle class female researcher I have the ability through the dissemination of the research findings to inform relevant stakeholders of the gendered experiences of African adolescent girls within the South African context. While due to the intersection of the participants’ age, class and gender they did not have the platform at the time of the research process to inform the wider community of their lived experiences.

In agreement with endarkened feminist research I conclude that my intentions were to conduct the research in collaboration with the participants in a “sacred” (Dillard et al., 2011) manner. “Sacred” as in the research participants were honoured and seen as worthy in sharing their own expertise with regards to how they made meaning of their gendered experiences. By doing the research I needed to be responsible and simultaneously acknowledge that my humanity is linked to the participants who were part of the research study. The sense of reciprocity is very important as both myself and the participants were changed or influenced in the process of mutual teaching and learning regarding their gendered experiences as African adolescent girls with in the South African context.

2.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As stated in the introduction, research methodology refers to the process followed by the inquirer with regard to the applicable data collecting methods and data analysis methods drawn on, to deliver sound research findings according to the research purpose (Babbie et al., 2001). ‘Methodology’ also refers to the use of good judgement and responsible principles to guide the process (Madison, 1988, as cited in Laverty, 2003). Van Manen (1997, as cited in Laverty, 2003) is of the opinion that the use of methodology requires the researcher to be reflective, insightful, sensitive to language and constantly open to

experiences. In addition, methodology is a creative approach to understanding a phenomenon using ways and methods that are responsive to the research questions and subject matter (Laverty, 2003). This research study was aimed at understanding the nature of the gendered experiences and life worlds of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households, which fits with phenomenology due to the focus on their pre-reflective experiences and feelings (the essence). I used methods that the participants and I first discussed and agreed upon.

2.8 DATA COLLECTION

A number of data collection methods were employed during the research process namely biographical questionnaires, focus group interviews, individual life history interviews as well as an activity booklet which included a photo voice activity. The various data collection methods will be discussed subsequently.

2.8.1 Biographical questionnaires

After meeting the group of children the NGO co-ordinator had arranged for us at the larger orientation meeting held on 25 February 2009 I arranged with the school in which I conducted most of the research to meet with the specific group of participants identified by the NGO. During our meeting held at the school I met with 13 possible participants to re-explain the research purpose as well as the possible direction it might take. At each school we also asked for a research coordinator who would assist us in terms of the identification and collecting of children when we worked at the schools every Wednesday. The research coordinator at the school in which I worked also then translated the information to them regarding the research purpose. After the explanation we then signed the necessary assent and consent forms, depending on the adolescents' ages. The forms that needed to be given to an appropriate caregiver to sign or which had to be signed by the director of the NGO were then provided to the potential participants.

At the next meeting the 13 female and male participants completed a basic biographical questionnaire in order to obtain background information regarding their names, ages, family members, and to determine if they already had the necessary identification documents and received support from the Department of Social Development in terms of accessing possible support grants. Child support grant and foster care grants are available

to families in need of financial assistance. As stated by Denscombe (2010), factual questionnaires do not require participants to pass judgement or voice their opinions, only that the participants provide one- or two-word answers to close-ended questions. I thought the biographical questionnaire appropriate as I needed straightforward information (biographical) from a moderate number of participants, who were able to read and understand the questions (Denscombe, 2010). While the participants were filling in the biographical questionnaires I remained in the venue to clarify possible uncertainties regarding some of the questions.

I decided to make use of the biographical questionnaires for two reasons. Firstly, I wished to obtain some information regarding the adolescents' family structures in order to inform my participant selection process. It was important to stay as close as possible to selecting participants who represented members from child-headed households, however many were from vulnerable family circumstances. Secondly, I wished to ascertain whether some of the adolescents had already accessed some of the support structures available in their communities through the NGO or other support community members.

2.8.2 Interviews



Interviews draw on the conversational skills a researcher may already have but are distinctly different from a conversation as they involve assumptions and understandings about a situation that are not necessarily associated with informal conversation (Denscombe, 2010). As explained by Sammel (2003), when working with a hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design it is possible through in-depth interviewing to move beyond asking for descriptive answers to explain understandings or actions to being open to emerging inter-subjective explorations of meaning. By using group as well as individual interviews more success was achieved in encouraging participants to talk freely about their daily lives while actively co-constructing understanding and meaning.

According to Briggs (1986, as cited in Miller and Crabtree, 2004) interviews are only appropriate when interviewing is a known communication routine of the participants and if it is a culturally appropriate communication form for the topic of interest. The participants were adolescents who were able to conduct appropriate conversations and enjoy expressing themselves verbally. The interview method seemed appropriate for their age

group as well as for their level of understanding. The in-depth interview is a research data-gathering process which generates narratives that focus on reasonably specific research questions. It is personal and intimate, focussing on “depth, detail, vividness and nuance” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.76, as cited in Miller et al., 2004), and by conducting one with the eight girl participants more vivid and detailed accounts were explored in terms of their live-histories. In every interview there were also non-verbal and emotional interchanges and a continuous exchange of multi-layered messages being perceived (Mishler, 1986, as cited in Miller et al., 2004). During the interviews I also made notes of the non-verbal behaviour during the transcriptions. Focus group and individual history interviews were used to collect relevant information as well as to assist in selecting possible specifically selected participants living within the child-headed contexts.

Morgan (2004) defines a focus group as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Denscombe (2010) elaborates that they consist of small groups of people, usually six to nine, who are brought together by the researcher. The aim is to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a specific topic, ranging from an hour to two hours. I conducted two focus groups respectively, the first with a group of seven girls and the second with a group of five adolescent boys (see Appendix N). By means of the focus group a range of opinions and viewpoints regarding the gendered experiences of adolescent girls were explored, as experienced and observed by the girls as well as the boys within their communities. A dialogical interplay (Sammel, 2003) took place during the focus group discussion, during which I facilitated understandings while recalling experiences, feelings, knowledge and observations associated with the gendered lived experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households.

A focus group, according to Denscombe (2010), has three unique characteristics, namely, i) the sessions have focus and the discussion is based on the experience of the topic of which all participants have knowledge; ii) the interaction within the group is a means of eliciting information; and iii) the researcher’s role is to facilitate the group discussion not to lead it.

From an ethical point of view it was important to re-explain the necessity for confidentiality and inform each member of the focus group that I would only share what they were comfortable with in terms of the group. I reminded them that a second opportunity would

be given on a more individual level during which they could share more sensitive and personal experiences during the personal life-history activity. The success of a focus group, according to Denscombe (2010) depends on the level of trust within the group, and this was established as the participants respected each other's opinions and experiences and treated the shared information as confidential. The focus group discussions, however, revealed mostly general information and observations the participants had of the specific research topic.

After conducting the two focus group interviews with the adolescent boys and girls my focus moved to the lives of the girls as I still needed to determine which of them would be fitting within the criteria of my research purpose, albeit all were from vulnerable living and home circumstances. I held an individual life-history interview with eight girls as this would also help me in identifying with whom to continue a more long-term journey. Seven of the girls were part of the focus group discussion and one girl was introduced to me afterwards by the Life Orientation teacher as she may have adhered to the participant selection criteria. Again, I had to remind the girls which process I would follow and state that ultimately there would be only a few with whom I would spend more time in the following months owing to the extent of the study. The life-history interviews would also provide the participants with the opportunity to share more sensitive or personal information with which they had not been comfortable during the focus group interviews. During May and June 2009 I conducted six individual life-history interviews with the girl participants and I still needed to conduct another two during September and October 2009. As I met the girls during break and after school I also conducted some site observations during the times I waited to meet with the next participant after school.

According to Haglund (2008, p.148), when researchers choose to use life-histories they view the participants as collaborative partners involved in the reconstruction of their life stories. I initiated the life-history interviews by asking questions such as: "Could you tell me about your life from the day you were born up to now?" and "You can include or leave out anything you would want to". They could include any detail they wished and as they told their life histories I would respectfully request, where necessary, more clarity to help my understanding of their lives, for example by asking: "Can you tell me a little more about when you lived with your granny?" and "Do I understand you correctly, ...?". By being empathetic and sensitive the researcher guided the participants through their life history, prompting memories and while they reflected, interpreted and clarified aspects

they wished to share about their lives. This approach provided data that supported the researchers in gaining insight into how past events and relationships might influence current experiences (Hagland, 2008).

Cole and Knowles (2001, as cited in Hagland, 2008) provide a good explanation of the importance of understanding the context of the participants as it is not the unit of analysis but provides the backdrop that influences how a life is lived and interpreted. Context informs a person's worldview, through which the participants filter and assign meaning to events, thoughts, experiences and relationships.

The focus group discussions and individual life histories gave me a good indication of the living circumstances as well as life worlds of adolescent girls from within the communities. Because only one of the eight adolescent girls interviewed qualified regarding the child-headed context I used the individual life histories to inform my interpretive framework and assist with the selection of specifically selected participants. I did not use the transcripts of the individual life histories within the research findings as they were specific to each adolescent girl from vulnerable living circumstances but not necessarily from a child-headed household.



2.8.3 Activity booklets and photo-voice

After identifying the initial four girls I wished to work in greater depth with in terms of their gendered life experiences, I arranged a meeting in which we could discuss possible activities to include in a booklet which they could complete at their own time over the December 2009 holidays, without having to worry about having too much homework. The activities I suggested were mostly familiar to them and new ones seemed interesting for them to try. At the end of the discussion the girls selected the following activities to be part of the booklet (see Appendix H): A family drawing, as we were in the past and how we are now (see Appendix I); A timeline according to the peaks and valleys of my life (see Appendix K); My dreams and fears (see Appendix J); The strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats in my life; A written reflection of life at school as an African adolescent girl (see Appendix L) and a photo-voice activity (see Photo 2.6). Before the holidays I met with the selected participants at the high school as well as with other

selected participants at the NGO, where I handed out the activity booklet and disposable cameras with which to complete the photo-voice activity.

As a participatory methodology, by using photo-voice as a technique, the participants could visually portray their own perspective on their lives, as was carried out in three stages (Moletsane et al., 2008). In Stage One, the specifically selected participants were given the disposable cameras and a short explanation of the point of the activity. They were also given a short demonstration on how to use the camera and a date was set for them to meet with me in order to return the cameras as I needed to have the photographs developed and ready for our follow-up session. In Stage Two, they were then free to photograph any images relevant to them in connection with their gendered life experiences as members from a child-headed household. This stage took time as I had to make a few trips to Soweto to retrieve some of the cameras over two months. In Stage Three, I met with each specifically selected participant to discuss the photographs they had taken. I asked them to select the ones they felt they wanted to discuss in terms of the research project as others they took for their own personal value. We then discussed each photograph as they selected them. At the end of the session I gave each of the participants their own small photograph album in which they could keep the photos if they wished. One participant was very happy to be able to have a set of her own as she did not have a photograph of her or her baby. As an example a photograph taken by a participant of a rose bush (Photo 2.6) represents many family members living together before her mother passed away.

Photo 2.6: An example of a photo-voice activity illustrating family life



Rose (2001, p.6, as cited in Aldridge, 2007, p.7) has argued that “the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary western societies”, and by using photographs taken by the participants provided “a direct entry into [respondents’] point of view” (Radley & Taylor, 2003, p.79, as cited in Aldridge, 2007, p.12). The so-called technique of photo-voice was used during this research as a communicative tool with which the research participants produced the visual representations that fitted with their gendered life experiences. Methodologically, they were given the camera and took photographs that said something about their everyday lives, after which they would provide verbal explanations of the photographs and their meanings, during an interview with the researcher.

Traditionally, research participants are generally those whose voices have been silent in social research, for example children, ethnic minorities, women, the homeless and the elderly. For the purpose of my research I also considered the photo-voice activity relevant as it could facilitate the communication process between the participants and me as we were from different home language groups. By using photographs they had the opportunity to show what they might have thought would be amiss during our previous data collection sessions. As Berger (1972, p.7, as cited in Aldridge, 2007, p.7) states, the visual medium is important as “seeing comes before words”.

Photo-voice has increasingly become a useful data collection method within the South African context, for instance when working with teachers and community healthcare workers (Mitchell, De Lange, Moletsane, Stuart & Buthelezi, 2005; De Lange, Mitchell & Stuart, 2007, as cited in Mitchell, 2008). Collier and Collier (1986, p.105, as cited in Mitchell, 2008, p.369) are of the opinion that “images invite people to take the lead in inquiry, making full use of their expertise”. The photo-voice activity provided the participants with the opportunity to participate in their own construction and gathering of data as they viewed it useful to portraying aspects regarding their own gendered lived experiences. Mitchell (2008) also argues that use of visual images are appropriate as it draws on the participants themselves as central to the interpretive process, when for instance choosing the most appropriate one’s they would like to discuss and critically evaluating to what extent each photograph speaks to their own lives. I used photo-voice thus as a method with which to extend the research in terms of participatory research activities.

The use of photographs also assisted me in the ‘continuing flow of interviewing’ (Collier et al., 1986, p. 105, as cited in Mitchell, 2008, p.369) as I used the photo-voice activity as my last data collection session to triangulate all the data collected from previous sessions in terms of the girls’ gendered lived experiences and everyday lives which also showed that a point of data saturation had been achieved.

2.8.4 Observations

Once a week for eight months I visited the school in which I conducted part of my data collection, and which allowed me to conduct the interviews with the participants during their break and after school using one of their classrooms initially as the research venue. The venues changed to the computer room, which was also a copy room, so compromising personal discussions and accounts of the participants’ lives. As mentioned, the venue moved to my car, underneath one of the large trees for shade. In the time I waited from break until after school I was allowed to make use of the staffroom as a waiting room. I also used this time to write my personal observations or to write down some observations in terms of staff and learner interaction or having some discussions with teachers regarding my research topic and the culture/nature of the school. These observations provided me with some natural setting experiences regarding the participants’ educational context. As discussed by Denscombe (2010), my observations during the visits to the school as educational context of the participants can be characterised as direct fieldwork within the participants’ natural (educational) setting. As far as possible I tried not to disrupt the naturalness of the setting as I minimised the extent of my presence by writing and keeping myself busy while in the staffroom. Most teachers were busy with marking or writing in marks on a mark sheet. Without realising it in time, when I could possibly rather have left, I observed a parent-teachers meeting in which the parent was almost disciplined regarding the conduct of her son.

It is important to be aware of the influence of my own perceptions in these circumstances. According to Denscombe (2010), our selection and organisation of what we observed was not random. We highlighted and rejected some information, depending on familiarity, past experiences and our current state. During my observations I would write down what I saw in my reflective journal and make notes regarding possible gender-related observations.

These observations supported me in acquiring a sense of the social contexts of the specifically selected participants' life worlds at school.

In summary it was thus my intention to provide the reader with a research study that was conducted with integrity, is rigorous and trustworthy. The rigor and trustworthiness was demonstrated by the nature of the interaction between myself and the research participants; the triangulation of data; using systematic data collection methods; providing rich, thick descriptions of the findings which will be discussed in Chapter 4; as well as operating within the philosophical assumptions of feminism as research paradigm.

2.9 EXPLICATION OF DATA (ANALYSIS)

After many readings, initially in terms of clarifying the research methods and analysis appropriate for my study, I drew on Ajjawi et al. (2007) and their use of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research design, as steps taken in analysing data. Hycner (1999, p.161, as cited in Groenewald, 2004) prefers to use the term 'explication' to 'analysis', as it refers to the study of the constituents of a phenomenon while still keeping the context of the whole. This also fits with the hermeneutic circle metaphor in which the researcher moves from the part to the whole in terms of understanding and interpreting the data. The explication of the data drew from phenomenological and hermeneutic principles and the methods specific to my research study and context.

According to Van Manen (1997, p.36, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007), the aim of data analysis in phenomenology is to "transform lived experiences into a textual expression of its essence, the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful." The phenomenological researcher aims to provide an evocative description of human actions, behavioural intentions and experiences as lived by the participants in their life worlds. The themes from the study may be seen as 'structures of experience' and offer a thick description of the phenomena (Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007).

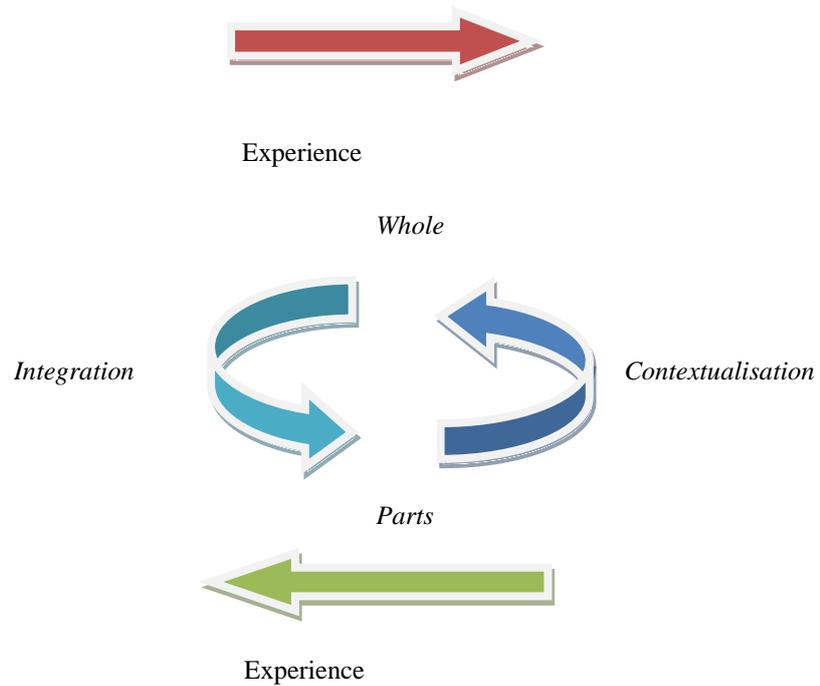


Figure 2.3: The basic form of the hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996, p. 4 as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007, p.623)

The hermeneutic circle as metaphor was used to guide my understanding and interpretation of the data as I moved between the parts (data) and the whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), the vice versa, giving meaning and understanding to each other. Understanding took place through the dialogue process between the researcher and the text (transcripts of each participant and field notes).

The explication of the data took place within the following six stages, as shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Stages of the explication of data

1. Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising the data - set into text • Iterative reading of texts • Preliminary interpretation of texts to facilitate coding
2. Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the first order (participant) constructs • Coding of data using <i>Atlas-Ti</i> software
3. Abstraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying second order (researcher) constructs • Grouping second order constructs into sub-themes
4. Synthesis and theme development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping sub-themes into themes • Further elaboration of themes • Comparing themes across sub-discipline groups
5. Illumination and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking the literature to the themes identified above

illustration of phenomena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstructing interpretations into stories
6. Integration and critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of the themes by the researcher and external • Reporting final interpretation of the research findings

(Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, p.261-262)

2.9.1 Stage One: Immersion and organising the texts

During the data collection phase I audio-taped all the conversations, interviews and discussions, after which each one was transcribed. Two sets of focus group transcripts, one for the boys and one for the girls, and eight individual interview transcripts were used as context, with the three specifically selected participants' activity booklet discussions and photo-voice discussions also transcribed. I listened repeatedly to the audio recordings and at the same time re-read the transcripts to be able to *immerse* (Van Manen, 1994) myself in the data collected, as well as reflecting on the context and day each interview took place. Immersion involves engaging with the meaning of the texts, in order to obtain a sense or preliminary interpretation of the texts, which facilitates coding. I also used the field notes I had written during my observations and interactions in the staffroom to facilitate the recreation of the context in which the participants and I constructed meaning of their life-world as part of text interpretation. I also added memos to the relevant sections of the transcript while working through the data using *Atlas-Ti*.

2.9.2 Stage Two: Understanding and identifying first order constructs

Titchen and McIntyre (1993, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007) explain that the first order constructs refer to the participants' ideas expressed in their own words or phrases, which capture the precise essence of what they are saying. These constructs were linked to the research question in terms of South African adolescent girls, who formed part of child-headed households and the meaning-making of their gendered lived experiences within their educational and social contexts. First order constructs were created for both the focus groups as well as for the three specifically selected participants who were specifically from child-headed households.

My understanding of the participants first order constructs was checked with the participants during a feedback session. This formed part of member checking, which then also provided a richer and deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and was an important part of producing findings from the interactions between myself and the participants.

2.9.3 Stage Three: Abstraction and identifying second order constructs and grouping to create themes and sub-themes

By using my theoretical and personal experience, second order constructs were formed from the first order constructs. By using *Atlas-Ti*, a family grouping was formed for each of the transcripts incorporating all the codes that were generated from the first order constructs. Interpretations of each interview transcript were used to form a picture of that participant's data as a whole. Similarities between each data set were also identified, thus all relevant texts were grouped under the construct for each sub-group in order to answer the principal research question and sub-questions.



2.9.4 Stage Four: Synthesis and theme development

Themes were developed from the results of stages one to three of the analysis. At this stage the themes and sub-themes were developed and their relationship clarified further. This stage involved the hermeneutic circle as I moved between the literature, the research texts and the earlier analysis, moving from the parts to the whole. From this process the interpretation of the research phenomenon, an inquiry into the meaning making of the gendered experiences of African adolescent girls from child-headed household within their educational and social contexts, unfolded. As stated by Ajjawi et al. (2007), the interpretations at this stage involved the identified meanings that the participants could not always articulate accurately, considering the complexity and tacit nature of the phenomenon: "In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (Van Manen, 1997, p.107, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007).

Themes and sub-themes were presented at a symposium held by the University's Educational Psychology Department on child-headed households (23 June 2011) (see Appendix M), which was used as platform to gain feedback for the fit and credibility of the themes and sub-themes. This was used to receive feedback and discussions about the research topic and helped to refine and further develop the presentation regarding the research themes. Delegates from the GDE, Social Development Department, community religious organisations, NGOs, critical reviewers from the University of the North West and the respective teachers from the various schools involved in the SANPAD project attended the symposium, which provided wider community feedback to the participants' input and reflections, thus encouraging refinement of explanations and meanings. In light of the applicability of the findings it was important to raise the adult community's awareness of how urban South African adolescents from child-headed households experience their social and educational contexts with the relationship of gender and responsibilities ever present and influential. Comments received were incorporated into the interpretation and slight adjustments were made where necessary.



2.9.5 Stage Five: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomena

At this stage I examined the literature for links to the themes and sub-themes across the data set. With these and their interrelationships I reconstructed the participants' provided lived experiences, also using first order constructs to illuminate the process and highlight key findings.

2.9.6 Stage Six: Integration and refining the themes

The final stage included me relooking at the findings and critically evaluating the main themes along with a final review of the literature for key developments that could contribute to a greater understanding of the gendered lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households in their educational and social contexts. The themes and interpretations were presented at the Psychological Society of South Africa's (PsySSA) Conference on 15 September 2011 for further comments. The PsySSA conference was attended by students and psychologists, both clinical and academic, mainly from South Africa. The conference was seen as an opportunity for further critique of the findings as the audience could

question the clarity and meaningfulness of the findings which further aided me in terms of the interpretation of the findings. The findings are discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.

2.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to ensure that the research is credible the process followed should be rigorous. Lavery (2003) explains that reliability and validity can be discussed in the qualitative phenomenological traditions as issues of rigour, which according to Merriam (1998) is demonstrated in qualitative research by the presence of the researcher; the nature of the interaction between him or her and the participants; the triangulation of data; the interpretation of perceptions; and rich, thick descriptions of the findings as accounted for in Chapter 4. Lincoln and Guba (2000, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007) state that quality in all research requires the rigorous use of systematic methods of data collection and analysis, transparency in documenting these methods, and consistency in operating within the philosophical assumptions and traditions of the research paradigm and approach. Strategies applicable to this research in terms of enhancing rigour include congruence between the adopted paradigm and the chosen methods, prolonged engagement with the participants and the purpose of the study, multiple methods of data collection and auditable records. According to Denzin et al. (2011) the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. During the research I used different data sources, the research document was examined by various stakeholders and I utilized different data collection methods as discussed in Section 2.8.

I achieved these outcomes by spending more than eight months, once a week, co-constructing data with the participants. Over this time I was able to gain their trust, which encouraged them to discuss their lives with relative comfort and freedom in terms of their gendered lived experiences and views, adding to the rigour and trustworthiness of the research process. The various data collection methods and sources provided an exhaustive construction of the phenomena that enhanced the depth and richness of the data, specific to the participants in this specific study. I collected data through observations, in-depth interviews, using an activity booklet, photo-voice activities, and focus group discussions. Mays and Pope (2000, as cited in Ajjawi et al., 2007) add that using multiple methods and sources of data encourages reflexivity in the collection and analysis of the data or sensitivity to the interaction between the researcher and the research.

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness of the research findings, within the vivid and faithful descriptions of the experiences lived by the participants (Beck, 1993, as cited in Laverty, 2003). According to Merriam (1998), research is considered trustworthy if also valid and reliable. This requires ethical conduct by the researcher during the inquiry, and it should be concluded from the detail presented that the interpretation of the results and the findings 'make sense'. Validity and reliability in the qualitative sense describe people acting in events, whereas a quantitative study describes variables and static states, within the conceptualisation of the study, the way in which the data was collected, analysed and interpreted, and the way in which the findings were presented, informed by the underlying philosophical assumptions of a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Several strategies can be utilised to enhance validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998).

Internal trustworthiness – Internal validity deals with the question of *how* the research findings represent reality. Ratcliffe (1983, as cited in Merriam, 1998) suggests that validity should be assessed by keeping in mind that data cannot speak for itself and needs an interpreter or translator. People's construction of reality and making meaning of reality is what researchers are observing, and in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. This implies that reality is accessed through the researcher's interviews and observations. Merriam (1998) suggests that due to this perspective on reality, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research. Of the utmost importance are understanding the perspectives of those involved in the phenomena, uncovering the complexities of human behaviour in a contextual framework and presenting an holistic interpretation of what is happening.

In line with Merriam's (1998) basic strategies of enhancing internal trustworthiness I triangulated the data by using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data and multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings. I made use of in-depth life history interviews, focus group interviews, activity booklets and photo-voice activities. This added to the richness of the descriptions participants gave to their lived experiences. Within the participatory nature of the research the participants and I could be seen as the primary investigators as they also made use of the photo-voice activity to visually portray their lived experiences. The focus group participants as well as the specifically selected participants were the primary sources of data, although informal discussions and visits

with teachers, the NGO co-ordinator as well as the youth workers corroborated from their experiences the data provided by the research participants.

By carrying out member checks I returned the data and tentative interpretations to the participants from whom it was derived and asked them if the results were reasonable or credible. After identifying the different themes from the analysis I returned to the two focus groups and the three specifically selected participants to clarify the themes before finalising the findings. I utilised long-term observation by gathering the data over time in order to increase the validity of the findings. Taking into consideration the time I had, I spent a little more than eight months going once a week to the respective participant, at the school and NGO where I conducted the data collection. The identified themes were discussed with them in June 2011 and October 2011 and clarified. The information needed to be obtained within a certain time and according to the practical availability of the participants and supporting teachers.

By means of peer examination I asked colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge. As with the supervisors they gave regular input and supervision with regard to the process of the inquiry as well as with the identified themes and findings. The findings were also presented at the University's Symposium in June 2011, which provided the opportunity for various stakeholders from different departments as well as community leaders to give their feedback. I presented the preliminary findings at the Psychological Society of South Africa during September 2011, where feedback opportunities were given to peers within the profession.

Collaborative modes of research involved the participants in all phases of the research, from conceptualising the study up to writing the findings. By requesting their participation the members from child-headed households could make an informed decision to become involved in the inquiry. I tried as far as logistically and practically possible to involve them in the research process, consulting with them regarding the activities they would like to include in the activity booklets. We then also decided to include the photo-voice as one of the activities as the participants themselves would then further have control over which photographs they would find relevant and speak about their specific realities. After identifying the themes they had become involved once more in verifying the findings. It was also my responsibility to give feedback to the participants after completion of the research and provide them and myself with the opportunity to reflect on the research findings.

I clarified my researcher assumptions, worldview and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study, as discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.6.

Dependability – Dependability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated when the study is repeated. Merriam (1998), however, reminds us of the assumption within the qualitative paradigm that human behaviour is not stagnant. As the term ‘reliability’ in the traditional sense seems to be insufficient within the qualitative paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.288, as cited in Merriam, 1998) suggest that the terms ‘dependability’ or ‘consistency’ of findings should rather be used. The question that the readers should then be answering is whether the findings of the inquiry are consistent with the data collected by the researcher. Merriam (1998, p.206-207) suggests the following techniques to ensure that the results are dependable. I stated my position in explaining the assumptions and theory behind the study, my position with regard to the group being studied, the basis for selecting participants and a description of them and the social context from which data was collected (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I have presented descriptions of myself as a person, my values and personal as well as professional background. I gave a detailed outline of the process we followed in terms of gaining entry into the field as well as the process I followed purposefully selecting the participants. A description of the participants’ educational and social contexts was provided.

Also within dependability the process of triangulation is important as it again refers to using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, strengthening reliability and internal validity. Methods used in the study were biographical questionnaires, focus group interview, individual life-history interviews, three specifically selected participants completed activity booklets and photo-voice activities. By keeping an audit trail, I authenticated the findings through explaining how the results were arrived at and thus providing a detailed account of how the data was collected, themes derived and decisions made throughout the inquiry. This should be judged as a whole within the final document.

External trustworthiness – This refers to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. Merriam (1998) states that qualitative researchers choosing a single case or small sample do so because they wish to understand phenomena with more depth and not necessarily to determine what is generally true about many. It is rather

suggested that the following strategies could be employed by the inquirer in order to enhance the possibilities of the results (Merriam, 1998, pp.211-212). Rich, thick descriptions provided adequate depictions in order for the readers to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and thus whether findings can be transferred. Merriam (2002) also states that it is the rich thick descriptions and the words that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the research findings and interpretations as being provided in Chapter 4. Typicality or modal category means that the reader can determine how typical the individuals or group is of the class, so that users can make the comparisons with their own situations. Multisite designs are achieved by means of the several sites, cases, situations and those that maximise diversity in the phenomenon. The variation can be achieved through purposeful or random sampling.

I as the researcher aimed at demonstrating validity by showing that the data was collected by means of authentic strategies, being rigorous in the analysis and showing through the steps of data transformation the path I took to develop the knowledge statements and findings. Firestone (1987, p.19, as cited in Merriam, 1998) mentions that these different strategies should persuade the reader of the authenticity of the findings creating a gestalt (whole) that makes sense to the reader.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework of hermeneutic phenomenology as the research design with the subsequent methodological approach to researching the gendered experiences of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households. A procedural description was provided, explaining my actions with regard to gaining entry into the field as well as the extensive time it took to work through purposively selecting the participants. The data was co-constructed by me and the participants through focus group interviews, individual life-history interviews, activity booklets and photo-voice activities. This chapter facilitated the preparation for discussing the final themes and findings that will be provided in Chapter 4. The next chapter will provide the theoretical context regarding the gendered lives of South African adolescent girls within their social and educational context as described within the existing academic literature.

CHAPTER THREE

A FEMINIST THEORETICAL ORIENTATION AND CONTEXTUALISING THE LIVES OF AFRICAN ADOLESCENT GIRLS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Globally it has become widely accepted that achieving gender equality and ending violence against women and girls are essential to contribute positively to human development, alleviating poverty and supporting economic growth in African countries. The Progress Report of the Sixth African Development Forum (2008) states that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (constituting the International Bill of Rights) are international instruments to uphold the principle of non-discrimination irrespective of a person's sex. Both the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol promote gender equality in access to social and economic opportunities and political power. As further stated, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) continues to be the overarching global framework on gender equality and empowerment of women in twelve critical areas of concern, namely poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, economic disparity, power sharing, institutions, human rights, mass media, environment and the girl child.

Taefi (2009), however, argues that from international human rights law the CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) may not effectively address the needs of the girl child due to the tensions that exist between the discourses of women's rights and children's rights. These tensions refer to the girl child's needs being marginalised and fragmented when considering the overarching perspective on women's rights and children's rights respectively. According to Taefi (2009) it is extremely important to strengthen the needs and interests of girls and the power of the rights discourse lies in the recognition of them as worthy of fulfilment. It would also be valuable to listen to and hear what the gendered experiences are of girls and, specifically for my study, the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households. The study will contribute to

building up a frame of reference regarding their experiences, needs and interests within the South African context of adversity on a daily basis.

Within the South African context the girl child often is held responsible for managing the family and supporting their siblings when parents have died. The concept 'orphan' is, according to Hepburn (2002, p.88, as cited in Maqoko et al., 2007, p.722) a socially constructed concept and the meaning thereof would thus vary according to cultures and countries and according to the local understandings or realities regarding children's vulnerability. Bray (2003) elaborates on the concept in various African languages as referring to a child who is destitute or without care, rather than parentless. Bray (2003, p. 11) further states that 'orphan' means "without parents or bereaved", and also includes the meaning "one bereft of protection, advantages, benefits or happiness previously enjoyed". Lindblade, Odhiambo, Rosen & De Cock (2003) describe an orphan as a child who has lost either or both parents and refines the categories as 'maternal', 'paternal' and 'double' in the cases of both parents being deceased.

A decade ago, according to Sloth-Nielsen (2004), approximately 840,000 children in South Africa had lost their mothers, mostly because of HIV/AIDS, to a lesser extent by wars, illness, needing to work away from home to find employment, some abandoning their children or becoming victims of fatal car accidents or violent riots (Sloth-Nielsen, 2004). Children in South African society represented 39% of the population in 2007 (Lutya, 2010). In the South African Constitution (1996) (Section 28, p.23) a person under the age of 18 is considered to be a child and every child has the right to a name and nationality by birth.

The child-headed household as a phenomenon is not new to global and South African societies, with statistics having disclosed (UNAIDS/WHO, 2003, p.3, as cited in Maqoko et al., 2007) that, globally, by 2002, around 14 million children had been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in Sub-Saharan Africa (USAID, 2004, p.7, as cited in Maqoko et al., 2007) were about 43 million orphans in 2003. The type of child-headed households can also be diverse, as determined by the various contexts in which children and adolescents grow up. They may include older siblings being the head of a household, or other households that are headed by an older sibling, with a family or community member providing some level of support. There are also children who take care of a very elderly or

sick family member who do not receive any form of support from family or the community and becomes isolated due to the possible stigma of an illness.

Adolescent girls play a very important role in the household, as many of the responsibilities are taken upon them to manage the household and take care of younger siblings and older brothers. As argued by Maqoko et al. (2007), a large number of children, including adolescent girls have become the heads of households, dropping out of school, being forced to look after themselves and siblings, and so have become vulnerable to various forms of abuse and exploitative working conditions.

Maqoko et al. (2007) criticise research (UNICEF/UNAIDS/USAID, 2004, p.13) of orphans and other vulnerable youths for not having taken into account physical, cognitive, emotional and psychological characteristics, and argue that misinformation and prejudice limit the willingness of communities and families to provide support for them. Maqoko et al. (2007) and Richter (2004) indicated that the lives and experiences of many of the children and adolescents from child-headed households are further influenced and complicated by economic hardship, the need to leave school, malnutrition and illness, loss of inheritance, fear and isolation as well as the increased risk of being abused physically, sexually and emotionally. Uys (2009) calls upon society to take up the challenge to support, market and defend the human rights culture in Africa, as many of the problems facing the girl child stem from traditional cultures of African tribes and the social cultures that have developed in African countries due to their social, political and economic patriarchal histories. Traditional cultures are often perceived as perpetuating the exploitation of girls and women and the social culture often further supports violence.

The internationally formulated human rights culture can provide such a guideline of protecting the rights of the girl child, irrespective of traditional and social cultures. Maqoko et al. (2007) writes that, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 (Gow & Desmond, 2002, p.4), “children have the right to participate in discussions that affect them and due weight should be given to their opinions”. According to Kaime (2009) The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (1990) which entered into force in 1999, states that children who do not have parents or who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment need to be provided with alternative family care that includes foster placements or placement in suitable institutions for care of children (Article 25 [2]), but only if the children are

willing. In 1994 the South African government committed itself to the protection of all children's rights, the primary ones of which were enshrined in Section 28 of the South African Constitution (1996):

- An adequate standard of living;
- Family or parental care or appropriate alternative care when removed from the family;
- Basic nutrition, shelter, basic healthcare services and social services;
- Education and leisure;
- Protection from economic and sexual exploitation and child trafficking;
- Protection from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Within this chapter my aim was to review literature that would support and enhance the understanding of the reader regarding the gendered lives and social contexts of adolescent girls from child-headed households. Firstly, a suitable theoretical framework (see Figure 3.1) will need to be established, the most appropriate being one that situates adolescent girls from child-headed households regarding power and being undervalued within feminist theory, as discussed in the following section. The theoretical orientation of endarkened feminism and intersectionality was included to enhance the theoretical perspectives, with gender theory and resiliency theory included. Thereafter my focus moves to literature on the biological development of adolescents in general, incorporating the implications thereof for adolescent girls. In addition, reference was made to the psycho-emotional impact adolescent girls have to endure when faced by adversity. Finally, the contextual realities of South African adolescent girls was discussed, moving from the traditional African worldviews as a broad cultural framework to current socio-economic and cultural realities within South African communities, and concluding with the family, peer group and educational contexts of adolescent girls from child-headed households. Within each sub-section, the contextual concerns are discussed as a whole, then linked specifically to the research population.

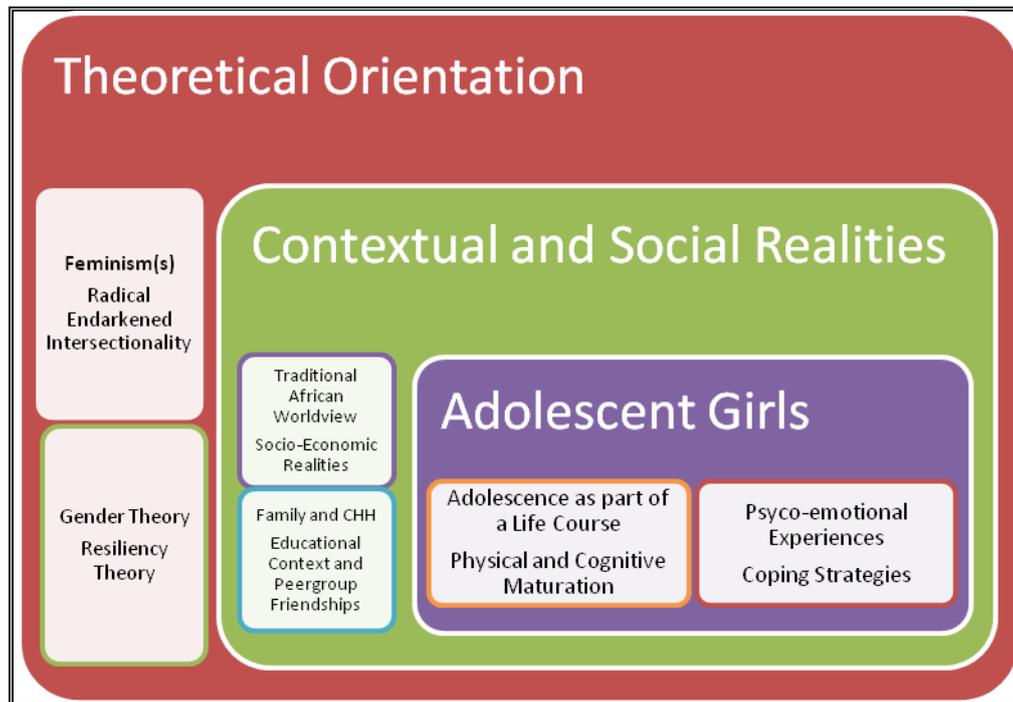


Figure 3.1: Visual representation of Chapter 3

I now extend my focus to aspects of feminism within the theoretical framework as a critical view of the power relations that underpin the lives of women and girls within society.

3.2 FEMINISM AS THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Feminism forms the basis of my theoretical orientation, supported by theories of intersectionality, gender, and resilience to help understand how roles are acquired or shaped and intersect to influence the girls' lived experiences on a daily basis (see Figure 3.2). Resiliency also plays a fundamental role in their survival and so helps one understand how personal qualities as well as their communities help them to survive adverse living circumstances.

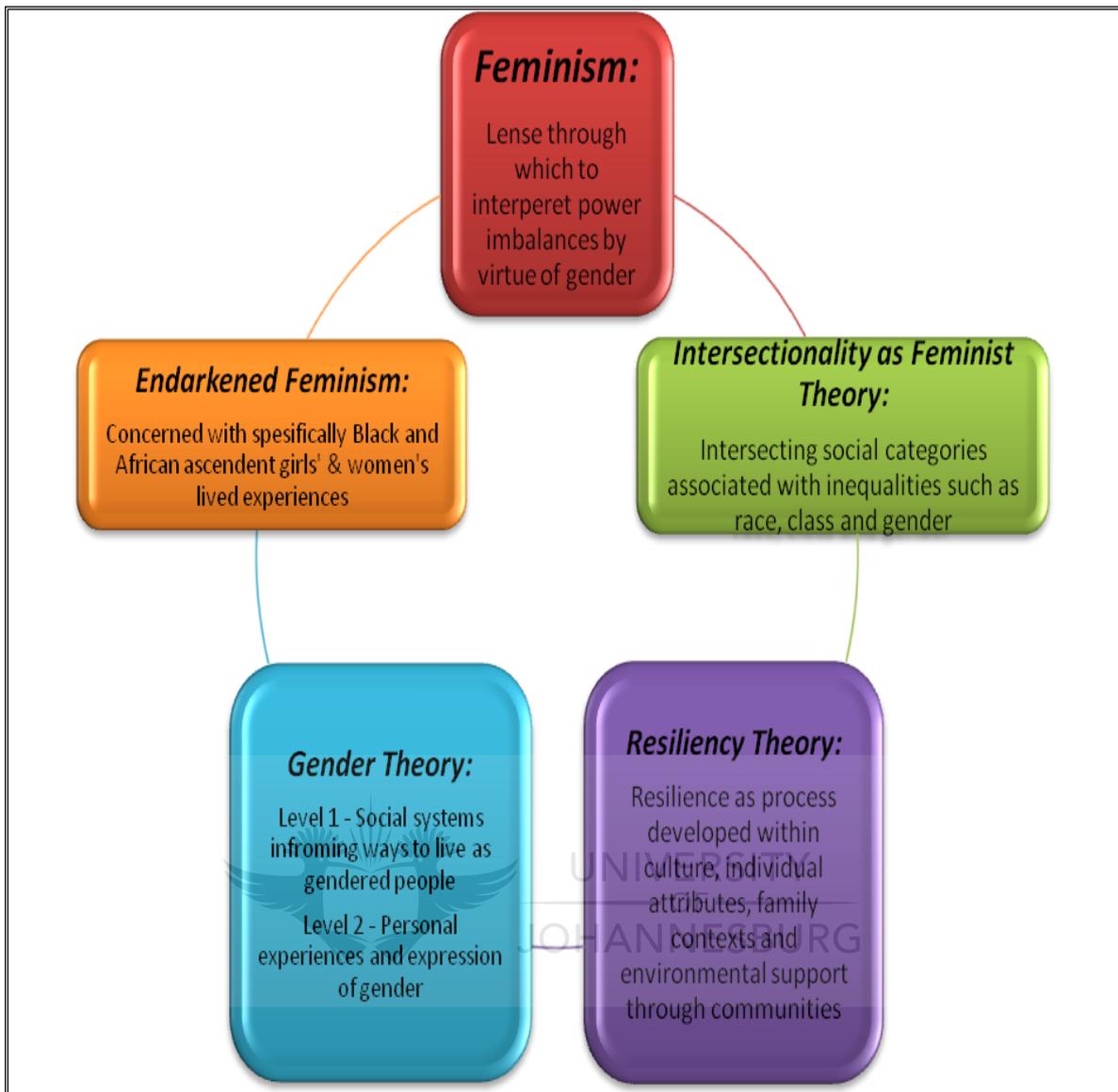


Figure 3.2: Theoretical orientation of the study

Crawford and Unger (2004) provide a useful background to the development of feminism and understanding gender as a concept, but for the purpose of this study it is useful in understanding adolescent girls' experiences as they are often socialised in the experiences of the women with whom they interact on a daily basis.

In terms of my own understanding regarding feminism I found it important to familiarise myself with its development as this supported me in terms of my own positioning.

The so-called 'First Wave' of women's movement occurred in the USA in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Declaration, which rejected the doctrine of female inferiority that was taught by academics and clergy (Harris, 1984, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004), losing some

momentum in the 1920s when women won the right to vote within society as they were under the assumption that this would lead to political, social and economic equality.

The 'Second Wave' of women's movements arose in the late 1960s, also influencing scholars to re-examine psychology as contributing to the forming and maintenance of some gender-related social inequalities. Women had previously largely been left out of studies and theories were constructed from male viewpoints as the norm in terms of understanding behaviour. Crawford and Marecek (1989), Kahn and Jean (1983) and Unger (1979b) as cited in Crawford et al. (2004) argue that differences in the behaviour of women in comparison to men had been attributed to biology rather than social influences. Psychologists realised that most knowledge about women and gender were male-centred (*androcentric*) and that new research needs to be *with, for* and *by* females. Women became an important force of change by conducting research, publishing books and writing articles, for instance Naomi Weisstein (1968), Phyllis Chesler (1972), Carolyn Sherif (1964) and Mary Parlee (1975). Within psychology structures, graduate students and newcomers to psychology also formed the Association for Women in Psychology (AWP) in 1969 and more established psychologists lobbied the American Psychological Association (APA) to form a Division of the Psychology of Women which was officially approved in 1973 (Unger, 1998 & 2001, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004).

Currently, the 'Third Wave' of women's movements is addressing some of the factors that earlier ones overlooked, for instance ensuring reproductive freedom, ending violence against girls and women and integrating women into politics, celebrating the joys of women's sexuality and asserting women's place in traditionally male domains. This study attempts to contribute to this movement in conducting research *with* and *for* girls, thus contributing to indigenous South African psychology as well as broadening the theoretical knowledge regarding girlhood studies within the South African context.

Tong (1998, p.7, as cited in Hook, 2008, p.278) writes that "... feminism is many and not one is to be expected because women are many and not one." An original motivation was to create unity among women in terms of a 'sisterhood' that could confront gender power imbalances and male domination (Kiguwa, 2008). The aim was soon criticised by females themselves, as not all women had the same political, economic or social goals. This was in part because women have different experiences around the world, there being many different areas of concern and focus for the various feminist and women's groups.

Nevertheless, Crawford et al. (2004) found that, despite these variants, feminist perspectives share two important themes: Firstly, women are valued as important and worthy human beings; and secondly, feminism recognises the need for social change in order for women to lead secure and satisfying lives. Thus, a feminist may be seen as a person who thinks that women are valuable and that social change must take place in order to benefit women. The core social change aspect that needs to be addressed is to end all forms of domination of men over women and those among women (Kimball, 1995, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004). According to Kiguwa (2008), feminism is committed to studying gender relations and determining how gender as a cultural construct can be reformed as a tool of oppression, with men holding positions of social power over women. It is important also to acknowledge that feminism is an action and form of behaviour that aims to change the constructs and relations that reaffirm women's subordination to men.

In contrast to feminism, 'conservatism' posits that females should adhere to their traditional roles of being restricted to their homes and family while the males hold public power and status (Crawford et al., 2004). These views were largely based on grounds of biology and religion. When justifying it from a biological perspective it was assumed that gender-related behaviour was determined by innate and unchangeable biological differences of more significance than the social environment. It was, for instance, believed to be in a woman's 'nature' that she was more nurturing. Religious justification, meanwhile, very often supposedly linked to biological reasons, was based on beliefs that female submission and subordination were prescribed by a divine authority and/or text, as adherents of some religious institutions chose to interpret it.

Diverse perspectives are taken in terms of driving and understanding the particular experiences of women, hence there are also many influential feminist theoretical perspectives, some of which are summarised briefly in Table 3.1. Feminist theories also differ in what is to be considered as causes of women's oppression and also as a result differ in the means by which oppression can be eliminated.

Table 3.1: Major feminist schools of thought (Kiguwa, 2008, pp.280-285)

<p><i>Liberal Feminism</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Traced to 18th century. *No fundamental difference between men and woman. *No real basis for unequal sharing of resources and opportunities. *Women’s oppression an inevitable outcome of systematic denial of the opportunities for women enjoyed by men. *Female subordination a result of legal constraints to which women are subject in patriarchal society. *Works from in the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into that structure.
<p><i>Marxist Feminism</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Emerged in feminist critiques of the post-1968 left. *Attributes women oppression to capitalist/private property system. *End oppression by overthrow of capitalist system of economy. *Role of domestic labour part of class system. *Problem with public/ private sphere division. *Challenges sexism within structures, forms and relations of left organizations; later versions concerned with intersections of class, race and sexuality.
<p><i>Radical Feminism</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Cutting edge theory during 1967-1975. *Patriarchy most fundamental cause of women’s oppression. *Systems of oppression include common and popular institutions like marriage and the family. *Systems of oppression are not easily eradicated by changing legislature or abolishing capitalist economy in society. *Patriarchal systems cannot be reformed but need to be rooted out completely. *Questions gender roles, for example, why must women adopt certain roles such as ‘mother’ by virtue of their biology and men alternative roles by virtue of their biology? *Problematise gender behaviour by drawing distinctions between biological versus culturally determined gender behaviour.
<p><i>Psycho- analytical Feminism</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Stemmed from Freud’s theories of sexuality. *Psychoanalytical feminists attempt to reinterpret Freud by ‘telling the Oedipal tale in a non-patriarchal voice’. *The fundamental explanation for women’s behaviour is rooted deep in women’s psyche. *Relies on Freudian concepts of pre-Oedipal stage and the Oedipal complex. *Gender inequality rooted in a series of early childhood experiences

	<p>resulting in both men's and women's perceptions of themselves as masculine/feminine. It is then argued that patriarchal society constructs and values these perceptions differently.</p> <p>*Theorists such as Chodorow have focused on the need to change contexts of early childrearing as a means of reconfiguring gendered subjectivities.</p>
<i>Post-structuralist Feminism</i>	<p>*Stemmed from post-structuralist theoretical assumptions about language/meaning and subjectivity.</p> <p>*Linked to a variety of theoretical positions developed from the works of theorists such as Lacan (1977), Foucault (1978) and Kristeva (1981).</p> <p>*There is not a universal gender experience.</p> <p>*More concerned with the ways in which women experience gender and oppression differently and not so concerned with the particular causes or solution to women's oppression.</p> <p>*Uses the post-structuralist notion of language discourse, social processes and institutions to understand gendered power relations and identify strategies for change.</p> <p>*Through concept of discourse post-structuralist feminism seeks to explore the working of power as well as resistance to it.</p>
<i>Black Feminism</i>	<p>*First formulated in USA through fiction-writing in the works of many African American women, as a direct result of dissatisfaction with anti-racist movements which were largely dominated by Black men as well as feminist movements that were equally dominated by White women.</p> <p>*Feminist politics among Black women is rarely seriously explored – unlike Western and mainstream feminism.</p> <p>*Black female researchers should seek to develop new theories and concepts which capture actual lived experiences of women in developing countries' in Africa.</p> <p>*Identifies White feminism as misrepresentative and oppressive to Black women.</p>
<i>Womanism</i>	<p>*Origins lay in Black women's dissatisfaction with the White feminist movement.</p> <p>*Similar and associated theoretical framework of Black feminism.</p> <p>*Linked to theoretical frameworks of Marxism, Feminism and Pan-Africanism/Black Consciousness.</p> <p>*Not as popular in South Africa, as Gquola (1998) suspects that the absence of the term 'feminist' shows no loyalty to feminism and makes womanism suspect to its critics (Abrahams, 2002, p.61).</p> <p>*A woman is never simply a woman but has a racial and class identity which influences and at times determines the ways she will experience herself as a woman.</p> <p>*Developed a theoretical space – one that is void of the term 'Black' – to explore any marginalised woman's identity and gender experience. In this</p>

	<p>one respect womanism can be distinguished from Black feminism.</p> <p>*'Womanism' acknowledges the psychological necessity of self-naming but simultaneously seeks to go beyond a reassertion of 'Blackness'.</p> <p>*Womanism is not a separatist movement but aims to 'centre' African and other women in developing countries in the theoretical debate.</p> <p>*Concerned with the psychological, existential and mystical meanings of strong Black womanhood, i.e., their spiritual welfare as the basis of the struggle for social justice.</p>
<i>African Feminism</i>	<p>*Linked to Africanist movements which dominantly construct a pre-colonial Africa that is free from any form of oppression.</p> <p>*Focus is on the reconstruction of pre-colonial history as a period in which Black women experienced considerable political and social power.</p> <p>*Like Black feminism and womanism, African feminism seeks to construct anti-imperialist knowledge systems which emphasise an independent and positive sense of identity for many developing countries and Black women.</p> <p>*It is strategic in its subversion of colonial constructions of racial inferiority of Black people. Plays a mentally decolonising role, thus of important and necessary psychological value.</p>

For the purpose of this study I aligned myself with the principles of radical feminism as well as African / endarkened feminism, being more appropriate for research into girls living in diverse and adverse living circumstances and being subjected to patriarchal social systems.

Traditionally, it was understood that feminism focused on the 'universal woman' as being oppressed, assuming that all women share similar experiences of gender and oppression. In practice, when speaking directly of the needs for social change to take place, particularly within South Africa, it is important to note that although patriarchy is universal, social classification systems such as race and class influence the way in which women experience it. Patriarchy refers to the personal, physical and institutional power that men exert over women, but there is cultural, social and political diversity among patriarchies. Despite these differences, women experience oppression *as* women first and foremost (Kiguwa, 2008). As argued by Kiguwa (2008), the critical feminist agenda should not only contain the ways gender oppression is a universal phenomenon but also how it can be experienced on different levels. I thus value the suggestion that research inquiries should also explore how gender oppression is embedded in cultural practices.

Important feminist values include a belief that human behaviour is shaped by social, historical, political and cultural forces. Crawford et al. (2004) state that feminists believe that gender equality is possible by means of being sensitive to the ways that social context influences people's behaviour and human potential. Other social systems of classification, such as race, social class and sexual orientation also influence people's life experiences and social power or domination. It is therefore important that feminism within an African context is clarified at this point, because of the diversity of society. Also within the South African context, women are not a homogenous group, influenced and divided by their particular social systems in terms of ethnicity, class, age, language, race and sexuality. Feminism modelled upon Western/Eurocentric philosophy may be problematic within an African context, leading Kiguwa (2008) to call for a form of feminism that acknowledges and engages with all women's differences, in turn resulting in the subjective experiences of gender and developing new ways of identifying and navigating marginalised women's unique interaction with it.

Endarkened or Black feminism embodies and engages the spirituality and sacredness (Dillard et al., 2011) of women's subjective experiences and is thus applicable to this study, specifically girls' subjective experiences. Spirituality and sacredness is central to endarkened feminism (Dillard et al., 2011). Dillard (2006a, p.77, as cited in Dillard et al., 2011) explains that "a spiritual life is first and foremost about commitment to a way of thinking and behaving that honours principles of inter-being and interconnectedness". Endarkened/African feminism advocates the "total rather than the exclusive perspective" with oneness of male and female energy in the struggle against oppression, and is thus spiritual in nature, promoting basic human rights (Dillard et al., 2011). In contrast to Westernised thought, African feminist perspectives embrace a common cosmological concept in African thought which reflects human oneness or human wholeness, in which the male is not the 'other' but a co-participator in the struggle for human survival, each gender being a critical half of the human whole.

In relation to the concept of oneness, the spiritual concept of communal wholeness and wellness is historically also prevalent in African/endarkened feminism and will continue to be part of the future. This principle implies that "I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am" (Goduka, 2000, p.29, as cited in Chilisa et al., 2010). This gives the community priority over the individual, whilst allowing the individual to grow and flourish as a person. Another important principle regarding African feminism (often denied by

Western feminists) is the acknowledgment of African women's power within indigenous relational worlds that celebrate motherhood, sisterhood and friendship (Chilisa et al., 2010). As Chilisa et al. (2010) argue, motherhood is central to African households and family organisation, and the agency and power of mothers is a source of solidarity. Acknowledging the importance of African relational gender roles helps in understanding how girls and women have used relational gender roles as sites for resistance and sources of empowerment. African feminism emphasises the power and agency of African women, in particular regarding their cultures and lived experiences, to produce knowledge that is contextually relevant, builds relationships and heals the self, the community and the larger socio-cultural sphere.

The common agenda of endarkened or Black feminism is to reveal the dynamic and constant changing nature of oppression of African ascendant women across national contexts. Dillard et al. (2011) argue that women of African ascent share experiences of oppression related to and characterised by class, race and/or gender. Even though such interlocking oppressions may characterise Black women's experiences in parts of Africa, Dillard et al. (2011) believes that any particular dominant form of oppression might differ from one geographical and national context to another.

The participants of this research had specific gendered experiences related to their own lives and within their specific contexts, thus the reason for the research. This study was aimed at collaboration with the participants to co-construct indigenous understanding of their subjective experiences as Black girls from poor socio-economic circumstances, raised within African cultural values but also influenced by Western educational ideologies, all intersecting to have unique influences on their experiences of power. This leads to a discussion of intersectionality as underlying supportive feminist theory.

3.2.1 Intersectionality theory as supporting feminist theory

Crenshaw (1989, as cited in Davis, 2008) originated the use of the framework of intersectionality, feeling that the experiences of women of colour had been excluded from both anti-racist and feminist discourse. She used the theory to argue that their race and gender intersected to make them particularly vulnerable to experience intra-racial violence. Davis (2008) explains it as the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of

difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. The concept intersectionality allows for the exploration of the relationships between different social categories and experiences in order to understand the different dimensions of the social world that impact on an individual or group. Clarke et al. (2009) believe that gender dimensions of privilege and marginalisation intersect with other social dimensions of inequality and exclusion, such as race, culture, class and sexuality. Multiple social categories work in concert with, or at times in opposition to, in shaping each other and thus influence how people can live in and experience the world. For the purpose of this research I do not see myself close to being a 'specialist feminist theoretician' (Davis, 2008) but rather a 'generalist' (Davis, 2008) who uses intersectionality in terms of exploring and understanding the different social categories that influence the adolescent girls' from child-headed households lives.

I appreciate the underlying principles of intersectionality as they support a deeper, unique and diverse understanding of the complexities that influence adolescent girls from child-headed households' lives. According to Davis (2008), it addresses the most pivotal theoretical and normative feminist concern, namely the acknowledgement that there are differences among women. By looking at the differences, it "aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it" (Phoenix, 2006, p.187, as cited in Davis, 2008). Secondly, it makes the social and material consequences of the gender/class/ race categories visible and does so by using methodologies compatible with the post-structuralist aim to deconstruct categories and unmask universalism, as well as exploring the dynamic contradictory workings of power (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p.82, as cited in Davis, 2008). Thirdly, it is appealing to both generalists and specialists in feminist academic audiences. It provides a bridge and mends the division between generalists (feminist researchers) and specialists (theory), by persuading theorists to ground their meta-concerns in the concrete social and political contexts of women's lives and the generalists to reclaim theory as an integral part of feminist inquiry. Lastly, by virtue of its vagueness and inherent open-endedness, it initiates a process of discovery that leads to more comprehensive and reflexive critical insight. In this process of discovery one views the world as more complicated and contradictory, inviting researchers to ask new questions and explore new territories.

Intersectionality does not imply the layering of different social categories but rather represents their mixing into an inseparable amalgam. Similarly, social categories are an integral part of the girls' lives as a backdrop of their lived experiences in terms of gender (female), socio-economic class (previously disadvantaged and harshly financially strained), age (adolescents), race (Black) and culture (African).

3.2.1.1 Intersectionality applied to the girl children

This section draws on a paper by Taefi (2009) on why girls have been marginalised and how the voice of the girl child can be brought to the centre of the human rights discourse. Taefi (2009) drew mostly on the work of Crenshaw and Grillo to argue that girls are marginalised globally as girls within the category of children, and as female within the category of women are minors. Girls' marginalisation is intensified as uniquely situated in both woman and children being confronted with gender bias and paternalistic attitudes towards them. Adult and male domination is reinforced by cultural norms, further denying their equal rights and value. Taefi (2009) explains that an intersectional approach to girls' rights, and I argue their value, acknowledges both a gender and age dimension to the concept of their best interests and participation in society. Gender issues pertaining to girls are often limited to harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (Lee, 1994; Wexler, 2006, as cited in Taefi, 2009).

The voice of the girl child is quietened because "...members of the dominant groups assume that their perceptions are the pertinent perceptions, that their problems are the problems that need to be addressed and that in discourse they should be the speaker rather than the listener" (Grillo & Wildman, 1991, p.402, as cited in Taefi, 2009). Adulthood defines indirectly what it means to be a child as the dominant experiences of being male (patriarchy) define what it means to be female. According to Mackinnon (2006, p.4, as cited in Taefi, 2009) men's experiences of the world still inform the dominant discourse and tacit authority of men defines society. The girl child is born into a gendered world in which male experiences are the norm and her experiences are considered less valuable. Concurrently, she is also born into an adult-dominated society and is emotionally and economically dependent on adults. The experiences of what it means to be a female are thus already shaped by what it means to be an *adult* woman, shifting the girl's needs and experiences to the margins. For this reason, Taefi (2009) argues that girls' rights are

overshadowed by a concern for the experiences of adult women and women's rights discourse (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000; Cook, 1994).

In order to include the girl child, general statements and conjunctive phrases are used, such as 'women and girls', however the specific experiences of girls within societies are needed to eliminate their dual marginalisation (Raitt, 2005/6, Olsen, 1992; Burman, 2008, as cited in Taefi, 2009). The same can account for when girls and boys are assimilated within the same category of youth studies which are ageless and genderless. In the South African and child-headed household context, Black girls are marginalised even more as they do not have the comfort of being emotionally or economically dependent on adults. Within society their gender places them further at risk of being subjected to sexual violence. Their age as minors and adolescents in an adult-dominated society, places them in a subordinate position of being under the power of adults. More threatening are adult men who assault adolescent girls from low socio-economic circumstances.

Gender-neutral approaches fail to acknowledge the interface of violence against girls and gender discrimination as manifested in culturally relativist attitudes towards violence against girls. Taefi (2009) argues from the principle that an individual's beliefs and actions should be understood in terms of their culture. Whilst for relativists no culture or state should impose their values on others, the opposing perspective asserts that rights are universal in character and transcend boundaries of culture, thus the fundamental values of international human rights apply cross-culturally.

Taefi (2009) uses the example of how intersectional discrimination against girls reinforces the validity of cultural practices, such as *Trokosi* (common practice in the Volta Region, Ghana) by which a girl's family places her in sexual servitude to a priest to compensate for the sins of family members (Amoah, 2007). Patriarchal attitudes in the family and wider community strengthen the perception that girls have a lower status and often materialise in emotional, physical and sexual violence (Goonesekere, 2006, as cited in Taefi, 2009). Two less questioned notions relating to acts of violence and abuse against the girl child are that parents own their children and that women are objects of male desire.

As indicated in this section, intersectionality frames the interaction of multiple forms of marginalisation to explain how power attaches to particular categories, and according to Grillo (1995, p.27, as cited in Taefi, 2009), a multitude of forms of oppression cannot be

dismantled as they mutually reinforce one another. Girls' gender reinforces discrimination and the lack of empowerment they experience.

3.2.2 Perspectives on gender development theory

Clarke et al. (2009, p.232) cites Burr (1988, p.2) who regards gender as "... the backcloth against which our daily lives are played out. It suffuses our existence so that, like breathing, it becomes invisible to us because of its familiarity". It is assumed that when babies are born the biological sex will determine the gender in terms of the psychological characteristics regarding identity and role-behaviour which develops within certain cultural guidelines. Sexuality will then emerge when nearing puberty. These constructs are binaries in terms of being male or female, masculine or feminine and heterosexual or homosexual. Clarke et al. (2009) state that, when the sex and gender match up, heterosexuality follows, but if the matching up does not take place society judges the child, the environment or the mother, but not the model.

Clarke et al. (2009) write about the reification of gender, which involves treating something such as gender, which is in essence abstract, as living or real. Gender is a construct that is used to theorise and explain patterned differences and experience which is treated as real, something inside a person, which determines a person's actions and interactions with others and one's identity. Gender behaviours and practices are seen as outward expressions of inner gender identity which should match the sex. Within the social constructionist model gender is not reified, but gender is rather seen as *something that people do*. There are thus different points of view in terms of what gender is and how it should be understood.

Gender is thus a very important and complex category which influences lives significantly, especially when social issues of inequality and exclusion are explored and addressed. In terms of intersectionality, gender intersects with other social categories associated with inequality and exclusion, such as race, culture, class and sexuality. Gender, according to Clarke et al. (2009), also limits the way in which one can experience the world as well as how one views people and their behaviour. Despite legislative reform on international and national levels, the lives of women and men, and girls and boys continue to be formed and moulded by different expectations and opportunities. Examples would be the classical

notion that little girls should wear pink and play with their dolls and tea sets, while boys wear blue and should play with cars, boats and aeroplanes. In general terms, boys are also expected to achieve higher educational qualifications while girls should settle for a career in teaching and nursing, for instance.

Gender is a complex term used and theorised in many different ways. Nath (2009) provides examples of conceptual approaches which have been used in social science, such as its being used as an attribute for individuals, as a mode of social organisation or as a transitional and contradictory space, operating simultaneously as a social fact as well as a normative and regulatory demand. Furthermore, gender is a product of socialisation or disciplinary practice, an effect of language, a matter of behavioural conformity or a structural feature of labour. For Scott (1986, p.1067, as cited in Nath, 2009), gender is a concept of two interrelated and analytically distinct components: “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” Lastly, Clarke et al., (2009) discuss and surmise that most psychological research is concerned with gender on two interrelated levels: firstly at the social level, where gender is a social categorisation system, informing individuals about the importance of gender and its origin. It provides information regarding appropriate ways to which I add appropriate ways according to the specific culture, society, and community, to live as gendered people. Secondly, at the individual level, there is the personal experience and expression of gender. This refers to the sense people have about themselves as gendered beings, and the way they enact their lives in a gendered way. I regard gender as not an either/or notion but as one that should be considered as an interrelated process of what the individual experiences internally as well as how society influences gendered behaviour and gender roles. Clarke (2009) provides an outline of the three main models used to explain the origin and meaning of gender cutting across various levels, as follows.

Gender as nature: Before the 1970s the dominant framework viewed gender as the sex of the body and/or the masculine/feminine personality traits. This is also the biological based explanation of where personalities, desires, needs, abilities and beliefs result from hormones, genes and other biological factors. This is thus also an essentialist way of viewing gender, namely as a fixed and stable feature of the person or their personality (their nature), from birth to death, and will not change depending on context or the situation. Gender is *what one is*.

Gender as nurture: The term ‘gender’ was first theorised about and used in the 1970s to distinguish what was socially learned from sex as a biological classification. It also demonstrated that a relationship was not necessary between the two. In this instance gender refers to masculine or feminine personality traits. It is seen as a cultural overlay of the biological sex, as something that has been learnt by individuals from an early age and the culture in which they grew up. Children learn a range of culturally appropriate and inappropriate desires, practices, beliefs and feelings in accordance with their sexed bodies which then becomes internalised as a stable part of the individual. Gender as nurture is still the dominant model in feminist psychology, mainstream and critical psychology. This too is an essentialist view of gender because as gender is learned it is seen to be stable and relatively unchangeable by the influences of immediate contextual surroundings. Gender is *what one has*.

Gender as social construct: The most complex and challenging way gender is theorised, as a social construct it questions the core assumptions of both the nature and nurture frameworks. The social constructionist approach does not view gender as a natural phenomenon but rather as a social construction, specific to a socio-cultural and historical period. Gender is seen as a result of shared cultural knowledge and language use, rather than as an internal psychological or biological process. Two important social constructionist components accounting for gender are anti-essentialism and social categorisation. Gender is not seen as something that is stable, a permanent feature of an individual or as something that resides *within* individuals as part of either biology or personality, thus referring to anti-essentialism. Gender is an unnatural social categorisation system that places priority on gender differences. Masculinity and femininity are not seen as naturally resulting from biological differences between ‘male’ and ‘female’ bodies but as social products resulting from society.

Clarke et al. (2009) argue that some social constructionists posit that there are two types of sexed bodies and two types of gendered people who are different from each other, a powerful ideology that shapes reality and not just reflects it. Thus, societies believe that there are two sexes because they continually reflect this idea and persuade citizens that it is so, and they in turn perpetuate it. Gender is thus seen as *what one does*, rather than *what one has or is*. According to Bohan (1997, p.40, as cited in Clarke et al., 2009, p.236): “Individuals *do* – ‘act out’ – gender in our lives and interactions. However, we still

‘perceive ourselves as *intrinsically* gendered because gender so thoroughly infuses our experiences’, through the power of social norms”.

Still within the social constructionist model, Butler (1999), a cultural/queer theorist, has argued that gender is *performative*. In Butler’s model there is no inner essence of gender but rather the gendered person is produced in and through the performativity of gender. By engaging in practices such as playing with dolls and/or cars repeatedly, day after day, one produces and reproduces a gendered reality and with it the illusion of a stable inner gender identity. Butler also prefers the term ‘performativity’ to ‘performance’ as the latter suggests that there is an inner gendered being prescribing a person’s outward behaviour. The social constructed realities are very powerful and the effects of language and gendered behaviour are regulated by powerful social norms that are reinforced each time gender is performed within the cultural norms determined by society (Clarke et al., 2009). When people do not fit into the normative society their behaviour may be judged and disapproved of through stares, violence and psychiatric diagnosis.

In summary, based on my experience as an educational psychologist working with a transgendered client as well as with gay clients over the past 10 years, and as mother of a daughter who is sensitive to gender development, I argue that gender may include aspects from the three models. The transgendered client explained gendered development experiences as progressing from birth as a male into a certain biological and genetic composition which then influenced natural preferences towards social behaviour and interests associated with beauty and femininity. Although children are living within an adult-dominated society they have the power to internally select the gendered behaviour and interests that fit with them. They may realise it at different times, considering the limitations and prescriptions of their social and cultural world. Figure 3.3 provides an illustration of my own understanding regarding the interrelated factors of gender development.

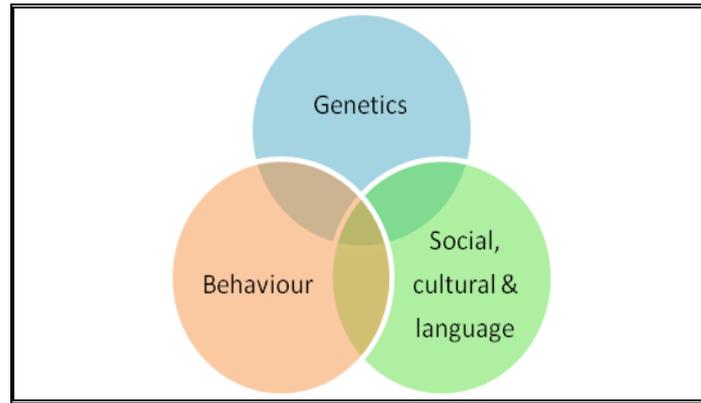


Figure 3.3: Gender development model

Gender is experienced by and affects all. Men as a group are often seen as the chosen ones against whom women are evaluated and judged due to gendered constructions and practices. Travis (1993, as cited in Clarke et al., 2009) believes that men are seen as ‘normal’ and women as ‘different’ from men, and the difference needs to be explained. Individuals are also influenced by the traditional constructions of masculinity in terms of rationality, individualism and aggressiveness, while femininity is associated with emotionality, valuing relationships and submissiveness.

3.2.2.1 Gender roles and Black adolescent girls

I included the study done by Buckley and Carter (2005) as it provides a clear discussion regarding the gender roles of Black adolescent girls, illuminating the contextual realities of what adolescent girls from child-headed families are also faced with within South African society. Some feminist scholars (Chodorow, 1979; Dinnerstein, 1976; Gilligan, 1982, as cited in Buckley et al., 2005) argue that the domination of adolescent girls can be related to restrictive gender socialisation traditions. According to Galambos et al. (1990) and Ruble and Maritn (1998) as cited in Buckley et al. (2005), gender intensification heightens during adolescence, when gender-differential socialisation promotes girls as more passive, nurturing and submissive (feminine characteristics), while boys according to Hill & Lynch (1983) cited in Buckley et al. (2005) are encouraged to be more independent, assertive and strong (masculine characteristics). Adolescent girls receive strong messages from significant others as well as the culture that undermines their confidence, suppresses their

self-identity and compels them to conform to limiting gender roles, as reflected in the experiences of mainly White girls (Basow, 1999; Brown & Gilligan, 1992, as cited in Buckley et al., 2005). Collins (1991, 2000, 2004) and Ward (1996) as cited in Buckley et al., (2005) have however found that Black girls in the USA experience their gender roles as less limiting and restrictive while their self-esteem remains relatively constant during adolescence (American Association of University Women, 1991, cited in Buckley et al., 2005).

Relating to gender roles and psychological well-being, Buckley et al. (2005) write that more recent research has indicated that girls and women who are less traditional, androgynous (possessing both masculine and feminine characteristics) and exhibit stereotypical masculine characteristics are associated with life satisfaction (Mokgatle & Schoeman, 1998), positive body image (Molloy & Herzberger, 2002) and academic achievement (Robinson-Awana, Kehle, Bray, Jenson, Clack & Lawless, 2001).

In terms of race and gender socialisation, Harris (1994, 1997), Pettigrew (1964) and Wade (1996) as cited in Buckley et al. (2005) explain that individuals internalise characteristics considered to be masculine or feminine as prescribed and determined by a person's race and culture. Due to unequal access to economic, social and political resources Black people (Massey & Denton, 1993; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997, as cited in Buckley et al., 2005) are not afforded the possibility of gender role differentiation (Harris, 1997, cited in Buckley et al., 2005). In South Africa, employment for Black women is of vital importance to the economic survival of Black families, so their definitions of womanhood and femininity have expanded to include hard work, perseverance, self-reliance, tenacity and resistance (Collins, 1991, 2000, 2004; Reid, 1988, as cited in Buckley et al., 2005). Adolescent girls are then often socialised to take both traditional responsibilities such as care and nurturance and non-traditional gender ones as financial provider (Ward, 1996, cited in Buckley et al., 2005). Ward (1996, cited in Buckley et al., 2005) suggests that Black girls who include the roles of mother and worker in their lives, displaying strength and perseverance, are likely to experience positive self-esteem as these roles and characteristics are consistent with their cultural teachings. Although research by Makgatle and Schoeman (1998) into Black South African college students also found that non-traditional gender roles were associated with life satisfaction (Buckley et al., 2005), for instance being able to study further after finishing school, being more assertive in romantic relationships and socialising more outside the family.

Regarding the study by Buckley et al. (2005), positive relationships were shown between gender role and physical attractiveness, as physical appearance is a significant marker for self-esteem for adolescent girls (Erkut et al., 1996; Erkut, Marx, Field & Sing, 1999). Chin and McConnel (2003) and Duke (2002) as cited in Buckley et al. (2005) have found that Black girls are often able to resist mainstream messages regarding beauty and instead take cognisance of the cultural group's beauty messages.

From the above discussion one may infer that Black African adolescent girls are generally socialised and exposed to take on childrearing and household responsibilities from an early age. Those specifically from child-headed household however are placed under more pressure as they no longer have the support of a live-in adult, but still have to manage a household and strive to achieve a general education qualification.

Gender roles taken on within the household are influenced by many intersecting factors and a closer look will now be given to resiliency as the second supporting theory.

3.2.3 The underlying principles of resiliency theory

Resiliency theory in relation to endarkened/Black feminism acknowledges the principle of communal values (Dillard et al., 2011) as a protective factor, supporting individuals in managing their adversities. Kulkarni, Kennedy and Lewis (2010) explain that both feminist theory and resiliency theory focus on identifying environmental strengths, community resources and relationships that support and strengthen growth within the individual as well as the community to lead to change. Furthermore, feminist theory pertains to intersectionality, wherein gender, race/ethnicity and class inform a deepened understanding of the lived experiences of marginalised adolescent girls from child-headed households, while resiliency theory provides a framework for identifying the strength-based factors within the community as well as the individual, and to withstand their adversities despite these social categories. Endarkened feminist theory values the relational processes of individuals and the community which contributes to human development and growth, interrelating well with the protective factors that can be highlighted within resiliency theory.

Explaining and defining resilience is difficult since understanding of it has developed as studies have been conducted regarding what makes it possible for some people to negotiate

and manage their way through difficult and undesirable conditions but then still ultimately live generally happy and constructive lives. Eloff's (2008) chronological-historical view of the development of resilience research and its meanings traces it from the 1960s and 1970s, when it was conceptualised in relation to *ego-resilience* (Block, 1965; Tyron & Tyron, 1976; Arend, Gove & Sroufe, 1979) and linked to children being able to adapt positively to the environment with which they were engaged. This meant that children would then adapt well and exhibit skills such as being flexible, resourceful, and persistent when in difficult and adverse situations. This however also meant that the researchers had to consider what was meant by 'adverse' situations.

In the 1980s, according to Eloff (2008), the transactional nature of understanding resilience was researched by, for instance, Rutter (1987) and Werner (1984). The focus moved to how quickly children would return to a preceding psychological or physiological state, with the assumption that the previous state was preferred. During this time resilience was seen as a characteristic or a trait of an individual (Garmezy, 1984a; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982). Children were seen as resilient if they took an active approach to solving problems, looked for support and used 'faith' to give meaning to their life experiences. Later, the understanding of resilience was elaborated on by authors to include children being able to form relationships with significant adults as well as to use 'adaptive distancing' and realistic expectations of themselves and their environment (Beardslee & Podorefsky, 1988). Barnard (1994) added research inquiring into how the individual's resilience correlated with internal locus of control, achievement orientation and the ability to construct meanings of events. It was also found that adverse situations may even increase children's resilience and be influential into adulthood (Bolig & Weddle, 1988; Barnard, 1994).

Eloff (2008) further explains that in the 1990s there was an increase in research, inquiring into the deeper understanding of social competence, problem solving skills, sense of purpose, participation, positive expectations and the nature of caring environments, while children had to cope in adverse situations such as surviving brain tumours (Carpentieri, Mulhern, Douglas, Hanna & Fairclough, 1993), homelessness (Douglas, 1996), and childhood sexual abuse (Lam & Grossman, 1997). According to Boyden (2011), resilience as concept was picked up in psychology (Masten & Reed, 2002; Masten 1999) and was used to indicate good outcomes despite high-risk status; sustained competence under threat; and recovery from trauma (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). The 2000s brought

about the realisation of the complex variables of resilience factors and the risk factors (Finkelstein et al., 2005; Davis, Cook & Cohen, 2005; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Buckner et al., 2005; Armstrong, Berni-Lefcovitz & Unger, 2005; Almedom, 2005, as cited in Eloff, 2008). Resilience as a psychological construct has thus far been well researched while more recent literature aims to include the contextual factors and the interactional nature between resilience and adversity and the idea of resilience as being collective in itself, with protective contextual factors also playing a role in children's resilience (Eloff, 2008; Boyden & Cooper, 2007; Boyden, 2011).

In developing countries much of resilience research has focused on how children manage and negotiate their way through social devastation such as armed conflict and rebel forces, famine, as well as family abandonment and orphaning. Boyden (2011) argues the point that for a long time the role of contextual factors as well as the social, economic and political contributions children have made to their families, have been ignored. The main reason for this was that the dominant Western discourse of universal child development viewed childhood as a decontextualised life phase characterised by dependence, incompetence and vulnerability. Boyden (2011) notes the research done by Young Lives in which the causal processes in household poverty and hardship in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam are being explored. The project follows 12,000 children over fifteen years and to date has shown that household vulnerability to poverty is amplified by serious illness and death, environmental hazards such as droughts and flooding and economic shock, for example job loss or dramatic price fluctuations. The most significant indicators are that household poverty is closely related to rural location and social structural factors such as minority ethnic and/or religious status. One example would be how the structural configuration in India permanently disadvantages a hundred million people within the deprived 'Scheduled Castes', supported by religiously sanctioned notions of pollution. The original inhabitants of India, the 'Scheduled Tribes' involves another highly disadvantaged minority, living in the poorest households, facing adversity such as environmental hazards, economic shock, family illness and death (Boyden & Crivello, 2011, in Boyden, 2011).

Studies further established that these structural inequalities are worse for girls due to intra-household inequalities (Boyden, 2011). An important element of resilience is also influenced by the perceptions people have of risk factors, as influenced by the social and

cultural meanings that inform and motivate human interaction with adversity (Boyden, 2011). In summary, it is important to take note however that more research needs to be done in terms of the political-economic and social structural dynamics that cause inequalities and in combination predispose the disadvantaged to adversity. Boyden (2011) thus believes that factors that mediate children's resilience are often misdirected as having causal roles when they might rather be secondary to more fundamental societal processes. Most of the body of knowledge regarding resilience in the past has also been formed around how the individual manages and works through adversity and stressful life experiences, not taking into consideration the circumstances and contextual attributions as they contribute to the individual's resilience. With regard to the contextual environment researchers speculate that moderately safe communities with supportive resources outside children's homes may increase their resilience (Leaper et al., 2008, as cited in Uys, 2009).

Included within the collection of different developments within resilience studies, is family resilience (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011). Families are seen as the most fundamental social system influencing human development and, as mentioned in Section 3.3.2.3., constitute a critical entry point in terms of socialisation within society. Bhana et al. (2011) add that when formal safety nets and state provision fails, families are the social systems that lessen the burden on individuals by absorbing the negative impact of events, especially during rapid social change and where state facilities and services are overstretched (Richter & Sherr et al., 2009). If a family is not successful the health and wellbeing of the individual members are at risk, especially for children (Richter, Dawes & de Kadt, 2010). Resilience is seen as a process that occurs due to the dynamic interchange between the individual, the family, the community and the dominant culture. Families thus form part of a critical foundation for the development of resilience, even though the most effective strategies promote resilience at institutional, political, familial, community and individual level (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, Infante, 2001, as cited in Bhana et al., 2011).

Bhana et al.'s review (2011) of family resilience among low and middle income contexts identified individual/family-level and community-level determinants contributing to family resilience. Families' belief systems and values play an integral part in terms of fostering optimism and finding some meaning in crises or changing events. Self-reliance and self-determination comprise another factor which could form a sense of personal confidence in terms of helping family members to utilise their problem solving skills and abilities.

Furthermore family resilience studies regarding low and middle income families often report that the belief in a higher power serves as an important factor in overcoming their challenges (Greeff & Du Toit, 2009; Greeff & Loubser, 2008).

Crosnoe, Mistry and Elder (2002) reported that when a financially poor family displays warmth, emotional support, togetherness and collective efficacy children perform better at school and are more likely to improve their life opportunities. Seccombe (2002) however noted that if parents are not able to provide this kind of support, other family members such as siblings, grandparents and close community members may have a similar effect and highlights the role of extra-familial support which strengthens resilience. Cluver and Gardner (2007) as well as Operario, Cluver, Rees, MacPhail and Pettifor (2008) discussed the role warmth and emotional support play as a foundation for family resilience among children orphaned by AIDS. In terms of social and community related factors, the availability and use of social support and community ties serves as a very important resilience-promoting factor for families in lower income households (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Bhana et al., 2011).



3.3 SOUTH AFRICAN ADOLESCENT GIRLS' LIVES

A more general discussion of each of the following sections will be given, after which it will be discussed more specifically to adolescent girls from child-headed households within the South African context. My aim with the literature review was to appreciate the multiple and complex intersecting factors that are innately part of each individual adolescent girl's life as well as take contextual factors into account which shape individuals lives daily. The literature review will thus include a general discussion of the understanding of adolescence as part of a life course, the role of cognitive and physical factors influencing the lives of adolescent girls and contextual realities South African adolescent girls from child-headed households are confronted with. It will inform and elucidate the findings discussed in Chapter 4 as suggested by this research study.

3.3.1 Adolescence as part of a life course

Human development is a lifelong process, which makes adolescence part of a life course and not an isolated period of development. Collins, Welsh and Furman (2009) as cited in Santrock (2010) and Johnson, Crosnoe and Elder (2011) agree that what takes place during adolescence is related to the development and experiences both in childhood and in adulthood when taking into consideration Life Span Developmental Theories and Life Course Developmental Theory. The combination of heredity factors, experiences of childhood and adolescence, and socio-cultural influences, impact on the course adolescent development takes and is specific to each individual. Shanahan and Macmillan (2008, p.40, as cited in Johnson et al., 2011) explain that life course refers to “the age-graded sequence of roles, opportunities, constraints and events that shape the biography from birth to death”.

Grotevant (1998) summarises the three principles of the Life Course Perspective as a developmental model, firstly considering the individual’s own development as shaped by the conditions and events during the historical period through which the person lives. For instance, the adolescent girls’ development is influenced by growing up in a post-apartheid era when the socio-economic injustices of the past are still being addressed and supposedly eliminated. The second principle includes the biological timing, social transition and role expectations and opportunities throughout the individual’s life course which plays a major factor in his or her development. The adolescent girls from child-headed households are expected to fulfil the role of caregiver and student as well as coping with their own emotional, cognitive and biological changes. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that the lives of family members are interdependent and that their own personal reactions to historical events or role transitions affect the developmental course of other family members within and across generations. Within the child-headed family the adolescent girl being confronted with physical maturation, the role of household manager and learner may not be able to provide the necessary emotional support to a younger sibling who has just entered formal schooling and who is also confronted with emotional, social and cognitive developmental changes and transitions. The adolescent’s development, changes and transitions take place within relationships, culture and history.

Johnson et al. (2011) raise two conceptual themes found in a variety of developmental perspectives that are also relevant to my study. The first is that adolescence can also be

viewed as a time during which earlier disadvantages or childhood experiences can be safeguarded or aggravated in ways which then influences adulthood. This involves continuity and discontinuity in life's pathways. It may thus provide a turning point whereby previous life advantages and risks are accumulated, sending young people on divergent paths into and through adulthood. This interrelates with the second conceptual theme, which involves the role individuals play in their own development and the complex ways adolescents select personal experiences, interpersonal relationships and social settings which reflect their past and contribute to their future. This process of selection is influenced by the person's 'agentic striving' as well as the interplay of environmental and biological factors.

These two themes imply that a child whose primary caregiver has died during adolescence, when thoughts are becoming critical, choose to process and integrate the loss as influential in choosing to rely on the values taught by the mother and strive for independence. Alternatively, the child might be influenced by personal experiences and social settings to justify choosing to become involved in risky behaviour and drop out of school. It is thus important for me to take into consideration the historical, socio-economic and cultural aspects of adolescent life as these factors in their variety leave a mark on the life course as well as psychological wellbeing of young people.

Grotevant (1998) argues that adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, but is long and unique enough to require analysis in its own right. Crawford et al. (2004) note that in societies in which children are expected to do adult work as soon as they are physically able, there is no such stage as adolescence. I will however include three 'primary' developmental changes that are seen as universal regarding adolescence. I will not be discussing developmental theories in detail but rather focus on how the physical and cognitive biological changes influence the lives of adolescent girls, specifically those from child-headed households.

The universal aspects of developmental change in adolescence is seen by Grotevant (1998) as the changes in physical and sexual maturation, changes in social status from child to adult, and the potential for changes in reasoning ability. The beginning of adolescence is typically identified by the signs of transformation from the body of a child to that of an adult. For girls, however, these changes may start from the age of ten, earlier than for boys.

These physical changes are significant, especially with regard to how they become incorporated into the adolescents' emerging sense of self and relationships.

3.3.1.1 Physical and cognitive attributes as influential features

Brooks-Gunn and Petersen (1983a, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004) point out the etymological derivation of *adolescence* in Latin means “to grow up”, and the word *puberty* from the Latin word *pubescere*, which refers to “to become hairy”. Puberty involves the rapid physical maturation of individuals as it involves hormonal and bodily changes which are usually complete by mid-adolescence. Physical maturation in itself presents with a multitude of compounding factors that influence the lives of adolescent girls. Those from child-headed households may no longer have live-in support of a mother or a mentoring elder lady who could guide and support them through these physical changes and maturation. Besides needing to manage a household, care for siblings and go to school, adolescent girls from child-headed households also need to manage their way through physical maturation.

3.3.1.1.1 Physical maturation

According to Santrock (2010), the determinants of puberty include heredity and hormones, and are accompanied by changes in weight, percentage of body fat and leptin. Physical maturation in adolescence is influenced by two classes of hormones, namely androgens and estrogens. The endocrine system's role in puberty involves the interaction of the hypothalamus, pituitary gland and gonads. For girls, menarche and sexual maturation are key features of pubertal change, but for many girls menarche, as associated with menstruation, is an embarrassing event that needs to be concealed. According to Crawford et al. (2004), many cultures have a ritual to publicise the girl reaching menarche. Menstruation, however, continues to carry a negative stigma and women are aware of the social impact thereof, and thus adolescent girls are continuously concerned about how to conceal it. For those from child-headed households and in vulnerable socio-economic situations it is an even higher stressor as they do not have the financial means to purchase sanitary products to prevent odour and staining. Some decide to stay at home until their menstruation cycle has passed, impacting on their academic progress.

These pubertal changes also have a psychological effect on adolescents as they become more aware of their body image and show a heightened interest in their bodies. Adolescent girls seem however to have more negative body images during adolescence (Santrock, 2010).

Crawford et al. (2004) suggest that on average a girl's physical changes and maturation are more significant and visible earlier than boys, and most girls compare themselves to other girls. Society, peers and media project certain bodies as valued, and girls internalise society's judgements about feminine roles, with stereotypes that may lead to problems with self-esteem and school achievement difficulties. Sexual objectification influences their relationships with other girls as well as with boys and significant concerns about appearance reflect general social issues such as ambivalence about the role of women.

Girls from child-headed households compare themselves to their peers at school and may idealise the 'size zero' Western body image portrayed in the media as desired by men. These impressions of what the ideal woman should like and which role she should fulfil could further compound their lived realities as they feel frustrated by their financial restraints and disappointed as the slim successful career woman image is more difficult to attain when needing to struggle to survive physically, economically and emotionally on a daily basis.

The development of an individual's own sexual identity and desires takes place within the context of a particular time in history, social class, ethnic group, religion and prevailing set of gender roles (Foucault, 1978; Rubin, 1984, cited in Crawford et al., 2004). According to Carroll (2010, as cited in Santrock, 2010) teenage sexual initiation varies widely between culture and gender and is in most cases linked to the culture's values and customs. Social norms and the involvement of peers in sexual activity have a strong influence on adolescents' sexual identity. A study by Potard, Courtois and Rusch (2008, cited in Santrock, 2010) showed that when adolescents perceive their peers as being sexually permissive, they showed a higher rate of initiating sexual intercourse and engaging in risky sexual behaviour. One of the strongest predictors of sexual activity is the *perceived* level of sexual activity of adolescents' best friends (DiBlasio & Benda, 1992; Furstenberg, Moore & Peterson, 1986, Miller et al., 1997, cited in Crawford et al., 2004). Lyons, Giordano, Manning and Longmore (2011) also found in their study that friends' liberal attitudes and sexual behaviour was seen as a significant predictor of variations in the

number of sexual partners adolescent respondents reported. Negative labels and gossip by the wider circle of peers due to more negative attributions was however buffered by closer accepting friends. This is also important in relation to adolescent girls from child-headed households as they may associate only with a few trusted friends, but this does not guarantee that the few trusted friends do not engage in early sexual activity. Due to their parents being absent or dead, adolescent girls may seek and find a false sense of belonging within a sexual relationship with a partner, which would be more acceptable if practiced by close friends. Possible risk factors identified for early engagement in sexual intercourse for adolescents were identified as living with other than two biological parents, being less closely monitored by parents, having more advanced physical maturity and more involvement in dating behaviour, having more permissive attitudes towards sex, alcohol use, delinquency, school problems and, for girls, showing depressive symptoms, and living in lower socio-economic status (Zimmer-Gembeck & Helfand, 2007, as cited in Peltzer, 2010). Adolescents' sexual identity and behaviour also involve an indication of a person's sexual orientation, which involves activities, interests and styles of behaviour.

According to Crawford et al. (2004), sexual orientation is a multidimensional concept involving erotic identity, affectionate relationships, behaviour, fantasies and emotional attachments, and it should be understood that sexual relationships are only one component, and may not necessarily be the most important component. A person's sexual attraction, whether it is heterosexual or within the sexual minority group, is likely to be influenced by a combination of genetic, hormonal, cognitive and environmental factors. Hammack et al. (2009, as cited in Saewyc, 2011) believe that adolescent narratives may be changing to incorporate experiences of 'emancipation' or resistance to the more hetero-normative structured categories of sexual orientation of the previous generation.

Studies by Savin-Williams and Diamond (2000, cited in Saewyc, 2011) noted greater fluidity of attractions among adolescent females with a significantly higher proportion of females than males identifying as bisexual or mostly heterosexual in population surveys (Russel & Seif, 2002; Saewyc et al., 1998a, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, as cited in Saewyc, 2011). This information is also relevant to my study as one of the participants experienced a same-sex relationship soon after the death of her mother while attending an all-girls high school during her Grade 9 year. As Hammack, Thompson and Pilecki (2009, cited in Saewyc, 2011) argue, it is important to take into consideration the adolescent's context and

societal changes in which sexual orientation development occurs, as well as the specific meaning it has to him or her. The peer relations of sexual minority youth also vary from those of heterosexual youths as discrimination and bias against same-sex attraction produces significant stress for the adolescent (Santrock, 2010). In township communities, such relationships are still seen as taboo, and are highly discriminated against to the point of threats, intimidation and violence.

In closing, adolescent girls are thus also at risk in terms of sexually transmitted diseases due to increase in sexual activity. Peltzer (2010) reported on a study conducted in eight African countries (Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Senegal, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) on HIV-risk behaviour, 16.3% of 15 year old adolescents reported having had two or more sexual partners, and among the sexually active almost half (45.4%) reported not using condoms during their latest sexual encounter. Worldwide, the greatest concern regarding specifically the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is in sub-Saharan Africa, where it has reached epidemic proportions (DiClemente & Crosby, 2009; UNISEF, 2009, as cited in Santrock, 2010). Cherutich et al. (2008, cited in Santrock, 2010) state that it is adolescent girls in many African countries that are at greater risk of infection with HIV by adult men, with about six times more adolescent girls being HIV positive than boys in these countries. In Kenya 25% of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are HIV-positive, compared to 4% of boys. In Botswana, more than 30% of adolescent girls who are pregnant are infected by HIV. This phenomenon has also led to an increase in children and adolescents who are orphaned and left to care for themselves because of their parents acquiring the disease. According to UNICEF (2006, as cited in Santrock, 2010), twelve million children and adolescents had, by 2006, become orphans because of the death of their parents due to AIDS, and the figure was expected to increase to sixteen million in 2010. A study by Thurman, Brown, Richter, Maharaj and Hagnani (2006, as cited in Uys, 2009) concerning the number of AIDS orphans in South Africa indicated that they were approximately one and a half times more likely than non-orphans to have sex at a young age. In addition, 23% of the orphans reported having engaged in sexual activity by the age of thirteen.

3.3.1.1.2 *Developmental changes of the brain*

Although little research has been carried out in terms of the developmental changes of the brain during adolescence, an increasing number of studies are now being conducted

(Casey, Jones, & Hare, 2008; Whittle et al., 2008). According to scientists the brain is still growing during adolescence and is different from that of a child and undergoes significant structural changes (Blakemore, Burnett & Dahl, 2010; Casey, Getz & Calvan, 2008; Van Duijvenvoorde & Crone, 2013). The most significant changes are in the corpus callosum, a large bundle of axon fibres that connect the brain's left and right hemispheres and thicken during adolescence as it improves the ability to process information. The prefrontal cortex is the highest level of the frontal lobes that is responsible for a person's reasoning, decision making and self-control. Its development continues throughout early adulthood until approximately 18 to 25 years of age and later (Giedd et al., 2008; Shaw et al., 2008, in Santrock, 2010). The amygdala, as part of the brain's limbic system and seat of emotions such as anger, matures much earlier than the prefrontal cortex (Whittle et al., 2008). The implications thereof, according to leading researcher Charles Nelson (2003; Nelson, Thomas & de Haan, 2006, as cited in Santrock, 2010), is that although adolescents may experience heightened emotions, their prefrontal cortex may not have developed adequately enough to control their passions. In terms of adolescent girls from child-headed households, their circumstances may trigger heightened emotions of despair, sadness, fear and anger, from which at times it may be difficult to regulate, as their reasoning skills and abilities are still maturing into early adulthood.

Cognitive development is influenced by heredity and environmental factors (Sternberg, 2009d, as cited in Santrock, 2010), and the changing adolescent's cognitive skills are also accompanied by changes in how they view their social worlds. Near the end of adolescence the young person is challenged to know and realise on a more integrated level who he/she is, and combine individual abilities and interests with the cultural opportunities and norms set out. Niemark (1982, as cited in Grotevant, 1998) highlights however that the potential for hypothetico-deductive (scientific) reasoning appears to be universal but the environments provided by different cultural settings are not equally facilitative for such development. The adolescent's cognitive development, for example, influences his/her cognitive-social development between parents and adolescents and adolescent and peers. Parents and adolescents might disagree on certain issues due to the differences in interpretation or meanings attributed to an event or the adolescent might start questioning the culture's values. The adolescent during this time may also become more aware of him/herself and start to think critically about social, political and religious issues.

According to Crawford et al. (2004), female development during adolescence has been researched especially in terms of how gender-related behaviour is influenced by home, school and peers. It is important, however, to keep in mind that definitions of femininity and the experiences of adolescence differ from ethnic groups and social class and thus illuminate the social construction of gender during adolescence and its relationship to biology.

3.3.1.2 Psycho-emotional impact when facing adverse circumstances

Fiorelli (2010) and Schultz (2007) stated that the loss of a parent can have a profound impact on a young person during a phase of life that is already marked by significant physical, interpersonal and psychosocial transition. Children indeed grieve and often experience a significant amount of distress in response to the death of a parent (Hope & Hodge, 2006). It has been argued by Foster and Williamson (2000, as cited in Bray, 2003) that little is known about the psycho-social impact of being an orphan due to overriding concern for the social and economic impact thereof. It was found by the abovementioned researchers that the rate of depression among orphans in Uganda was particularly high, especially when losing their mothers, while in Zambia changes in children's behaviour were related to change in self-esteem rather than in sociability. The orphans also "exhibit internalized behaviour changes such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem rather than acting out sociopathic behaviour such as stealing, truancy, aggression and running away" (Kirya, 1996; Forsyth et al., 1996, in Foster and Williamson, 2000, p.282, as cited in Bray, 2003). Little research has been carried out on the psychological impact of orphanhood on children in South Africa and little comparative data gathered to understand the impact of being a member of a child-headed household. Research into children's resilience has looked at the conditions under which they socially and psychologically are able to maintain a sense of wellbeing, even under severe stressful circumstances, as well as determining the factors that positively affect the person's ability to recover after intense trauma and adverse conditions. Bray (2003) writes that the conclusions suggest that the context of a traumatic experience is more important than the experience itself and therefore contextual securities, such as shelter, friendships, consistent caregiver or income source, may have a critical impact on overcoming adverse, traumatic or vulnerable conditions.

In a small-scale comparative study conducted by Donald and Clacherty (2005, as cited in Bonthuys, 2010) regarding the material and emotional management of child-headed

households, it was found that their heads were more altruistic towards siblings, skilful in solving conflicts between siblings, and displayed emotional maturity which are generally not so evident in children living with adults. The children also utilised their social networks in order to acquire support regarding emotional, material and educational concerns. They also found that the heads of child-headed households had less free time available due to added responsibilities but were able to manage their time and money adequately. Heads of child-headed households may have learnt child-rearing skills and taken on domestic tasks even before their primary caregiver had died (Nsamenang, 2009). Bray and Brand (2007) as cited in Bonthuys (2010) have found that children are proud of these skills and derive a sense of self-worth from them. Children from child-headed households draw emotional strength from the presence of their siblings (Leatham, 2005) and from remaining in their physical and social environments (Bonthuys, 2010). In the midst of being able to exhibit these emotional strengths and skills, children from child-headed households also suffer from stress and anxiety when they are particularly unable to fulfil educational and other needs due to poverty (Bonthuys, 2010; Subbarao & Coury, 2004).



3.3.1.2.1 Coping strategies used by adolescents

Under ordinary circumstances adolescence in general is perceived to be a time to become cognitively more thoughtful and critical about situations and people as well as attempting to achieve a more equal power relationship in terms of parental concern. The way adolescents deal with stressful situations is an important health and wellbeing component. Difficulty and possible failure to deal with stress is costly in social and emotional terms and suicide is one problem that may be ascribed to adolescents' inability to cope with their stressors (Lewis & Frydenburg, 2002; Meehan, Peirson & Fridjhon, 2007). Beautrais, Collings and Ehrhardt (2005) as well as Meehan et al., (2007) identify three different categories of risk factors in terms of adolescents attempting suicide: the mental health of the individual, the person's personality type, and the social and family context.

Seiffge-Krenke, Aunola and Nurmi (2009) note that regular stressful conditions for teenagers include their relationships with parents (Seiffge-Krenke, Weideman, Fentner, Aegenheister & Poebrau, 2001; Thornton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995) as well as their interpersonal relationship experiences with peers (Compas & Phres, 1991; Ebata & Moos,

1994; Seiffge-Krenke, 2006) during everyday life. Stress is caused by an imbalance between the individual and the environment, and concern that something is at stake, while coping involves active and purposeful process by which the individual responds to stimuli exceeding his or her resources, such as behavioural, emotional and cognitive attempts to manage the demands caused by the stressor (Seiffge-Krenke et al, 2009). In a preliminary study done by Seiffge-Krenke (1995, as cited in Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009) with 1,029 adolescents, a multi-dimensional coping model identified three conceptually different coping styles used by adolescents: i) active coping includes strategies such as support-seeking and discussing the problem with parents, peers or other concerned persons; ii) internal coping refers to cognitive ways of dealing with stressors such as considering possible solutions and anticipating results; iii) withdrawal coping consists of withdrawal from the stressor, distraction strategies and seeking emotional outlets. According to Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2009), a number of cross-sectional studies have also indicated that when adolescents are confronted with age-specific stressors they would rely more on active and internal coping strategies (Garnefski, Legerstee, Kraaij, van der Kommer & Teerds, 2002) than on withdrawal (Gelhaar, Seiffge-Krenke, Borge, Cicognani, Cunha, Loncarie, Macek, Steinhausen & Winkler Metzke, 2007), especially when they perceive the situation as being balanced in terms of power levels (Bukowski & Sippola, 2005; as cited in Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009).

In a study by Meehan et al. (2007), within the South African context, both male and female adolescents scored higher on the functional coping strategies (active and internal) than the dysfunctional (withdrawal), with girls scoring significantly higher on each than boys. The study also found that adolescents might also be moving away from the stereotypical beliefs whereby boys are seen as being more active and girls more passive in their response styles. Previous research has not refuted the stereotype that girls are more passive in dealing with difficult and adverse situations and boys more active and overt in their actions in managing stressful situations. This may however not be the case, as recent studies have identified girls as more productive in dealing with stressful and adverse circumstances. Green and Cillessen (2008, as cited in Uys, 2009) have found that from a young age girls in their researched group have utilised more collaborative strategies while negotiating for preferred roles during a playgroup activity. The girls were also more inclined to use pro-social-assertive strategies with other girls than with boys.

Meehan et al.'s (2007) research study investigated the coping strategies of South African adolescents in terms of suicidal ideation and the role of gender. The results showed that the adolescents scored higher on internal coping strategies, for which it was important to use cognitive processes to assess the stress-related situation and find an appropriate solution, than active coping by which they would seek advice and support from other people. Both internal and active coping are functional coping strategies. Withdrawal, in terms of denying the problem or using alcohol and drugs, was the least used strategy. It was found that both the boys and the girls use similar coping strategies, with girls scoring higher on each strategy. Both girls and boys used similar coping strategies, thus contradicting earlier research studies in terms of girls and boys differing in their coping strategies. The boys and girls did however differ in the techniques they used as the girls might seek more advice and help from family members and friends (active coping) while boys may have preferred to use written material or the Internet.

During the study conducted by Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2009), which involved 200 adolescents over a four-year period, it was found that situational impact was a powerful determinant of stress perception and each individual's perception of the confronted situation. The highest stress levels were related to situations in which parents were involved, while lower levels of stress were found in relation to themselves due to possible higher self-esteem. Of significance to my study was that future-related stress increased during late adolescence for girls, perhaps because they need to make many more decisions that would have important consequences for their life trajectories (Arnett, 2000; Nurmi, 2004, as cited in Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009).

In terms of the role of situational factors in coping, Seiffge-Krenke et al.'s study (2009) indicated that the adolescents generally used active and internal coping strategies in response to stressful situations related to school and in some instances to their peers. They dealt with the problems by seeking support and relying on the help of significant others. These coping strategies were however used less in terms of dealing with situations dealing with their parents, romantic relations, the self and leisure. Within the South African context Meehan et al. (2007) point to the high levels of violence, family problems, extreme poverty, unemployment as well as HIV/AIDS, as they impact on adolescent wellbeing and the little control exercised over them.

Meehan et al. (2007) and Schlebusch (2012) are concerned that these social, political and economic problems are contributing to the rise in teenage suicides in South Africa. The chronic inability to cope with life events and stressors are a high predictor of adolescent suicide attempts and it is important to understand the relationship between suicidal ideation and coping strategies. Within the study it was found that active coping strategies positively correlated with positive ideation, while withdrawal was positively associated with negative ideation. Girls showed a significant relationship between functional strategies (active and internal coping) and positive ideation, while the boys showed a significant relationship between dysfunctional coping, withdrawal and negative ideation.

In the South African context it is important to discuss the broader contextual factors influencing the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households as this provides clarification of their cultural and socio-economic circumstances.

3.3.2 The contextual reality of South African adolescent girls living in townships

In considering the contextual realities of adolescent girls the broader traditional worldviews and assumptions informing their lives could shed light on the values and reasoning behind the roles to which they ascribe. Thereafter the socio-economic and cultural realities will be discussed, followed by the social systems within which most adolescent girls are situated in terms of their family life and educational context.

3.3.2.1 The traditional African worldview as a broad cultural framework

According to Mkhize (2008, p.25), “A worldview refers to a set of basic assumptions that a group of people developed in order to explain reality and their place and purpose in the world. Worldviews shape our attitudes, values and opinions as well as the way we think and behave.” In the critical psychology framework (as discussed in Section 2.2.2.), it is important to take into account the different ways people from different cultures create meaning in their lives. Taking into account their worldview also enhances understanding the manner in which the participants’ reflected upon their lived experiences. Critical psychology, according to Mkhize (2008), argues that all forms of psychological knowledge are grounded in social, cultural and historical context. It is thus important to understand the

participants' experiences, values, motivations and behaviour by taking into account the broader African worldviews and cultural context.

I acknowledge that there are many different variations in terms of African worldviews and that there is not necessarily one unifying one. According to Mkhize (2008), it would be important for me as an inquirer to take into account the dynamic interpretation of various worldviews in order to understand human experience. Nsamenang (1992), Teffo and Roux (1998) as cited in Mkhize (2008), however, argue that there is nevertheless an approach to reality shared by a number of Africans and other indigenous societies, especially in the regions south of the Sahara. These core features would include beliefs about a divine being, the universe and notions of causality, person and time (Myers, 1988, as cited in Mkhize, 2008).

By providing an African worldview I do not imply that all members of a culture or even the participants in the study subscribe to it in the same way, but rather it is an attempt to explain reality from an indigenous African perspective, as Myers (1988, as cited in Mkhize, 2008) suggests. Indigenous psychologies, according to Mkhize (2008), refer to forms of knowledge that arise from social and cultural realities of people concerned and which are not imposed for the outside influences, aiming in the process to address the needs of the people involved in the inquiry.

3.3.2.1.1 An African metaphysical system

According to Mkhize (2008), metaphysics refers to people's understanding of reality, how they position themselves within the universe and how they see themselves in relation to the environment and other people. Metaphysical systems could be seen as cultural models (Quinn & Holland, 1987, as cited in Mkhize, 2008) or meaning systems (Miller, p.36, as cited in Mkhize, 2008) through which people make sense of the world and their actions in the world. The more traditional African societies believe in the harmony and interconnectedness of the parts in terms of the whole of the universe. Disconnectedness is seen as unwanted and immoral or unethical while moral development within the Western theories is more individualistic and values abstract and generalised views of the self (Mkhize, 2008). A short summary of the following interdependent philosophical African assumptions will be discussed, as delineated by Mkhize (2008).

The hierarchy of beings – Traditionally, it is believed that all things are connected hierarchically to one another. Each object or organism is dependent on another and also in turn influences the other parts. The nature and direction of the influences are determined by the amount of life force of each object or organism. Lifeless objects and plants are at the lowest level of the hierarchy and have very little life force of their own, and thus have no direct influence on superior beings, such as people. Animals would take their place on the next level. Human beings occupy the next intermediate level where they can directly or indirectly communicate with their ancestors. The ancestral world is divided into two, the first being the world of the recently deceased, whom are in an in-between state until their relatives have performed rituals of integration to pass on to the integrated state. While in this state the ancestors can communicate their concern to the family through dreams but cannot communicate directly with ‘God’. The integrated ancestors are able to communicate directly with ‘God’ on behalf of the human beings, who rarely call upon ‘God’ directly. The ancestors continue to be involved and interested in the affairs of their relatives (Teffo & Roux, 1998). It is however important to note that only people who lived a life of high moral standards can be elevated to the status of an ‘inyanya’ (isiXhosa) or an ‘izinyanya’ (isiZulu), meaning ancestor (Mkhize, 2008).

The notion of a Life Force – According to Myers (1988), ‘life force’ refers to the energy or power that is within everything material and immaterial. It can be seen as an ‘energy’, a spirit or a creative force received from ‘God’ which should not be confused with inner powers of an occult nature. The creativity of the powers of ‘God’ is seen in the changing seasons, birth, and cycles of nature, and in human achievements. As humans are seen to share in this life force it is seen that they can influence the events in the world to an extent. It is ultimately expected that the life force will be used to maintain vital connections and interdependence between the family, the community and the rest of nature. From an African perspective, life is a never-ending spiral of human and communal relationships in which it is expected that individuals will fulfil their duties and responsibilities according to their position or roles (Kasenene, 1992).

The principle of cosmic unity – Cosmic unity refers to the idea that there is a connection between God, the ancestors, animals, plants and lifeless objects, in which everything is perpetually in motion, influencing and being influenced by something else. The world is thus also seen holistically and knowledge through participation is viewed as more valuable

than knowledge created through separation and abstraction. A person comes to know by participating in the dynamic process involving interaction between the parts and the whole.

The communal view of personhood – Communal life is a very important traditional African principle, and personhood is strongly related to the community. Coetzee (1998, p.276) as cited in Mkhize (2008) defines community as “an ongoing association of men and women who have special commitment to one another and a developed sense of their common life”. Community is a shared understanding of a characteristic way of life by which people mutually recognise the obligation to be responsive to one another’s needs. An important notion is to regard a number of people as family, irrespective of shared genetics or mutual understanding of community. The community understanding also extends to the saying ‘Your child is my child’, by which parenting responsibilities are shared through the practice of collective childrearing within the traditional community. It is understood that the entire community will benefit positively when the child develops leadership and qualities that would enhance the life of the community as a whole.

The saying ‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am’ (Mbiti, 1969, p.214; as cited in Mkhize, 2008) exemplifies personhood and finding meaning in life, as brought into being by participation in a community (Kasenene, 1994; Kinoti, 1992; Menkiti, 1984; Verhoef & Michel, 1997; cited in Mkhize, 2008). The self-in-the-community is grounded in sayings such as *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Nguni), or *Motho ke motho ka batho babang* (Sotho), which roughly translates as: ‘One becomes a human being through other human beings.’ The following Xhivenda equivalent points to the interdependence between the self and others: *Muthu u bebelwa munwe* – ‘a person is born for the other’. Ikuenobe (1998, as cited in Mkhize, 2008) critically evaluates the notion of the person deriving their meaningfulness from the community, as this contention may be used as a way of keeping individuals under the totalitarian control of the community. Although individual creatively can transcend the community it is expected that they will influence the community positively to higher levels of functioning when they do perform well and achieve higher status. Individuals are then seen as being part of the collective community that they help create and which in turn creates them. When tensions do occur between the community and the individual it is expected that they will be resolved in a way that restores interdependence and ideally advances the community to an even higher level of functioning.

Personhood needs to be earned within African societies, and Menkiti (1984, as cited in Hook, 2008) refers to the ‘procedural’ nature of being as the individual needs to undergo rituals marking the passage from childhood to adulthood. There are some viewpoints that according to Menkiti (1984, cited in Hook 2008) maintain that children are not fully human, although Gyekye (1992, as cited in Hook, 2008) is of the opinion that it does not deny the personhood of children but rather refers to the view that personhood is an ongoing process achieved through interactions with others within the community. Values of generosity, benevolence and respect (Gyekye, 1992, as cited in Hook 2008) are the standards against which personhood is measured. Depending on the person’s circumstances, personhood is an unpredictable open-ended process of becoming. The quality of a person’s personhood is reflected in the relationship with other people in the community and environment. In Sotho and Tswana it is referred to as *botho*, and in Nguni these qualities are referred to as *ubuntu*. Ubuntu is the practical implementation of one’s knowledge of a person’s duties and responsibilities within the community, such as is seen as a collective responsibility of the community to raise children, illustrated by the saying; ‘Your child is my child’. This is consistent with the notion of a person being with and for others.

The system within the community of utmost importance is the family, and this is seen as a critical element of an individual’s social reality and personal identity. Moyo (1992) explains that the ‘family’ includes a close-knit community of relatives, including both living and deceased, and close non-biological community members. The hierarchically organised family has a reciprocal understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Traditionally the elders are usually highly respected and the oldest members of the family have the important role of keeping the family as a cohesive unit. As in other cultures it is then also expected that older members would act in a dignified manner as well as be responsible in their behaviour as appropriate role models to younger generations. Elders also play their role in terms of mediating marriage difficulties and other forms of family conflict, by virtue of their experience and knowledge that bring depth and richness to the community (Ikuenobe, 1998; Paris, 1995, as cited in Hook, 2008).

Although more traditional, these values still predominantly influence the worldviews of many people within the South African society. Another very important contributory aspect of the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households is the socio-economic realities which intersect with every other system of their lives.

3.3.2.2 Current socio-economic and cultural realities within the South African context

The socio-economic context of South Africa is marked by mostly black people living in poverty stricken circumstances moving along the continuum to people living in extreme wealth. The demographics of the wealthy in South Africa are changing to include more black economic empowered individuals as opposed to the traditionally white male economically privileged individuals. The economic gap between the rich and poor is however ever increasing making it even more difficult for the poorer black adolescents to attain the educational levels and financial freedom they desperately long for. South African adolescents are growing up in an era of globalisation, with them connecting socially, politically and educationally. Adolescents from poorer socio-economic circumstances are also placed under pressure by being confronted with materialism, survival sex, substance abuse, adherence to the dominant culture, child prostitution, lack of adaptation to family beliefs, traditions and values, as well as the increase of child-headed households (Gover, 2004; Thurman et al., 2006; as cited in Luty, 2010). Although child-headed households are one of the family structures within the South African context, it is important that researchers, academics and community members should be cautious not to assume that children and adolescents are without values and social principles (Bray, 2003; Leatham, 2005), threatening the moral fabric of society.

From a previous study (Leatham, 2005) it was evident that the participants as well as the educators who worked with them reported that most of the members from child-headed households honoured the values they were taught by their parents, especially their mothers, and did not want to draw any attention to their households by becoming involved with illegal activities. The children were under great economic pressure, evident especially in the case of terminally ill parents for whom income is lost, the household resources depleted in order to cover medical cost, and children needing to nurse their dying parents (Loening-Voysey, 2002; Howard, Matinhure, McCurdy & Johnson, 2006; Bonthuys, 2010).

Bonthuys (2010) writes that although little research has been conducted on child-headed households there is a common understanding that these are deeply affected by poverty, especially when extended family members are not always able to provide the necessary financial support. In a study by Khumalo (2003, in Bonthuys, 2010), 90% of the children from child-headed households interviewed identified shelter and 50% the availability of

food (Leatham, 2005) as a major problem. Half of the children were not attending school due to inability to afford school fees, books, uniforms and transport (Khumalo, 2003, as cited in Bonthuys, 2010; Subbarao & Coury, 2004; Kuhanen, Shemeikka, Notkola & Nghixulifwa, 2008). Bonthuys (2010) also includes Miller, Gruskin, Subramian and Heymann's (2007) finding that orphans are more likely to live in poor households and that the mean income of child-headed households are dramatically lower due to payments in kind, erratic work and gifts from family members, leading to the household's income being irregular and unstable (Donald & Clacherty, 2005).

Lutya (2009, 2010) is of the opinion that certain social and personal characteristics informed by culture can place young rural girls in South Africa at risk of becoming victims of involuntary prostitution. *Ukuthwala intombi* is an ancient custom in the rural parts of the Eastern Cape, in which girls as young as 13 years of age have been abducted and forced into marriages with older men. Historically, *ukuthwala* was regulated by traditional leaders and involved a man spontaneously approaching a young girl and keeping her in his dwelling for a certain time. The man would then send a message to her family that she was being kept for marital purposes. Once the girl's family received the message, *lobola* was paid to the family. Bermudez (2008) adds that in recent years young girls were being abducted and kept as sex slaves by older men from the communities that historically practiced *ukuthwala*, the result of a myth that having sex with a virgin could cure them of HIV/AIDS. Often, families of these girls would also turn a blind eye, leaving the victimisation to continue until they fell pregnant from these relationships, thus exacerbating the financial and emotional hardship they have to endure, as well as being adolescent mothers.

Due to socio-economic deprivation of many female adolescents in South Africa, survival strategies such as transactional sex, intergenerational sex, child labour and human trafficking endanger many lives (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Hesselink-Louw, 2008, as cited in Lutya, 2010). Family difficulties, geographical circumstances and the need for financial survival compound the risk factors for many female adolescents in South Africa. Richter (2004) wrote of a report by the International Organisation for Migration (2003) which indicated that the trafficking of women and children was the third most lucrative type of organised crime in the Southern African region, following the sale of arms and drugs. Trafficking of children and adolescents in the Southern African Development Community

(SADC) mainly occurs for the purpose of child prostitution, illegal and false marriage, illegal adoption and child labour. The report highlighted a European-led child sex tourism industry in Malawi and the trafficking of Mozambican children into prostitution within the Johannesburg metropolitan area. Richter (2004) points to the dangers that child exploitation and child trafficking poses, as it reduces the individual and national development potential, marginalises and dehumanises children and separates them from available sources of help and support, engendering widespread disregard for children and leading to close associations with crime. Children are traded for profit and are exploited, physically damaged, psychologically ridiculed and their dignity broken, thus further undermining society, family structures and communities. The dilemma may be complicated by some adolescents not necessarily having the mature thinking skills to critically evaluate the financial offers they receive (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, as cited in Luty, 2010).

Another difficulty South African adolescents are confronted with is the increase in defining themselves in terms of material objects and consumerism. They grow up with a materialistic culture that places importance on getting rich fast, owning expensive material objects, attending glamorous parties, and owning the latest mobile telephone brand (Alsfine, 2006; Naidoo, 2010; Nutall, 2005; Ndlangamandla, 2006; as cited in Luty, 2010). According to Alsfine (2006) and Naidoo (2010) cited in Luty (2010), possessing these material objects makes adolescents feel empowered, happy, fulfilled and socially accepted. It is also, however, a South African reality that many of the adolescents' parents cannot afford to buy all these products for their children, nor can many children who are part of a child-headed household. The children however are still confronted with materialistic objects through the media and peer pressure. As a result, some adolescent girls will either date older men ('sugar daddies') who are willing to purchase gifts for them in exchange for sex or will seek employment opportunities that could result in them becoming victims of human trafficking for involuntary prostitution (Dunkle et al., 2007; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, as cited in Luty, 2010). Intergenerational sex thus becomes a source of income to support a materialistic lifestyle.

Dunkle et al. (2007, as cited in Luty, 2010) write that there are many socio-cultural settings in South Africa in which casual and secondary relationships are motivated by the need to access material goods for survival, such as becoming involved with older men who

could provide financial support. Such relationships place teenage girls at the risk of violence and HIV/AIDS. When financial reward is not followed with sex the older male provider may use violence in order to force the adolescent girl into submission (Lutya, 2010). The transaction of exchanging money for sex is seen as a sign of power for men keeping adolescent girls powerless unless the transaction is sealed with sex (Dunkle et al., 2007; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, as cited in Lutya, 2010). Intergenerational sex is most prevalent in the communities with high levels of unemployment and poverty and communities may be tolerant of this practice for the sake of the financial gains obtained by the women and adolescent girls (Lutya, 2010).

As a way to alleviate poverty and allocate social assistance to families in South Africa the government has made provision for social grants to be given to mentors or caregivers who look after children. There are three categories (Maqoko et al., 2007):

- The Child Support Grant is paid to the persons responsible for the children's primary care and meant for those living in poverty. The person receiving the money may be a parent, relative or an unrelated member of community. The child support grant is currently (in 2013) R290 and is available to children under the age of 14 years. In 2009 the age was increased to include children up to the age of 14 years (Meintjes & Hall, 2012). As argued by Sloth-Nielsen (2004), it is difficult for many orphans from child-headed households as there is no responsible adult who can be trusted with obtaining the money.
- The Foster Care Grant is to be used for a child who has been placed in foster care with a responsible adult by the children's court. Community-based caregivers could also qualify to be carers for child-headed households only if a report from the social worker accompanies the application given to the court. The grant money provided, could help the children buy food and clothes, but may not necessarily be enough to cover all their costs.
- The Care Dependency Grant is for children up to 18 years of age with severe mental and or physical disabilities who require permanent domiciliary care. Children at a terminal stage of AIDS are also eligible for this grant, although there is no formal policy to guide practitioners as to whether and when HIV-positive children may be awarded this grant.

The social grants are important as they help members from child-headed households to buy school uniforms and pay their school fees, although no child may be refused schooling if he or she is unable to pay school fees. There are however studies (Donald & Clacherty, 2005, as cited in Bonthuys, 2010; Loening-Voysey, 2002; Cluver et al., 2007) that show that children from child-headed households in South Africa are less well-informed about the existence of various forms of social support grants and exemption from school fees, and do not know that they can benefit from free municipal services such as water and electricity. Even if they were to be aware of these services, acquiring them could be problematic as many children from child-headed households may not have the necessary documentation, such as a birth certificate.

In relation to difficult socio-economic circumstances, many communities and families are also exposed to violence on a regular basis.

3.3.2.2.1 Violence in communities

Violence within the South African context is part of many children's lives. Two decades ago, the United Nations (1995, as cited in Uys, 2009) stated that girl children were usually seen as more vulnerable to sexual violence. In a later South African study, conducted by Barbarin, Richter and de Wet (2001), the researchers found that the vicarious violence in the community had a negative effect on the attention, aggression and anxiety-depression of children, irrespective of gender and socio-economic strata. Girls grow up in environments where sexual harassment and disparaging remarks about them are common. According to Leaper and Spears Brown (2008), a study in the USA indicated that 90% of adolescent girls reported having experienced sexual harassment at least once and 62% heard demeaning gender-related comments.

The results of the national South African Youth Victimization Survey report by Burton (2006) indicated that by virtue of their gender young women are at risk of becoming victims of sexually related crimes. A greater risk in South Africa is the exposure of the youth to violence to the extent that it is normalised. As Burton's survey indicated, one in five children had considered committing a crime, one million young people had committed a crime and known someone who had committed a crime and/or a person who was serving a prison sentence for doing so. The exposure to high rates of violence in communities and the presence of motivated offenders, compounded by the absence of parents or guardians,

as within the context of child-headed households, increases the potential victimisation of adolescents, especially girls, by virtue of their gender. The potential victimisation of adolescent girls will specifically include violence and crime, for instance human trafficking, involuntary prostitution and intergenerational sex (Lutya, 2010).

3.3.2.2.2 Material and social living conditions within Soweto

Social and economic conditions have a critical influence on the health and development of children. Urbanisation worldwide and the wellbeing of children are interconnected, especially poor urban children and adolescents, and constitute an important priority in developing countries (UNICEF Innocenti Report Card, 2000, as cited in Richter, Panday, Swart and Norris, 2009). Richter et al. (2009) conducted a study into the material and social living conditions of adolescent in Soweto, presenting data from the BT20 school survey and exploring material, household and care giving conditions of school going adolescents. Soweto is the largest and one of the most populated urban settlements in South Africa, however it is important to keep in mind that urban centres are dynamic environments as persistent circular migration takes place with rural areas and socio-economic conditions change. The findings show that the average household accommodated 5.7 persons, and that the majority slept three or more to a room. Although urban adolescents had access to basic infrastructure the resources were shared by larger households, with over half of the sample living with more than three children to the household. This may have a positive implication for social support and even economic support by older working siblings (Maharaj et al., 2000, as cited in Richter et al., 2009) however, it highlights recourses for child care demands. It was reported that 68% of the children were cared for by their mothers, not all of whom were biological, as indicative of informal family fosterage of children in the country.

Some of the reasons families were taking care of the children included the inability of parents to provide the care themselves, and the value of the child might add to the kinship in the household, in terms of companionship or household responsibilities and the desire to provide children with improved economic and educational opportunities (Maharaj et al. 2000; UNICEF, 2003). High father absenteeism was also found to have a negative impact on young people's financial support, as was growing up in a single-parent family. The poor economic conditions were worsened by the higher unemployment rate among women in conjunction with lower salaries (Richter, 2005, as cited in Richter et al., 2009). Many

households were dependent on state-subsidised pensions of grandparents to pay school-related expenses (Budlender, 2003, as cited in Richter et al., 2009).

In terms of the intergenerational effect of education, 60% had incomplete school education, whilst high levels of unemployment and absence of biological parents from the home contributed to the completion of education. Motala et al. (2007, as cited in Richter et al., 2009) writes that the learners' chronic repetition of grades in school and low achievement were the main reasons for learners to drop out of school, and it took an average of 19 years to complete 12 years of schooling, resulting in a significant loss of human economic contribution (Perry & Arends, 2003, as cited in Richter et al., 2009).

Family structures, according to Richter et al. (2009), continue to endure the strains of the legacy of the past that produced a migrant culture, together with persistent economic and social hardship. This has also led to disruption of life for many children and adolescents as they do not live with or are necessarily financially supported by their parents or extended families.

3.3.2.3 *Family and child-headed households*

Families are perceived to be a unit in which most individuals are introduced to the values and practices of a certain society. Killian (2004, as cited in Luty, 2010) explains that adolescents live in different sub-cultural groups that adhere to different ideologies that frame their point of reference and understanding of the world. In families they learn which behaviours, morals and values are adhered to, as well as how to interact and communicate with others, as modelled and explained by significant others within the family, as expressed through culture, socioeconomic status and engendered clues. Waldegrave (2009) explains that through families a sense of security, predictability and order is communicated from the cultured and gendered experiences of belonging, as influenced by the families' socio-economic position. Gendered identification and role expectations are also learnt from within the family structure. Within the South African context, many families are influenced by migrant labour due to economic hardship within rural areas or parents falling terminally ill. A majority of children and adolescents, and in the case of terminally ill parents, orphans, have been taken care of by their extended families, especially their maternal grandparents or aunts (Anderson & Phillips, 2006 and Jones, 2005; Howard et al., 2006; Foster & Makufa, 1996; Okeke, Blystad & Rekdal, 2005, as cited in Bonthuys,

2010). A small number of children and adolescents use child-headed households as an alternative family structure for various other reasons.

The prevalence of child-headed households in South Africa is also an indication that there are a number of children and adolescents who have to take on household responsibilities without the primary role models, caregivers or parents being present. Richter (2004) writes that the notion of child-headed household can be contentious, as for many years teenagers have been looking after households in rural areas while their mothers have been working as domestic workers in towns and cities. Where female relatives are not always available, domestic responsibilities are passed on, particularly to the daughters of the home and “most are able to keep their families going although almost always at a less effective level” (Marcus, 1999, p.16, as cited in Bray, 2003). Child-headed households in South Africa, according to Bonthuys (2010), are fluid in nature and may only be temporary solutions as adults live with the children from time to time and, culturally, looking after other people’s children is a familiar practice within a number of African communities (Bray, 2003).

According to Sloth-Nielsen (2004), child-headed households are generally considered to be those households where the main caregiver is younger than 18 years old, in line with the South African Constitution. The Children’s Amendment Bill (2006) also makes provision for the legal recognition of child-headed households as a type of family unit, whether created by brothers and sisters or adolescent mothers who insist on living in their deceased parent’s home or a dwelling on their own, rather than with family members. Statistics South Africa (for 2003 - 2011) defined a household as a common dwelling in which people stayed for at least four nights a week, and a child-headed household one in which all members were younger than 18 years of age (Meintjes et al., 2012). The General Household Survey of 2010 indicated that some 90,000 children live in a total of 50,000 child-only households across South Africa, totalling 0.5% of all children. Most orphans live with their extended families and there is no substantial evidence to indicate that the kinship safety net has been completely broken due to economic hardship (Meintjes et al., 2010). Nor were there signs of significant change in the proportion of children living in child-headed households in the periods between 2002 up to 2010, and predictions of a rapid increase in numbers due to HIV/AIDS at this point was unrealised. Of the 0.5% of children living in child-headed-households over half (58%) were 15 or above. A child-headed household generally appeared to be a temporary living arrangement (Madhavan &

Schatz, 2007), especially in the case of parent migration labour (Abaqophi basOkhayeni Abaqinile, 2008; Hall, Leatt & Rosa, forthcoming, as cited in Meintjes et al., 2010), when family members were busy making arrangements for the children to live with them soon after their parent or caregiver has died, or as a temporary living arrangement to help with easy access to school (White, Meintjes & Mafokoane, 1998; Wilson, 2003, as cited in Meintjes et al., 2010).

In Section 137 of the South African Children's Act (2005), a child-headed household may be recognised as a formal family structure if the eldest child is over the age of 16. A supervising adult could assist the household but should consult with the head of the household and other children of qualifying age before making any random decisions. The child heading the household may take day-to-day decisions relating to the children and household. The practical benefits for recognising child-headed households as families are that orphans will be able to access state subsidies such as free water and electricity, municipal service and free schooling, claiming government grants and becoming foster parents to their siblings. Family status should be determined by family functioning and if child-headed households in collaboration with their extended families provide mutual support (Glennon, 2005, cited in Bonthuys, 2010 and Rosa, 2004). Sloth-Nielsen (2005) however cautions that providing state recognition for these families could justify a withdrawal of state support on the basis that families rather than the state should support dependent family members.

According to Sloth-Nielsen (2004), child-headed households perform the same functions as an ordinary family whose siblings are supported, providing food, clothing and shelter as far as possible and dealing with their wellbeing. A study by the Nelson Mandela/HSRC (Richter, 2004) indicated that girls ('young women') were twice as likely to head a household as boys ('younger men'). Richter (2004), however, cautions that there is an ongoing debate surrounding what criteria are being used in terms of determining who heads the household. Is it on the grounds of moral authority, cultural values, taking up day-to-day responsibilities in the home or earnings for instance? These care giving responsibilities are however very challenging due to cognitive and emotional development, as well as being faced with socio-economic hardships, and include a serious threat to being able to complete their education, difficulty in obtaining food due to lack of financial income, higher risk of being sexually abused by relatives and neighbours, the threat of

child prostitution and child labour, difficulty in securing birth registration and obtaining healthcare and social support grants. These circumstances create vulnerable situations for children and adolescents.

In the case of child-headed households the members may long for the comfort and care of people who present themselves as caring and helpful but would instead take advantage of them. They may be subject to financial desperation, emotional vulnerability and the need for protection (Thurman et al., 2006, as cited in Lutya, 2010). Lutya (2010) believes that the culmination of parents being absent and not being able to provide the monitoring, guidance and connection on an interpersonal level, as well as some orphans being less likely to attend school, could influence the adolescents' judgements negatively, leading them to accept offers from traffickers, older men and other exploitative criminals without careful consideration.

Within reason, it should be kept in mind, however, that the existence of a child-headed household does not mean that these households are completely without any adult support or that all child-headed households are equally vulnerable. Vulnerability, according to Jones (2005, as cited in Bonthuys, 2010), depends on factors such as the age of the eldest sibling, the level of contact with extended family members and the availability of resources. Even though they live without the presence of caring adults in the home they do have contact with adults they could consult with in terms of support and guidance (Jooste et al., 2006; Donald & Clacherty, 2005, as cited in Bonthuys, 2010 and Leatham, 2005) such as trusting teachers and family friends.

In terms of family structures, a reality of some adolescent girls are that they may have not only siblings to care for, but babies of their own.

3.3.2.3.1 Adolescent motherhood

During a large part of human history first births have been to adolescent mothers, but within the context of extended families and under circumstances in which mothers could combine their daily responsibilities with childcare and share it with family members and kin (Kramer & Lancaster, 2009). Currently, similar arrangements are being made by members of poorer communities as the lack of resources and unemployment lead to the sharing of minimal resources. Post-industrial societies are, however, characterised by

diminished child-rearing support networks as generational time lengthens and families are prone to geographical scattering for the sake of employment. As a result, family networks decline, leaving adolescent mothers vulnerable without the support of kin-based networks.

Crawford et al. (2004) write that teenage pregnancy and childbearing may be related to social class disadvantages, such as low income, dangerous neighbourhoods and growing up in poor single-parent households. Adolescent motherhood has significant consequences for the young mothers, their children as well as society as a whole, as it includes interrupted education and lowered job opportunities for the mothers, health difficulties for the babies as well as the cost of public assistance and interventions (Elise, 1995, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004). Santrock (2010) states that adolescent pregnancy differs according to ethnic group and from location, but their circumstances are subject to similar stressfulness. Adolescent pregnancy poses health risks for both the teenage mother and baby, as infants born from teenage mothers generally have a low birth weight, and are more likely to have neurological problems (Dryfoos & Barkin, 2006, as cited in Santrock, 2010) and childhood illnesses (Malamitsi-Puchner & Boutsikou, 2006, as cited in Santrock, 2010). Only a small number of pregnant adolescent girls receive any prenatal care during the first three months of pregnancy and pregnant adolescents are more likely to have anaemia and complications related to prematurity (Chedraui, 2008, as cited in Santrock, 2010). Crosby and Holtgrave (2006, cited in Santrock, 2010) have found that adolescent mothers are more likely to come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Adolescent mothers may also even drop out of school or need to resume their schooling at a later stage. Kramer et al. (2009), however, caution that negative consequences associated with teen pregnancy do not necessarily take place due to the chronological age of the adolescent girl but rather to relative biological and obstetrical immaturity.

The meaning and consequences of teenage motherhood depends on cultural context and there are ethnic and cultural differences in the acceptance of teenage pregnancy. In a study conducted in the USA (Leadbetter & Way, 2001; Whitman et al., 2001, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004) it was found that most African-American teen mothers live with and receive support from their own mothers, while Hispanic families did not necessarily see the teen pregnancy as a problem as long as it resulted in marriage. Some teen mothers see their pregnancy as 'a gift from God', even if the circumstances may not be ideal, inspiring them to better their lives for the sake of their child. Often teenage pregnancy is used as a

symbol of moral and social deterioration and teen mothers are accused of undermining family values. However, according to research, adolescent mothers are a diverse group of their own, often struggling to overcome disadvantages (Crawford et al., 2004). Some teenage mothers show resilience and courage in challenging the difficulties with which they are faced. Leadbetter and Way (2001, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004) have found that their strength in terms of their resilience lay in often coming from strict home environments, receiving support from their families, having role models and support for education, being confident, strong-willed and having the determination to succeed.

Within the South African context, however, many adolescent mothers are facing several educational challenges. According to Chigona and Chetty (2007), teenage pregnancy and parenting are two of the major barriers to the educational success of adolescent girls. By the age of 18 more than 30% of teens have given birth at least once (NRC-IOM, 2005, as cited in Chigona et al., 2007), and both the adolescent mother and baby are at a critical stage in which development can be facilitated towards health and productivity or with minimum or no support towards poverty, exploitation and dependence. Chigona et al. (2007) write that community-based organisations, the African National Congress' Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994), the National Gender Summit (2001) and Gaganakis (2003) showed concern for gender inequalities that are still prevalent within the educational system and have expressed the need for research into gender inequalities in it. Although a policy was formalised in South Africa in 1996 allowing pregnant girls and mothering adolescents to continue schooling logistically and financially (Grant & Hallman, 2006; Chigona et al., 2007), the South African Ministry of Education (2000) still received complaints that pregnant learners were being discriminated against and treated unfairly by being suspended from class out of fear of 'contaminating' other girls. Chigona et al. (2007) reported that adolescent mothers who return to school struggle with a lack of time to study and do homework, miss class due to motherhood, fear loneliness at school, suffer from poverty, and lack skills in managing motherhood, professional counselling and support. As well as facing stigmatisation from teachers and some students, adolescent mothers are under pressure to be emotionally mature and make adult decisions. Social, economic and cultural aspects also make staying in school a complex decision for adolescent girls and are dependent upon their ability to manage logistics and finances associated with mothering and schooling simultaneously (Kaufman et al., 2001, as cited in Chigona et al., 2007).

3.3.2.4 Peer group and friendship

Peers are individuals who are about the same age or on a mutual maturity level. Friends are thus a sub-group of peers who engage in mutual companionship, support and intimacy (Santrock, 2010). According to Gottman and Parker (1987, as cited in Santrock, 2010), friendships provide adolescents with companionship, stimulation in terms of interesting information and amusement, physical support, such as resources and assistance, ego support, which is important in terms of encouragement and feedback regarding competence, attractiveness and self-esteem, social comparison as well as intimacy and affections. Sullivan (1953, as cited in Santrock, 2010), one of the most influential theorists in the study of adolescent friendships, writes that friendships become increasingly important with regard to meeting people's social needs and thus influence their emotional wellbeing. Apart from the role friendships play in socialisation of social competence, they are often an important source of support.

Santrock (2010) writes that there is increasing evidence that gender plays an important role in peer group and friendships (Blakemore, Berenbaum & Liben, 2009; Rose and Smith, 2009) and that it is related to group size and interaction in same-sex groups (Maccoby, 2002). From a young age, boys are more likely than girls to associate in larger groups and prefer to participate in organised sport and games. In terms of interaction in same-sex groups girls are more likely to engage in 'collaborative discourse', in which they talk and act in a more reciprocal manner. Boys, on the other hand, prefer to engage in competition, conflict, ego displays and risk-taking behaviour to seek dominance. According to Crawford et al. (2004), girls are socialised by society to value relationships and friendships more. As stated by Brown, Way and Duff (2000, cited in Crawford et al., 2004), girls spend more time with their friends, in smaller groups and will place value on kindness, loyalty, commitment and empathy from them.

Although previous research (Pietersen et al., 1991; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995; Simmons et al., 1987, as cited in Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009) reported higher levels of stress in girls than in boys, Seiffge-Krenke et al.'s (2009) study reported only two areas in which they experienced significant differences in their stress levels. Girls experienced higher stress levels in terms of their relationships with peers, possible due to spending more time with them than did boys (Benenson, 1990; Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson & Halliday-Scher, 1995), as well as more conflict (Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker & Ferreria, 1997)

and more jealousy (Parker, Low, Walker & Gamm, 2005). Secondly, girls in the study reported lower levels of perceived stress in romantic relationships, a possible reason being pubertal acceleration.

Girls also rate their friendships during higher grades (late adolescence) as being stronger and more interpersonally rewarding. Lyons et al. (2011) interestingly report that adolescents often seek out friends with similar characteristics and interests to them, but also seem to become more similar over time as their behaviour, communication and attitudes become more similar due to their daily interaction. During adolescence close friendship networks provide more immediate sources of reference and influence as the individuals, model the behaviour of their peers and learn broader sets of attitudes and justifications that render their behaviour understandable, appropriate and desirable under particular circumstances (Lyons et al., 2011).

The relationship between boys and girls can be hostile during adolescence as sexual objectification and sexual harassment of girls in school may begin very early. During adolescence boys begin to notice girls more as sexual objects for conquest and may compete with other boys for sexual achievement. Girls also become more concerned with their physical appearance and more vulnerable to concerns regarding their desirability as sexual objects (Crawford et al., 2004). Tolman and Brown (2001, as cited in Crawford et al., 2004) also found that very often girls are subjected to a double bind in which they are expected to have 'great bodies' but not to draw too much attention to active sexuality, which is seen as more appropriate for males. Adolescent girls are told that they should appeal to the sexual fantasies of men, but also that such appeal is hazardous.

3.3.2.5 Educational and school context

In the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) the Bill of Rights affirms the right "to a basic education, including adult basic education and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible" [Section 29(1) (a)]. One of the key priorities for the new democratic government was to reform the gross inequities of the past, especially through reformed educational policies. According to Thompson (2000, as cited in Books & Ndlalane, 2011), these inequalities included spending being ten times greater for White learners than for Black learners,

differences in teacher qualifications and salaries, as well as a curriculum design that incorporated the government's racist views as education in science and mathematics was deliberately neglected to generate cheap labour for what remained a colonially organised economy. Due to the previous apartheid system, children's education was significantly compromised as gender, racial and class inequalities were supported instead of contributing to the social support function of education and the optimal development of all the country's children. Historically, Black schools are still representative of institutionalised neglect and may still find it difficult to provide adequate learning and emotional support when children are confronted with difficulties and trauma (Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001, as cited in Books et al., 2011).

South Africa's post-apartheid government took the opportunity to become part of working towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in terms of achieving Education for All by 2015 (UNESCO, 2005, as cited in Runhare et al., 2011). According to Runhare et al. (2011), achieving Education for All, especially among developing nations still presents significant inequalities in terms of gender inequality in educational access, completion and performance rates. In Maqoko et al. (2007), the World Bank (2002, XVI) found that more than 113 million school age children were not attending school in developing countries and that two-thirds of them were girls. Of those girls who entered school, one out of four dropped out before attaining literacy levels. Due to a realisation that the fundamental human rights of girls and women were not yet being fulfilled the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDWA), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the MDGs all highlighted the principle of gender equality with regard to educational access and completion by 2015 (Runhare et al., 2011). At legislative level the South African Schools Act, Number 84 of 1996, unequivocally stipulates that every child has the exclusive right to the basic level of education.

Previously, according to Richter (2004), as many as 35% of rural African children between the ages of six and 17 did not attend school, as indicated in the 1999 South African October Household Survey. Furthermore, in the sub-Saharan region, approximately forty-four million children more girls than boys were not attending school (UNESCO, 2003/4). According to the latest statistics from Statistics South Africa (Meintjes et al., 2012), 11.3 million children in South Africa were of school going age, with 97% attending school. Equal proportions of boys and girls are enrolled in formal education systems.

It is the perception that orphans and members from child-headed households are more than likely to drop out of school, which has a negative effect on them attaining the skills and abilities necessary for future career opportunities. Maqoko et al. (2007) and Richter (2004) also note that some orphans may feel discriminated against and isolated, and thus find it better to drop out of school, whilst others may feel ashamed as they do not have money for a school uniform or school fees. This places emotional pressure on them as they feel embarrassed and thus has a negative impact on their educational progress. Girls are more compromised as they need to be responsible for the running of the household, finding less time for homework and studying. Adolescent girls are even more vulnerable as they can become attached to a caring older male who may provide some level of emotional care and support and thus run the risk of falling pregnant at some point. This then leads to their schooling being interrupted and when they do return to school it will be so much more difficult to pay attention to her academic progress as well as raise her baby. Runhare et al. (2011) however found that pregnant learners reset their goal, directing new perceptions to and actions in education. Furthermore Runhare et al. (2011) found supporting studies from the USA (Duncan, 2007; Key, Barbosa & Owen, 2001) that teenage motherhood had actually become motivating factors for some teenage parents to pass high school. In South Africa (Grant & Hallman, 2006) and Zimbabwe (Hof & Richters, 1999, as cited in Runhare et al., 2011) respectively, research studies showed that pregnancy, school participation and performance were influential factors in terms of dropping out of school. Runhare et al. (2011) explain that it was more likely that learners who performed poorly before their pregnancy would drop out of school than those who academically performed well. Grant and Hallman (2006) believe it is rather poor school participation and dropping out of school that promotes adolescent pregnancy.

Apart from education and schooling playing a vital role in terms of personal and social benefits for future career development and national development, they also provide stability, institutional affiliation and the normalisation of experiences for children, as well as social support from caring educators and peers (Richter, 2004; Leatham, 2005).

3.4 CONCLUSION

As highlighted by the intersectionality framework it is clear that understanding South Africa adolescent girls from child headed households' unique positioning in society is no

easy task. They are situated at the margins of gender, childhood, economic circumstances, cultural influences, and political injustices of the past. Despite these intersecting factors, however, adolescent girls from child-headed households continue to use resilience as supportive and coping mechanisms as well as drawing on contextual resiliencies to steer their way through adversity. As stated through the notion of endarkened feminism in this study, different adolescent girls may experience their realities in their own unique way, with their gender being a backcloth against which they live their lives.

In the following chapter the findings and interpretations of the gender-lived experiences of the adolescent girls from child-headed households will be discussed.



CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research aimed to explore and understand the gendered experiences of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households within the urban area of Soweto. It is important to keep in mind that no one person's experiences is exactly the same and by presenting the findings it is intended that a more informed understanding will arise. The participants of this study are thus spokespersons and not necessarily representatives of the total experience of all adolescent girls from child-headed households. This chapter will provide a detailed and integrated understanding of the data provided and co-constructed by the participants. They felt comfortable and wished to share their experiences with me, and it is thus specific to this study. Furthermore, the trustworthiness (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.10) of this qualitative research study will be evident in the way the reader can identify with the findings and bring it to use as noted by Henning et al. (2004), according to whom, pragmatic validity entails the usability of the findings and also the empowerment of the research participants in their everyday lives and practices. The findings are thus based on the experiences of the participants at the time of the study.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In the process of identifying and selecting three core participants from child-headed households, the NGO, Ikageng-Itireleng provided the names of the schools and individual learners they were supporting. I purposively selected the school (see Section 2.5) in which I conducted the research as I needed enough girl participants within the appropriate age range for the study. A meeting with all the participants from all the schools with whom our research group intended working was held. The NGO however invited all the learners on the name list, which subsequently included boys. I did not wish to disregard their willingness to participate and included them in the research as they would also be able to provide valuable observations and experiences of the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households.

After completion of the biographical questionnaires and obtaining permission from extended family members and the NGO it was evident that most of the participants were indeed from vulnerable living circumstances, with large numbers of people within the household having either older siblings in their 20s as part of the household, or a grandparent. Eight individual interviews were held with the adolescent girls who were identified from the NGO's list. Ultimately, the school itself identified two learners not part of the NGO to be members from a child-headed household. One additional learner from a different school in Grade 11 was identified by the NGO as she and her baby lived on their own. Thus, the three specifically selected participants were adolescent girls whose maternal parent had died, who had not had any contact with their paternal parent from a very young age and whose whereabouts were unknown. For the purpose of this study the specific criteria regarding the selected participants were adolescent girls who were looking after themselves and/or their siblings or their own babies, periodically without live-in support of an adult caregiver, or living without the financial and emotional care, support or interest of a live-in adult.

One participant lived alone with her baby in the home left to her by her mother. The second participant lived on her own, only sharing the living space (her mother's home) with her uncle and older brother. They did however not provide her with any physical care, food, clothing or emotional support and she was reliant on herself for survival. A caring neighbour tried to provide her with some food and emotional support. The third participant lived with her younger sister and two younger nieces and received financial support from an aunt, although the participants and siblings periodically lived on their own.

The methods of data collection utilised in the study were two separate focus group interviews with the group of girls and boys from the purposively selected school. The focus group interview provided good information regarding the backdrop against which the gendered experiences of adolescent girls lived. I then requested the three specifically selected participants to complete a booklet which included a family drawing in the past and present, peaks and valleys of their lives on a timeline (difficult and happy times), dreams and fears, incomplete sentences, an analysis of what they perceived as their personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and lastly a photo-voice activity in order to visually represent their gendered experiences as adolescent girls (Appendix H). They then explained each activity to me and we discussed it while being audio- and video-recorded. Profiles of the participants are tabulated as follows:

Table 4.1: Boys focus group

Pseudonym	Grade	Age	Background
Themba	10	16	Themba and his family members were also supported by the NGO but was not part of the original meeting at which they could fill in the biographical questionnaires. He did however come at a later stage and requested the permission and assent forms as he wished to be part of the focus group discussion, which he brought back signed to the focus group meeting
KG	12	19	Living with grandmother and nine brothers and sisters. His mother died after parents separated. NGO supported grandmother, helped with school fees and food.
Immanuel	11	17	Lived with foster parent. Shared responsibility with his brother. Seven in household, two sisters, cousin and two nieces. Both parents were dead. Felt unwanted and became part of NGO.
Jason	11	15	Living with grandmother. Eleven people in household and uncles between ages 22 and 30 as well. Both parents dead. Grandmother applied to NGO for help.
Sipho	8	14	Lives with grandfather. Nine people in household. Mother part of household, parents divorced. Became part of NGO because he wanted to stay out of trouble.

The following week I held a focus group with seven girls from the particular high school. I presented the findings as discussed in the focus group as a whole and did not make reference to specific participants.

Table 4.2: Girls' focus group

Pseudonym	Grade	Age	Background
Londy	12	18	Living with grandmother and grandfather and three brothers since birth. Her mother dead. Grandparents old and ill. Received support from extended family members. Had a hearing problem and wore hearing aids. Read lips.
Beyonce	9	15	Grandmother as guardian. Living with grandfather (75) and grandmother (63). Sisters in 40s, 30s and 29, with two male friends in 20s. Parents separated. Both parents dead. Social workers helped her get a birth certificate.
Rhiana	10	16	Both parents still alive. Mother not working. Brother in 20s and sisters 10, 12 and 14 years old. Parents separated. Biological father dead. Mother ill. Stepfather's friend raped Rhiana.
Natasha	12	17	Lived with mother, sister and aunt. Father dead. Eight in household. Mother ill. NGO, director knew her father and supported the family with needs. She continued being part of NGO.
Chantelle	9	16	Did not live with guardians. Shared responsibilities with brother when he was available; felt he abandoned her most of the time. Parents separated. Both parents dead.
Michelle	9	15	Ten people in household. Brothers and sisters, eldest brother 28 years old and eldest sister 24. Did not know father, mother was ill. No one worked so she became part of the NGO.
Mbali	8	14	Living with father, stepmother and two older brothers in their 20's, sister and cousin. Mother dead. Mentioned that after mother died the family took everything and left.

The following table represents the background of the core participants who were selected after conducting the focus group interviews. These three participants met with me on a weekly basis to discuss their activity booklet as well as their photo-voice activity and co-create an understanding as they lived their lives as adolescent girls living in child-headed households.

Table 4.3: Profile of the three specifically selected participants

<i>Pseudonym</i>	Age	Grade	Background Information
Chantelle	16	9	Did not live with guardians, shared responsibilities with brother when he was available, felt he abandoned her at times. Parents were separated. Both parents dead. Chantelle, at the time was not involved with any NGO but received some food, when she was willing to go, from the school's feeding scheme.
Thandi	17	11	Thandi lived on her own with her one year old baby girl. They lived in her mother's house. She left Thandi her house when she died three years ago. She did not know who her father was and became part of the NGO in 2008. Her baby's father was involved but did not live with them as the NGO did not allow for it as they paid her school fees and provided her with necessities and food as much as possible every month. Her baby's father lived in Johannesburg city centre and was 23 years old at the time of the data collection
Nthombi	17	12	Nthombi took care of her younger sister, 15 years old as well as her niece (10 years old) and her nephew (11 years old). Her parents separated when they were younger. Her mother died, as did her older sister. Her aunt was the only extended family member who mostly tried to support them financially. Their living arrangements fluctuated as they did not always live with her or might live in their mother's house she left for them. When this happened the aunt does tried to find a carer to live in with them but in the past the carer they did have was not around and was abusive towards Nthombi and the younger siblings. Nthombi took care of the younger ones herself without the support of the carer. She reported it to the school and the school requested the aunt to come for an interview. Subsequently the carer left and Nthombi together with her siblings were living on their own for a while again.

The data sources were coded according to the *Atlas-Ti* system (see Section 2.9), as the code indicate which transcribed interview it was as well as the line number in the particular interview in order to protect the participants' anonymity. The table below indicates the codes used for the aforementioned sets of data.

Table 4.4: Data Codes used for the focus group interviews, booklet discussions and photo-voice discussions

Data Type	Abbreviation	<i>Atlas-Ti</i> Primary Document	Booklet Activities	Examples Data Type; Primary Document Number; Line Number
Girls' Focus Group	GF	P1		GF1
Boys' Focus Group	BF	P2		BF2
Three Core Participants Thandi Activity Booklet Chantelle Activity Booklet Nthombi Activity Booklet	TA CA NA	TA3 CA4 NA5	Family Drawing (FamD) Dreams and Fears Peaks and Valleys of Life SWOT Analysis Life at School	(TA3: 93: FamD)
Three Core Participants Thandi Photo-voice Chantelle Photo-voice Nthombi Photo-voice	TPV CPV NPV	P6 P7 P8		(TPV6: 57)

Each focus group interview, booklet and photo-voice discussion was transcribed verbatim and the data thoroughly and systematically analysed, coded and categorised (creating code families) into themes (networks) by means of *Atlas-Ti*. As advised by Henning et al. (2004) I related the different codes from the raw data to the research question and I preferred to work at sentence and phrase level when I identified the relevant codes. In working with *Atlas-Ti*, I worked with the data as follows in order to derive the final themes and sub-themes:

I derived the Preliminary findings by means of the following steps:

- Created codes through phrase level content analysis

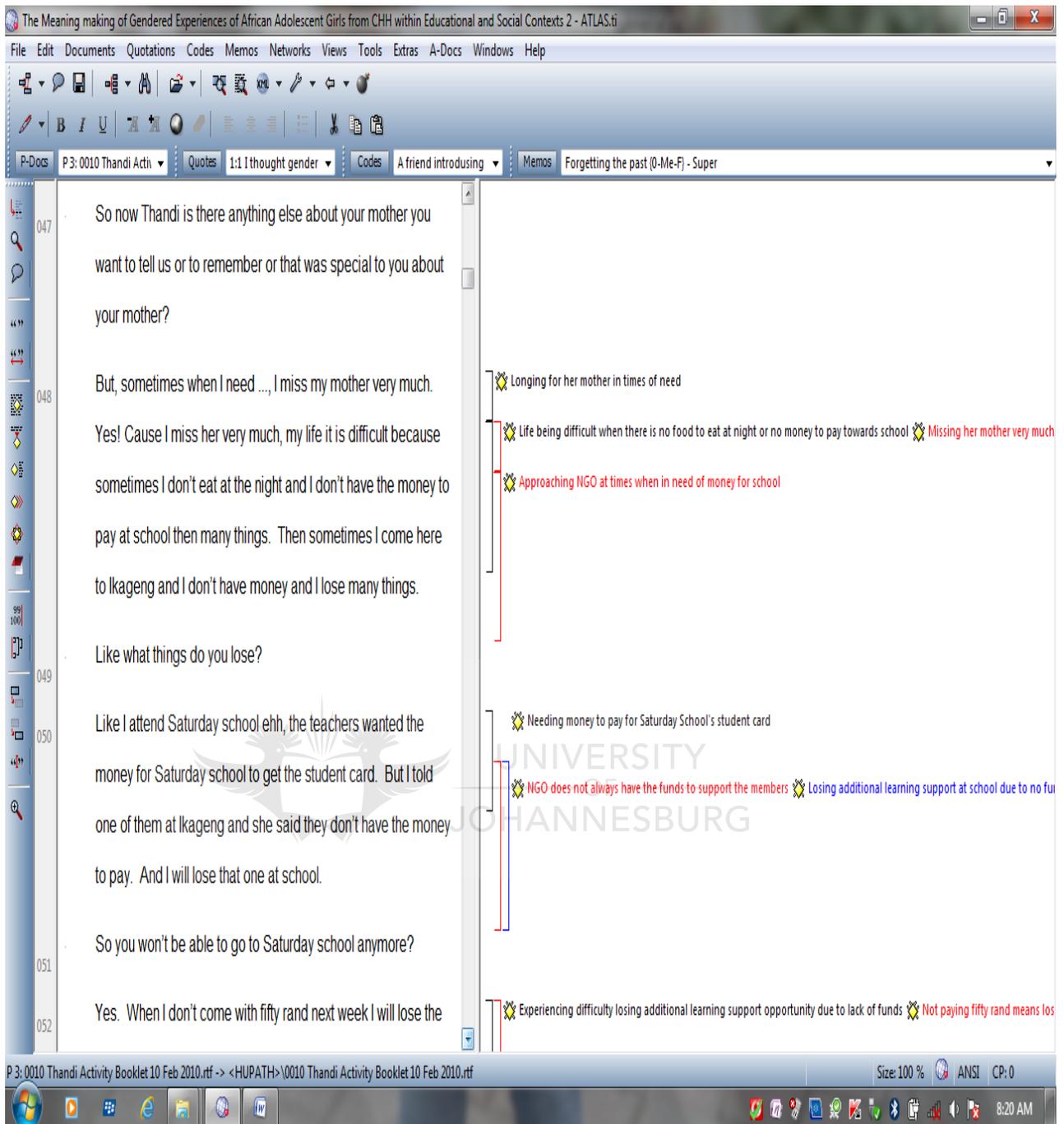


Figure 4.1: Phrase level content analysis

- Grouped codes together within each primary document (girls' focus group, boys' focus group, three specifically selected participants each in terms of their activity booklets as well as their photo-voice activity) to create code families

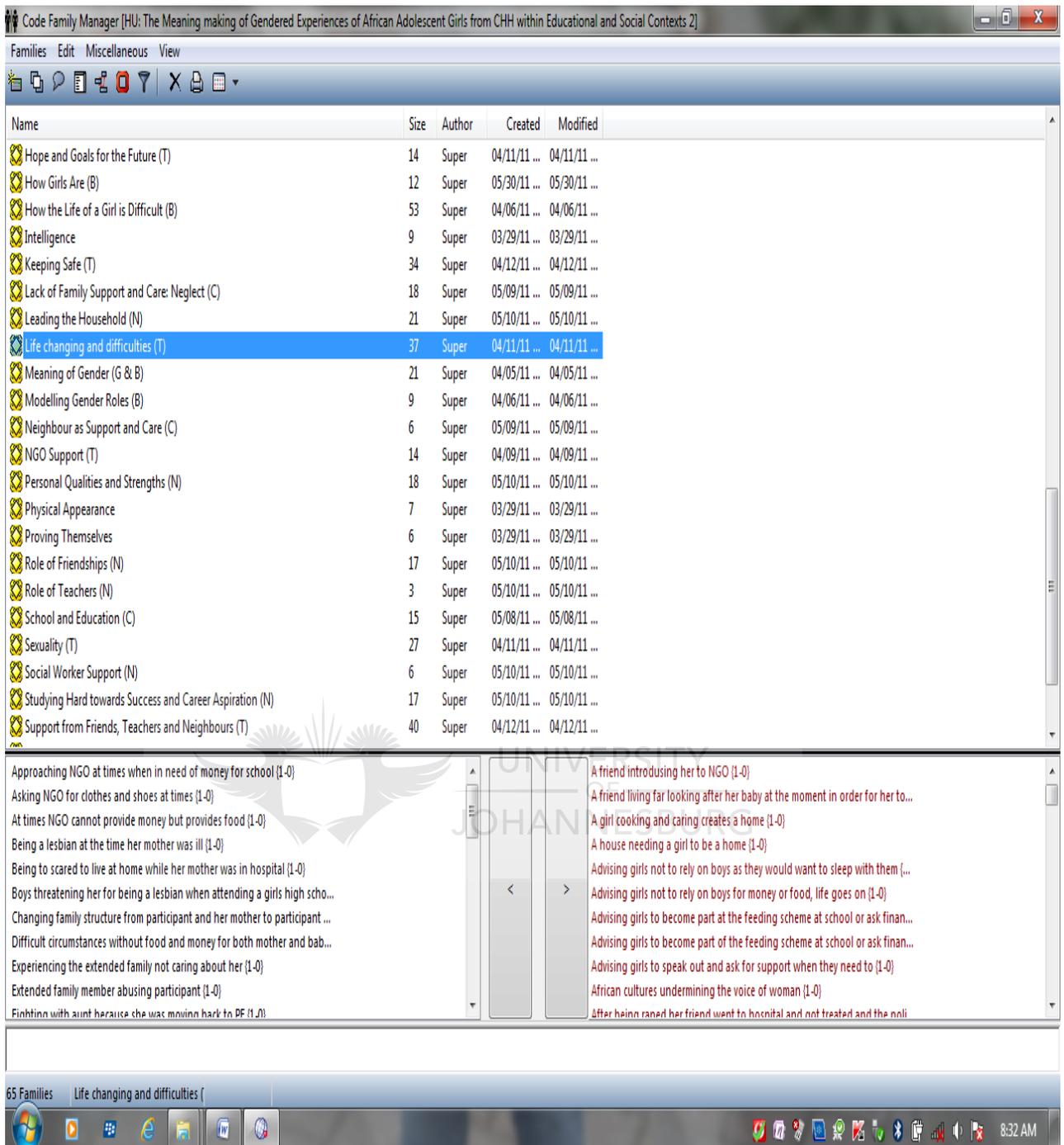


Figure 4.2: Creating code families

- Grouped Code families manually into Themes

Ultimate findings were developed by means of the following steps using Atlas-Ti:

1. Re-read all content analysis and codes
2. Re-looked at code families

3. Placed all code families together on *Atlas-Ti* network families and started to categorise – moving code families around
4. Re-looked and moved code families around more until I found the most appropriate group
5. Identified and named the groups of code families as themes
6. Re-looked at specifics of each code family within the themes and identified the sub-themes

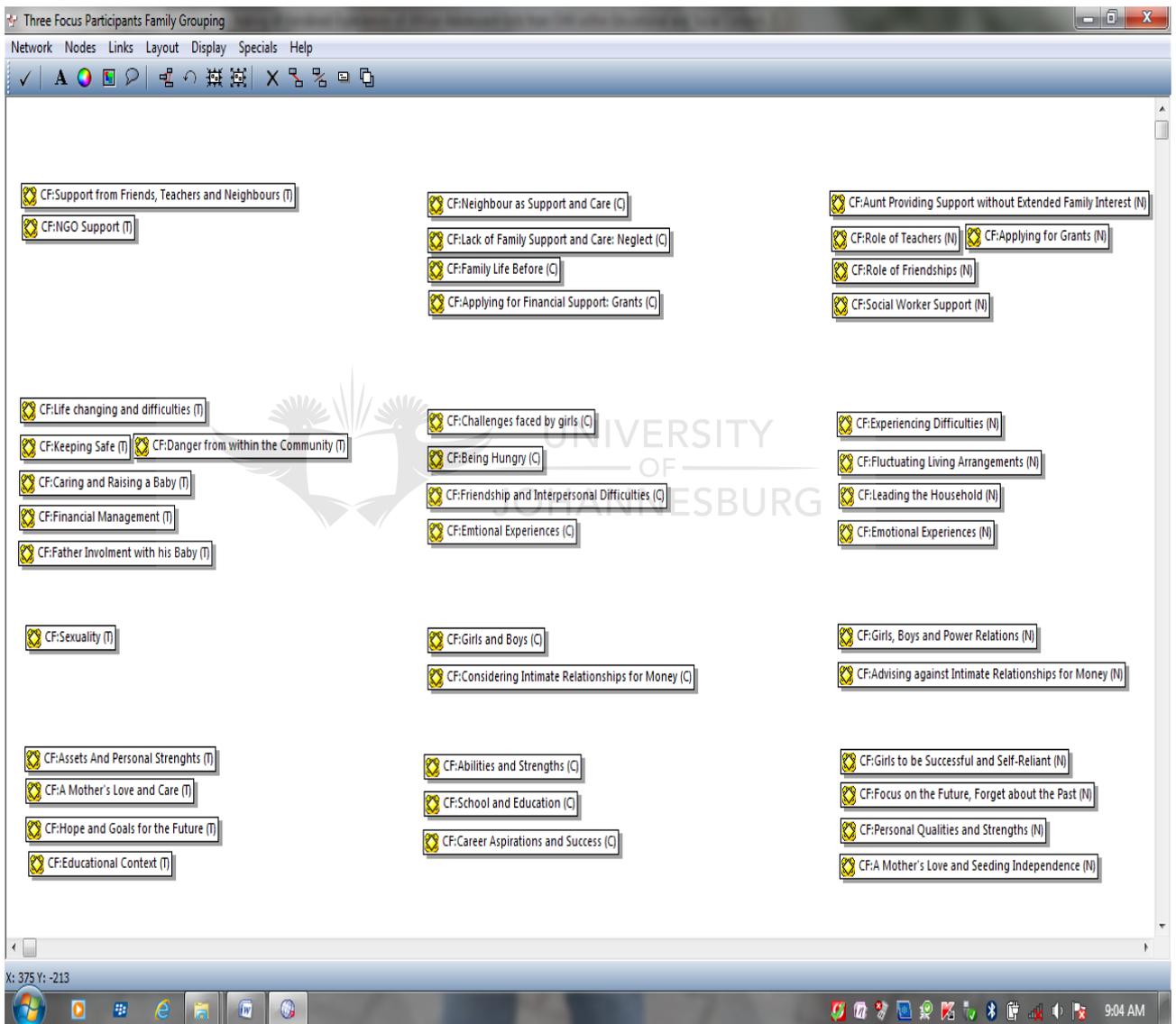


Figure 4.3: Grouping the core participants' categories to create possible themes

7. Took every Main Theme's code families to create own specific theme network
8. Within the specific theme network displayed all the related codes within the code family

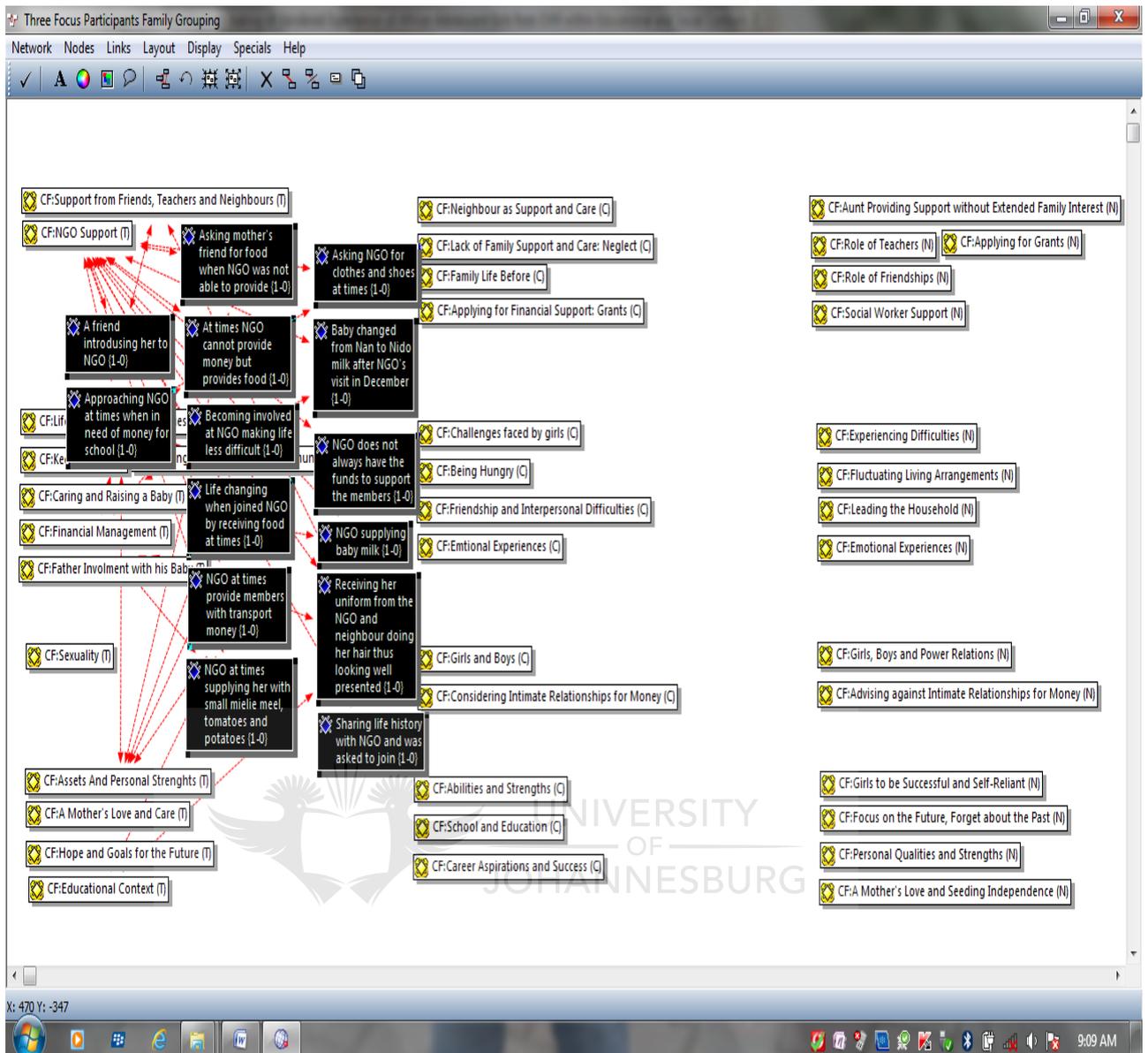


Figure 4.4: An example of the codes within the code family

9. Manually relooked and refined all codes to be associated mutually exclusively within the specific theme
10. Wrote up the findings for that specific theme

The themes were then prioritised in relation to the objective and the theoretical framework of the research study as it was my aim to phenomenologically describe the gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households from within the feminist perspective. The participants and co-constructors willingly and spontaneously provided descriptions of their gendered lived experiences related to the different contexts within which they relate. My reflections throughout the study were used in a supportive capacity

as well as where necessary to provide context and as such had not been subjected to detailed analysis (see Section 2.8.4.).

4.3 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The objective of the study, in terms of trying to make meaning of the gendered experiences of the adolescent girls from child-headed households, guided the data analysis process and the categorising of the findings. It used a hermeneutic phenomenological case study research design, so school communities, government departments and NGOs may utilise such understanding to appropriately and constructively support adolescent girls from child-headed households. Individuals are socialised into acceptable gender roles from early infancy, a process continued by significant others, such as parents, teachers and the media until adulthood. From early adolescence, children's behaviour is being restricted to fall within the accepted behaviour ascribed to boys and girls. Gender roles are being recognised and the allowable pre-adolescent behaviours are restricted for boys and girls (Buckley et al, 2005). Girls are encouraged to act out more feminine caring, nurturance and subtle behaviours while boys are encouraged to be more masculine, engaging in more assertive and strength-related behaviour.

Traditionally, it has been considered by Western psychological and social scientists that conformity to prescribed gender roles is a requirement for psychological wellbeing and attainment of a major developmental task of adolescence. Buckley et al. (2005) however wrote that female individuals who possess both feminine and masculine characteristics (androgyny) reported higher levels of life satisfaction (Mokhatlhe & Schoeman, 1998), positive body image (Molloy & Herzberger, 2002) and higher academic achievement (Robison-Awana, Kehle, Bray, Jenson, Clark & Lawless, 2001). Characteristics associated with being masculine or feminine are however also dependent on the person's race or culture. Limited research is available regarding the relationship between gender roles and psychological wellbeing of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households. Thus, the initial reason for the study was to provide adolescent girls from adverse circumstances as part of child-headed households the opportunity to voice their gendered experiences.

The gendered experiences that emerged from the study can be described according to the following themes: the perception of cultural influences with regard to gender roles;

challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household; and valuing themselves as being female.

Table 4.5: Exemplar of the themes and sub-themes

Themes	Emerged sub-themes
The perception of cultural influences with regard to gender-roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Past and present cultural positioning of females within culture *Gender roles and the great divide of household chores
Challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Fluctuating living circumstances and transition *Danger from within the community *Financial challenges and management *Caring for younger ones *Emotional experiences
Valuing being female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Physical presentation *Perceptions of cognitive abilities *Resilience fostered by values and skills *Supportive resources attributing to resilience *Needing to prove the value of being female <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher education levels for girls - Careers and financial independence

Cultural influences provide a backdrop for how people make meaning and understand their realities as taught through different generations. Values and principles of life as presented by culture are built into everyday interactions, behaviours and beliefs within society. Girls from vulnerable living circumstances and child-headed families are also influenced by culture and have to navigate their way through daily survival challenges which are also influenced by gender. Despite these challenges the girls of this particular study expressed a heightened awareness of needing to prove their value, exhibit resilience and strive for an improved future by means of education (see Figure 4.5). Interestingly, although the girls aimed to realise their value through striving for independence they still judged themselves in comparison to their male counterparts.

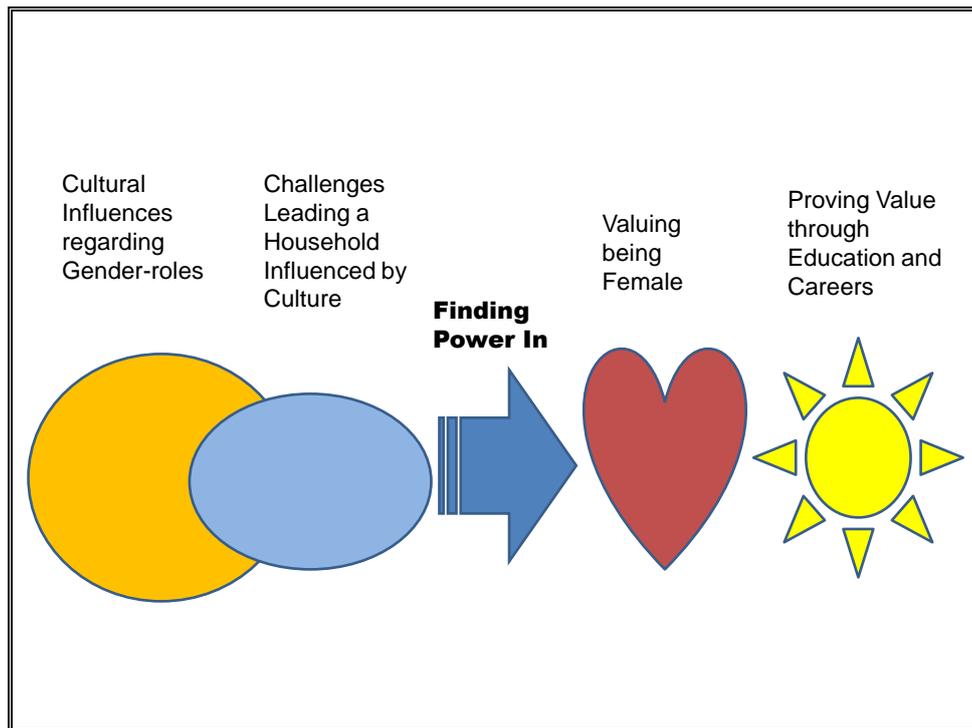


Figure 4.5: Main themes identified



4.4 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

I discuss the findings in greater detail firstly by presenting the voice of the participants and how they understand and make meaning of their gendered realities. I present the words of the participants verbatim as far as possible, but had to make slight adjustments in order to facilitate understanding, as English was not their first language. Thereafter, an integrated discussion is given whereby I link the findings to the theoretical framework of the study, existing literature as well as my understanding of the findings.

Before discussing the focus group participants' perceptions of the gendered lives of an adolescent girl living in a child-headed household I first enquired from the participants how they understood the term 'gender'. The girls' focus group considered the term to be referring to being male or female, as well as affecting a person's behaviour: "*I thought gender is being female or being male, being a girl or being a boy*" (GF1:8) and mentioned behavioural differences: "*because we don't like act the same*" (GF1:10). Similarly, the boys mentioned gender as being a: "*Word that describes a male person. A person that's a male or it's a female ...*" (BF2:14) and referred to physical differences: "*It shows you are*

a male and it shows the other person that she is a female” (BF2:18) as well as: *“Gender it means that it’s really a person if it’s a male it has a penis and if it’s a girl it has a vagina”* (BF2:50). According to the boys, physical differences were also further portrayed in the: *“... images they are not the same”* (BF2:58) as in girls look different: *“In their face...or even their hair”* (BF2:70-72). The boys explained that girls and boys also physically moved their bodies differently: *“Their walk, like I say the whole body of the human being is not the same”* (BF2:74).

In the following section the research participants explained their perceptions of gender as influenced by cultural background as well as how it directs the lives of adolescent girls from child headed-households, as affirmed and lived by the three specifically selected participants. I decided to begin the discussion of the findings with the theme, ‘the perception of cultural influences’ with regard to gender roles as it is the backdrop against which the girls make meaning of their gendered experiences.

4.4.1 The perception of cultural influences with regard to gender roles

All people are situated and informed by a specific culture which influences their perceptions, understanding of the world, values and beliefs. Culture also influences actions and how one relates to one another in daily life, as also experienced by adolescent girls from child-headed households. An overview of the first main theme and categories is provided in Figure 4.6 (below), which illustrates that cultural traditions and perceptions influencing the position of females in the home as well as the gender role division pertaining to household chores.

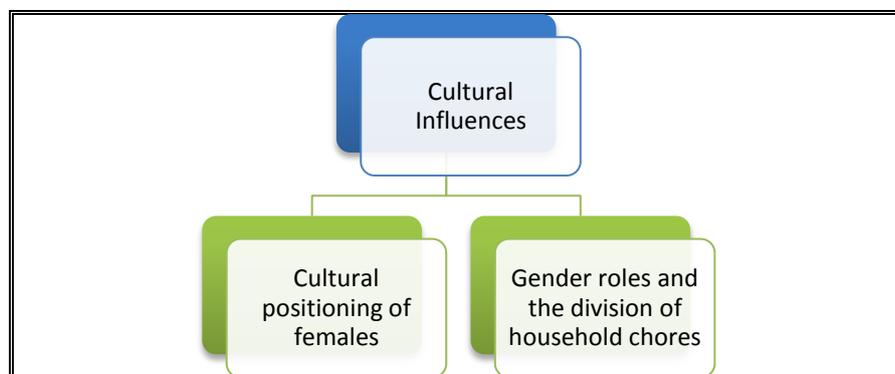


Figure 4.6: Role of culture within the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households

4.4.1.1. *Past and present cultural positioning of females within culture*

The value of girls within culture: The girls' focus group indicated that by virtue of their gender they were not taken seriously by males: *"Because like sometimes males like don't take us seriously"* (GF1:51). This was strongly confirmed by the boys' focus group that attributed the reason for girls not being taken seriously to traditional cultural values. The voices of women were seen as less significant: *"so women are not taken seriously because of our cultures"* (BF2:401). Another participant stated: *"Yes, mostly in African cultures the voice of a woman is undermined."* (BF2:453). This trickled down to viewing girls as not having an actual voice in any household matter: *"Girls are not taken seriously because they don't have a say in any deal"* (BF2:405).

The boys' focus group displayed a strong background with regard to their perception of the role cultural influences played in terms of the value of girls in the household in general. The participants proceeded to give examples from different traditional cultures: *"In the Zulu's the voice of a woman is not taken seriously"* (BF2:401), for instance in KwaZulu-Natal: *"If in the family someone comes and they ask can I talk to an elder? And the elder is not there; 'So can I talk to someone older?' – If that someone older is a girl, they will ask: 'Is there anyone else I can talk to?'"* (BF2:465). The following participant added that the same principles regarding the value of females were upheld in the Xhosa culture: *"As a Xhosa chief being in the environment that you live in, it's yours. So any creature that lives in it, it's yours, so no one tells you anything"* (BF2:421). The participants further explained that the chief can point out any girl who he would like to marry and the mother will not contest it due to the family's poor financial status: *"The mother won't say anything 'cause she doesn't have the money to feed the family"* (BF2:425).

Okpalaoka (2011, as cited in Dillard et al., 2011) writes that African feminists, such as Aidoo, Abena Busia, Sofola and Ogundipe-Leslie, argue for the consideration of *culture* as a form of oppression of African woman. It is called for that the three major axes of oppression (race, class and gender) should expand to include oppressive cultural norms in order to avoid thinking of African womanhood in universal terms (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Omolade, 1994; Oyewumi, 1997; Steady, 1981, as cited in Dillard et al., 2011). The male participants were united in their discussion that the practices of traditional African cultures, which are rife with patriarchy, still influence the value of girls today. The findings indicated that the girl participants realised that they were

not taken seriously by males because of their gender. In addition, being female meant that their opinions and voice were not as valued or taken as seriously as those of the male, as instilled through cultural patriarchal practices. The terms ‘undermined’ and ‘not taken seriously’ were used to describe the value placed by males on the voices and opinions of girls and women within traditional African cultures. These findings support the feminist paradigm which assumes that the world is socially constructed and that the powerful, usually male counterparts dominate social life and ideology at the expense of women (Sarantakos, 2012).

The position of females in households: Due to these traditional and cultural practices the male is seen as the head of a household: *“Most things must be said or told by a man”* (BF2:401) and thus practiced as such: *“I’m the head of the house, what I say goes”* (BF2:401). Another participant elaborated on how the positioning of girls is enforced through marriage: *“As a boy in the marriage thing, the boy is the head of the house and the girl is the body of the man”* (BF2:405). The boy’s focus group also spoke about the boy’s entitlement and owning the belongings when marrying, with girls being intimidated into keeping quiet: *“So if he decide to kiss you, you won’t say anything ‘cause that’s his money and furniture”* (BF2:405). Ultimately, the role of woman entails: *“They just take women as housekeepers and housewives”* (BF2:465). The girls’ focus group alluded to the roles they were seen to be fulfilling by mentioning: *“The girl must cook and wash the dishes while the boys just sit and watch while you do all the things”* (GF1:105).

The findings also suggest, in accordance with radical feminism (Kiguwa, 2008), that patriarchy is one of the most fundamental cause of female oppression. These undermining attitudes are then carried over into the marriage, where the male is seen as superior and receives automatic entitlement. Traditionally, the chief modelled the position of men in the communities and this was mirrored in their households, as the patriarchal system is entrenched in various societies today. A study by Petersen, Bhana and McKay (2005) found that boys were socialised from a young age into traditional patriarchal beliefs of masculinity which promote unequal gender relations. According to Mofolo (2010), in Black African culture the male has traditionally held the dominant position in the home and that the patterns of socialisation in the home are not only taught but also learned through daily observation within one’s family, as well as within other Black families. In terms of the findings, this implied that the patriarchal beliefs of promoting unequal

gendered relations also within the home influence the meaning girls may make of their position within the household as being subordinate to their male siblings as entrenched in society.

The elder male blessing for change: On enquiring from the boys if things are still the same in their current communities they acknowledged that change had taken place: “*So now, let me say that since Mandela came back things changed*” (BF2:473). In response to my question; “Do you as a group think that the culture needs to change?”, the participants responded by suggesting: “*No, we don’t have to (change the culture)... we have to change the laws*” (BF2:547-553). Change would need to take place by consulting with the elders: “*Or appeal to consideration, you have to consult the chief, if the chief doesn’t go with your story it means that they will stay the same so like for equality for us [our] girls, we need to change that everything needs to be equal*” (BF2:557).

The participants did however acknowledge that change in terms of gender equality has started taking place since the release of President Nelson Mandela. The change is taking place within higher educational levels for girls as well as women entering various career fields previously seen as traditionally male-dominated, however, the chief’s laws are still prevailing in the home. Noticeably, the boys’ focus group agreed that there should be more gender equality and that although laws within the culture can change the culture itself should be preserved. Interestingly, the permission of the chiefs, the male elders, will need to be obtained, once again holding the power over change for woman and girls. The chiefs are presently the male members of the ruling political party. Although more women are in parliament their voices are still not equal. Power and decision-making still belongs to their male counterparts and with those who form alliances with them.

Change and gender equality is still dependent on the permission received from a patriarchal decision-making system. One of South Africa’s most respected leaders, Oliver Tambo said:

The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our movement, also because of equality traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women (Govender, 2010, p.1).

These sentiments are still evident in the words of the adolescent research participants.

4.4.1.2 Gender roles and the great divide of household chores

As argued above by Mofolo (2010), gender roles are not just taught by their parents but also modelled by parents in the home.

Gender-roles modelled and taught by elders: The girls' focus group participants were of the opinion that gender role division is: "*Taught*" (GF1:115) and modelled by: "*The older people*" (GF1:111) from: "...*home*" (GF1:99). In accordance, the boys' focus group participants agreed that: "*You are told how to act*" (BF2:117) and: "*Most of the times boys and girls are told what to do by their elders*" (BF2:126), also giving the example pertaining to: "*girls are told that when they sit they shouldn't open their legs, they should sit up straight*" (BF2:126). There are specific expectations of girls as they spend time and learn from their mothers: "*Yes because once you are a girl and when you grow up you always stay with your mother, looking at whatever she does then you know...*" (BF2:257) and it is ultimately expected that: "*They were told how to take care of themselves and take care of a man ...*" (BF2:289).

All the participants were unanimous that household responsibilities: "... *go to the girls*" (GF1:219). This was corroborated during the boys' focus group as they confirmed: "*Most of the times it's the girl*" (BF2:505). It was the general opinion of the boys that the: "*Girl needs to take care of her family*" (BF2:341). Girls are perceived to be the essence of making a house a home by taking responsibility for running and organising the household, keeping it tidy and providing emotional support to the members. The boys explained that a house needs a girl to be a home: "*A house without a girl it's not a house because it would need a person who will take care of the house and a person who will cook for the house and the people around the house*" (BF2:345). According to one of the participants in the boys' focus group, girls: "*were born with it (the ability to be clean and tidy)*" (BF2:249). Girls are also perceived to be more apt to arrange and organise the home: "...*but a girl, you will put the girl here, 'please arrange my room', she will make it nice and you won't find the place dirty*" (BF2:245). Girls are also seen as the emotional support system for the boys, as mentioned: "*Because whatever sometimes people face it's tough cause you feel like not talking to anyone but if there is a girl who can come to you and ask you about whatever, (s)he will make you feel better in many ways*" (BF2:405). Girls from child-

headed household, in particular, take most of the responsibility: *“Mostly in situations like that the girl actually does the housework, they clean up the house see that their younger brothers or sisters are okay and the older sister or older brother they are the ones who help make income”* (BF2:513).

Girls being responsible for the household cannot spend their time freely: *“I think it is hard sometimes because you can’t do anything that you want to do”* (GF1:223). Boys on the other hand have a freedom: *“Let’s go play and he has the key to lock up the house and go”* (BF2:501). During the boys’ focus group it was mentioned that: *“Most of the time you won’t find a girl playing soccer”* (BF2:149), indicating that girls having household responsibilities to take care of.

The findings reveal that the participants made meaning from their gendered experiences as taught and modelled by the significant others in their lives. Moletsane (2004, as cited in Pillay, 2011) confirms that parents are the primary caregivers who instil family and cultural values to their children. Of interest, however, is that it is mostly the mothers of the family who carry forward the internal influences of socio-cultural and patriarchal structures within the home. This again supports the feminist paradigm in terms of acknowledging that the social world and reality is constructed and influenced by the ideologies of the ‘powerful’ (Sarantakos, 2012) (see Section 2.2) and elders in the communities. Both Aidoo (1998) and Zulu Sofola (1998) as cited in Dillard et al. (2011) agree that African women’s burdens of oppression can be traced to both internal influences of socio-cultural and patriarchal structures as well as external influences stemming from colonialism and the postcolonial crises of leadership on the African continent.

Mofolo (2010) writes that African boys are taught from an early age that they are the heads of their household and will need to provide for the family, while young African girls are socialised to be more nurturing and caring to young ones and husbands. Girls are being taught by their mothers, as well as observations during daily activities, how to be humble and respectful to their husbands. As mentioned in Buckley et al. (2005), feminist scholars such as Chodorow (1979), Dinnerstein (1976) and Gilligan (1982) are of the opinion that the domination of girls is related to the restrictive gender-differential socialisation traditions within societies. This influences how boys and girls will relate to one another later in life, as well as within their own homes.

Gender inequality instilled by means of household chore division: The research participants indicated that gender roles are essentially instilled through the division of household chores through the way their parents raised them. According to the participants from the girls' focus group the traditional division of household chores generally stipulated that: *"the girl must do the house chores and a boy does the garden ..."* (GF1:103). The boys' focus group similarly reported that: *"At home we have different chores that we have to do at the end of the day. Girls need to clean up the house..., and cook at the same time. So me as a boy, I need to go and take care of the garden"* (BF2:110). However, the girl participants were adamant that: *"The girl must cook and wash the dishes while the boys just sit and watch while you do all the things"* (GF1:105). Another participant added that: *"They don't want to do anything, they only want to sit and watch TV"* (GF1:187). One of the boy participants in the focus group discussion mentioned as an example: *"I also have a friend ...when I go and check on my friend, I find always the girl is cleaning and the boy's chilling"* (BF2:497). Chantelle mentioned for instance that when her brother sporadically did come home he did not participate in domestic chores, which caused conflict: *"Because he doesn't want to do anything. He always wants me to do things"* (CA4:90: FamD).

Taking into consideration the gender role division, and girls taking responsibility for the household, makes keeping up with schoolwork more challenging, as mentioned by one of the participants during the girls' focus group: *"When you want to do homework you must cook and you must clean so it is boring to be a girl"* (GF1:213). This was also pointed out by the boys focus group who mentioned: *"...the girl has to wash up the dishes, clean the house, tidy up the place they are living in and go to school at the same time"* (BF2:501). Thandi, who has a baby of her own, gave an example of her routine after arriving home from school as she needed to balance homework and manage household responsibilities: *"I cook, first thing I do at home I am cooking"* (TA3:183: FamD) then thereafter: *"I do (give) food for my baby or I go to my neighbours and ask them to look after my baby and I do my homework"* (TA3:185: FamD).

The girl participants also made meaning of their gender roles as being unequal to that of the boys in terms of the household responsibility workload being heavier for girls than for boys. The unequal responsibility and power relations between girls and boys are an integral part of all social relationships between men and woman (Walker, Reid & Cornell, 2004, as cited in Mofolo, 2010). This is also evident in the discussions from the research

participants regarding gender role expectations of girls. Gender role division is instilled with the simple division of household chores as the girls are held responsible for the home environment while the boys are held responsible for the garden. According to the participants, many girls spend a lot of time with their mothers from an early age and are taught two main tasks, namely, how to take care of themselves and how to take care of men in the family.

The unequal distribution of economic, social and political resources (Massy & Denton, 1993; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997, as cited in Buckley et al., 2005) compelled Black women to work for their families' economic survival. So, within the South African context gender role expectations as modelled and taught by mothers also includes girls to care and nurture their families as well as to provide for their families financially. It was explained that the presence of a girl is essential for a house to become a home. Within child-headed households, when a mother dies the girls continue to assume the household responsibilities as well as caring for their siblings. Meaning is thus also found in the skills and responsibilities that the adolescent girls have learnt from their mothers and continue doing after the death of the most meaningful adult in their lives.

According to the girls' focus group participants, the life of males and females should be fair and equal: "*Life has to be fifty-fifty*" (GF1:141). Some of the suggestions in terms of the equality of boys and girls and the division of the workload that came from the boys focus group included: "*They do things equal so when the girl cooks, the boy wash dishes, when the boy sweeps the floor the girl will wash the floor*" (BF2:537). The participants already experienced some form of equal division of responsibilities at their school, as indicated by a respondent who implied that the boys already sweep on Mondays: "*So like here at school we are ... on Mondays, ... and so the girls will sweep on Friday*" (BF2:537). The boys' focus group suggested that it would be better working together in order for girls and boys to achieve success: "*I do this, you help me out so we can finish early and so we can succeed in whatever we do*" (BF2:561).

In terms of achieving gender equality the research participants suggested a more equal division of household chores, such as practiced at school where chores were divided equally. As boys and girls within the home they could alternate in cooking and washing dishes, and together achieve their goal faster. Fitting within the African worldview and endarkened/Black feminism (Dillard et al., 2011) (see Section 3.2), boys and girls who

each constitute the critical half of a whole need to work together as a unit. African womanism suggests family centeredness rather than female centeredness, such as in Western feminism (Dillard et al., 2011; Kiguwa, 2008). Thus, the family centeredness of African womanism can inform the adults in families to unite in opposing oppression of girls and women at home by initiating a simple task of dividing household chores equally.

The following section will provide a deeper understanding of the practical living challenges and household responsibilities adolescent girls from child-headed households' experience, as framed within the mentioned cultural expectations of their communities.

4.4.2 Challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household

Leading a household in itself can be a challenging experience for most adult women, caring for and supporting children and where applicable a partner. The girls who participated in the study did however not have the support of a caring parent and still needed to complete their schooling while managing a household. Figure 4.7 (below) provides an illustrative summary of the meanings the girls made of the different challenges and hardship they experienced within their daily lives.

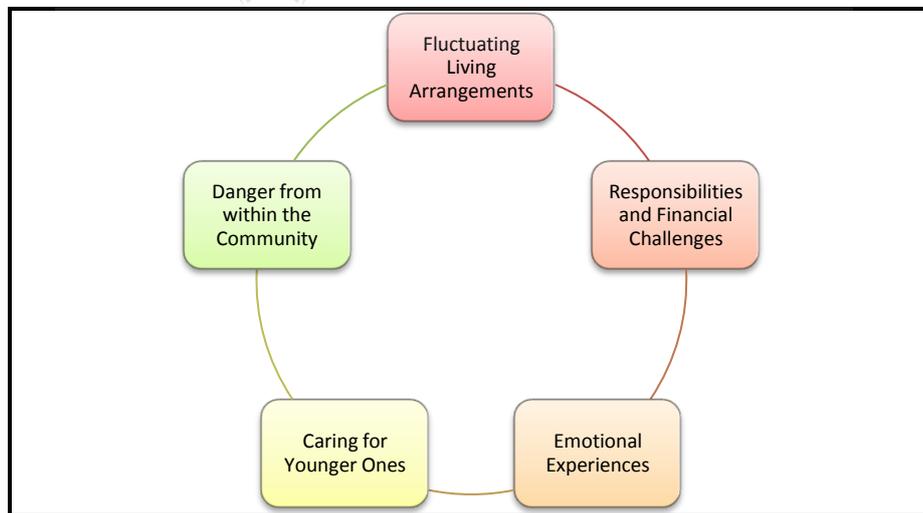


Figure 4.7: Challenges experienced by adolescent girls leading a household

4.4.2.1 *Fluctuating living circumstances and transition*

The three selected participants were able to explore and identify by means of the family drawing in the activity booklet how their lives had progressively changed from living with

their mothers to living on their own as adolescent girls from a child-headed household. They would describe their lives with their mothers as good and being cared for: *“When I was fifteen years old I was living with my mother and my mother [did] everything for me”* (TA3:8: FamD). Another participant thought of the times when her mother was still alive and mentioned: *“You know everything was fine, we ate, we had dinner together, uhm...”* (CA4:49: FamD). This statement was supported by a photo-voice activity whereby the participant stated that: *“These roses, uhmm symbolises my family before. It was a big family...”* (CPV7:6). The same participant described her family before her mother died as: *“It was a loving and caring family then”* (CA4:354: FamD). Circumstances changed as their mothers became ill. The following participant described the development of her changing circumstances as: *“when my mother was alive I was living with her. But sometimes she was going to hospital”* (TA3:345: Dreams & Fears) and, *“Yes she has been very sick. Yes she went to hospital for two weeks. And since she was there I was not living at home because I was scared. Yes. And when I lived at home I did not have my baby yet, I was alone and I will go to my friend’s house and live with her”* (TA3:347: FamD). Chantelle’s mother was also ill for a short time and she mentioned that: *“Before then when my mom was sick she went away”* (CA4:69: FamD). During this time even though the house belonged to Chantelle’s mother the live-in uncle became abusive to everyone in the family, including her ill mother: *“...he used to chase us away from the house, my mom and my brothers”* (CA4:55:FamD).

Thandi expressed the difficulties after her mother’s death as: *“When I was fifteen years my mother passed away and many things changed from my life. It was difficult. My life was difficult, very difficult”* (TA3:14: FamD). For Thandi: *“When my mother passed away I was living with my aunt”* (TA3:345: Dreams & Fears), but *“my aunt abused me very much”* (TA3:16: FamD) explaining that: *“Like was beating me every day. Then I battled at school. I don’t eat, I don’t get food to eat and when I go to school I don’t get the food to eat at school”* (TA3:18: FamD). Her aunt wanted them to move back home and subsequently left: *“My aunt was going home to Port Elizabeth and I was fighting with her”* (TA3:30: FamD). The other participant described their living arrangement after the death of her mother as: *“after my mother’s death because there was my aunt that we stay with, she used to come to us to see if we were alright, then she decided only to live with us for that time,”* (NA5:140: Peaks & Valleys). After some time her aunt went back to live in her own home, leaving the participant and her siblings to live on their own: *“she moved to*

her place because she is living alone, there is no one who is living with her, so it was difficult but we did manage to stay alone” (NA5:140: Peaks & Valleys). During the previous holidays the child-headed household had also been left on its own, as mentioned: *“December we used to be alone”* (NA5:52: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi expressed her uncertainty with regard to the living arrangement by mentioning that: *“I don’t know if she (their aunt) will be with us next year”* (NA5:16: Fears & Dreams).

The following statements illustrate the fluctuating living arrangements during the time of the research, as: *“I moved to the place I used to stay (deceased mother’s house), and then I moved to Diepkloof with my aunt”* (NA5:40: Fears & Dreams), which however will be short-lived as: *“Yes so she decided to take us there, but we don’t know when we are going to come here, because she was talking about we (the participant and her siblings) have to come back here at the place we used to stay”* (NA5:46: Fears & Dreams). Even though living in the homes left to them by their mothers, daily living fluctuates as for Thandi and her baby: *“When I live with my baby at home, sometimes me, I am okay. Sometimes we are not okay”* (TA3:112: FamD).

The death of a parent is a non-normative life transition for an adolescent and the continuing effects can present significant obstacles during this transition to young adulthood (Balk, 1991, 2000; Meshot & Leitner, 1993; Thompson et al., 1998, as cited in Schultz, 2007). These obstacles were also easy to realise when working with adolescent girls from child-headed households, as they had to focus on passing high school, worried about obtaining financial means in order to put food on the table for their siblings, and practically and emotionally substituted the roles and responsibilities of their mothers. The transition of a parent being healthy, then ill and dying places great emotional strain on the child in itself, together with needing to manage with physical and hormonal changes. Fiorelli (2010) explains that one of the most difficult tasks of a grieving teenager is to integrate the loss into their emotional lives, which is compounded by physical and hormonal changes. Although many changes occur within adolescents’ lives in terms of development, Balk (1991, as cited in Schultz, 2007) writes that when a loss occurs during adolescence young people are not able to postpone these physical processes while they need to cope with bereavement.

Fiorelli (2010) also states that many factors influence how adolescents grieve, such as the nature of the death, the person’s own personality, religious and cultural beliefs as well as

the nature of the relationship with the person who died. Often within the South African context in pre-child-headed families the adolescent provides the parent or grandparent (very often the mother or grandmother) with care during their illness and support until their death. Saldinger et al. (1999, as cited in Hope et al., 2006) found that the anticipation of death or the distress of awaiting an impending death may be more difficult for a child emotionally and cognitively than a sudden death. In terms of the nature of the relationship, Edelman (1994, as cited in Schultz, 2007) found early maternal loss to be a transformative experience for girls that is woven into their developing personalities and further raised a feeling of being pushed into adulthood. This adds to the complexity and intensity of how adolescent girls from child-headed households may experience bereavement as well as needing to adjust to new living arrangement and make meaning of their lives.

In a study by Hope et al. (2006) it was found that participating social workers observed more resilience in children whose lives remained the most stable and who suffered the least number of secondary losses or stressors after the death of a parent. These would include moving and separation from friends, for instance. Van Dijk et al. (2009) mention that providing child-headed households (the 'new coping mechanism' of extended families) with supervision by extended family members or community members may be an effective alternative to moving away from their parents' home, and siblings being divided among family members to lessen the financial burden. By forming a child-headed household children and adolescents thus try to keep their community environments familiar and the sibling unit intact, lessening the secondary stressors mentioned by Hope et al. (2006). However, the traditional family and community life has altered significantly in South Africa due to migrant labour and the history of apartheid. As a result, many communities are poor and may not have the resources to effectively support affected households.

The participants each went through very uncertain and transitional periods of adjustment from the time their mothers became ill, thereafter the death of their mothers and subsequently the possibility of continuous changing living arrangements. As mentioned in the literature review, the detrimental effects of parental illness may already manifest when parents fall ill, losing their income, depleting household resources and even children needing to nurse their dying parents (Loening-Voysey, 2002; Howard et al, 2006; Bonthuys, 2010).

However, the literature review did not include the transitional and adjustment difficulties as identified by the participants. During this timeframe of trying to make meaning of their parent's illness and their death of their parent they are confronted with needing to adjust continuously in a short period of time, placing great pressure on their emotional and cognitive coping abilities. Figure 4.8 (below) illustrates the different phases of adjustment the specifically selected adolescent girls from child-headed households had to go through from the time their parents fell ill and died.

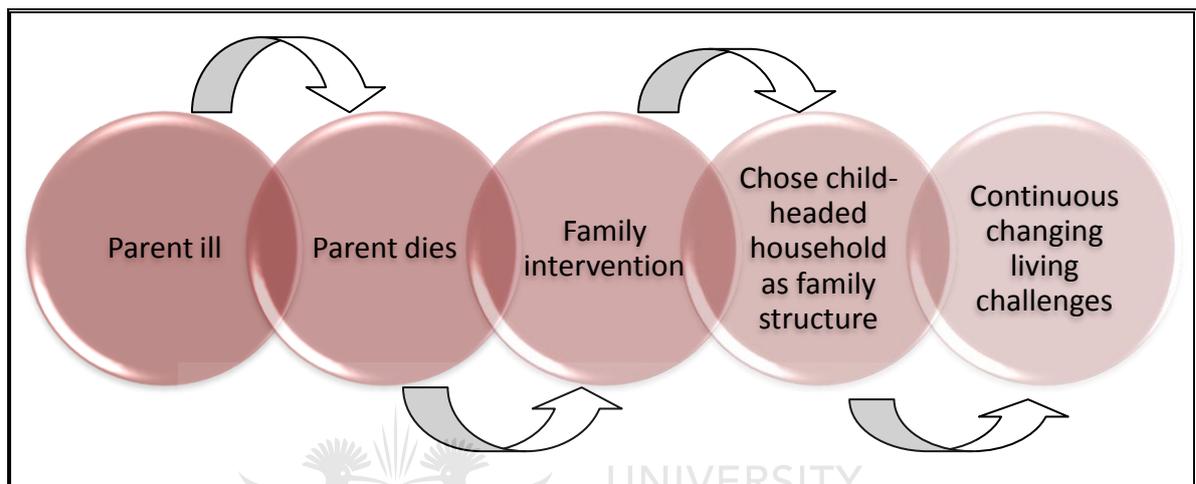


Figure 4.8: Adjustment phases of child-headed households after the loss of their parents

During each one of these phases the adolescent girls had to make meaning of their parents' illness, possibly not understanding it, not knowing what was going to happen and hoping that their mothers would recover. When their mothers did not recover they had to make meaning of their deaths and be concerned about where or with whom they would be staying. The participants ultimately made meaning of their lives by taking responsibility for themselves, and one specifically selected participant took responsibility of herself and her siblings. These were very difficult emotional times for the children, taking into consideration the adolescent girl who needs to make decisions for the sibling group as a whole or the adolescent being left behind without any siblings or older sibling support. In relation to the research study, the adolescent girls had to make meaning of the death of their mothers and make decisions in terms of living arrangements and circumstances. It is important to realise that it is not only when the parents of children die that they need

support and assistance, but even prior to this, when parents are ill and need to be admitted for treatment in hospital for an extended time.

Adolescent girls living on their own or being left on their own by extended family members also place a high risk on their safety within the community and social contexts, worsening their plight.

4.4.2.2 Danger from within the community

There are dangers within each community on different levels and usually they are part of the parents' responsibility to keep their children safe within the community and as far as possible to be raised within a secure and healthy environment. In the context of this particular study, adolescent girls from child-headed households did however no longer have the emotional or physical safety nets of their mothers to protect them, as implied during the individual interviews with the specifically selected participants (see Section 4.4.2.1), but rather were exposed even more as their communities were unsafe. Using the focus group interview with the boys as a backdrop it was reported that not all members of society took the human rights of others to heart: "...*there's still people who still do crime ... they don't care about your human rights...*" (BF2:481). The boys commented on the situation for girls: "*for girls it's (life) more dangerous than for men*" (BF2:321) and believed that: "...*men take advantage of that ...*" (BF2:321). One of the primary reasons for girls being more vulnerable was due to their having less physical strength: "... *girls, they don't have that much power*" (BF2:321). This then leads to men being able to overpower girls as: "*Most girls don't have power like men so it's much easier to abuse a, a girl than a boy*" (BF2:321).

This tacit rule also influences relationships as it seems as if it is the cultural influences as well as the boys' physical strength that would keep girls from defending themselves: "*So whatever he say, you as a girl, you won't say nothing because you don't have that power to overcome the man*" (BF2:405). During the photo-voice activity with Nthombi she mentioned that the unequal power relationships between boys and girls was due to the boy's physical strength: "*Guys they are strong, really guys are strong*" (NPV8:124), and when asked who holds the power in society in terms of relationships, Nthombi responded: "*Guys do*" (NPV8:130). During an informal visit with Thandi, nearing the end of the data collection stage, she confided in me that her then 23 year old boyfriend had been beating

her from time to time, and she no longer wished to be in the relationship. He used to arrive at her home at any time and she was afraid of him. Subsequently we had a discussion in terms of her support networks, such as the NGO, street security as well as her tenants who were willing to help and support her. Other legal measures were also discussed. Nthombi mentioned in the photo-voice activity that the girls advised each other regarding abusive relationships: *“Most of us we advise each other, if you are in such a relationship you should leave that guy”* (NPV8:170).

Combining males physical strength with alcohol abuse further increased the vulnerability of girls lives within communities: *“I see life of girls is endangered because whenever a guy who feels like wine..., drinks and he sees a girl he is thinking of something else, maybe raping her, abusing her...”* (BF2:301). Thandi’s lived experiences indicated that she was threatened and harassed by boys within her community for being a lesbian during her Grade 9 year, while attending an all girls’ school during very emotionally trying times: *“Boys they don’t like the thing I do to be a lesbian and they told me they will rape me if I don’t stop being a lesbian”* (TA3:333: Dreams & Fears). The intimidation and threats from within the community also had a ripple effect towards her aunt, due to Thandi’s sexual orientation choice at the time: *“They know where I lived with my aunt they know I lived with my aunt only and they came to harass my aunt”* (TA3:337: Dreams & Fears).

The three specifically selected participants identified community dangers as part of the threats impacting on their daily living. Living alone as an adolescent being part of a child-headed household made circumstances more difficult, especially when there are threatening males from within their immediate community: *“...but there is a guy who threatens us, not me only, there are girls he is getting them at the high school ..., he is outside the school”* (NA5: 202&203: SWOT). Nthombi mentioned that he called them over for no apparent reason to physically threaten and attack them: *“He wants to beat us, every time he saw us he wants us to go to him without telling us why he wants us to come”* (NA5:213: SWOT). She mentioned that this impacted on her sense of physical security as: *“It makes me vulnerable if I was still staying at my place he knows where I stay so if I was still staying alone, he will be able to come there, so I was afraid of him ...”* (NA5:216: SWOT). Also within Thandi’s immediate daily living there was a dangerous man lurking around the bridge they crossed when travelling to and from school: *“When I go to school I see her [him] at that bridge we go [use]”* (TA3:261: Dreams & Fears), also mentioning

that: *“When children go over that bridge he takes the children and rape them”* (TA3:267: Dreams & Fears). Thandi herself also felt vulnerable and experienced fear: *“I see that dangerous man that rape people, many people. And when I see them I am scared”* (TA3:257: Dreams & Fears). Thandi explained that although people know of the man as well as the police he managed to escape from them: *“They know about him but they not get him”* (TA3:268: Dreams & Fears). Thandi’s friend had been raped by the same man in 2006 and although she went through the appropriate medical procedures and the police were able to apprehend him, her friend did not follow it up, as Thandi said: *“...my friend was not attending the court and they let him out of jail.”* (TA3:277: Dreams & Fears). Although Chantelle did not feel as threatened her safety was of concern, especially if her uncle drank and returned home to verbally abuse her on a daily basis for still living in her mother’s home, sleeping under the dining room table as she was no longer wanted in the shared living space.

The specifically selected participants made practical arrangements to ensure that they were safe from the threatening males in their immediate environment. Thandi made use of public transport when crossing the bridge and did not walk across: *“Yes, when I go with the taxi”* (TA3:271: Dreams & Fears). Going home Thandi and her baby were also relatively safe: *“At my yard there is a gate and I key [lock] my gate when it is seven o’clock. Me and my baby are sleeping at nine o’clock when I key my doors and look after [out of] the windows to see. And then we sleep, we are safe there”* (TA3:289: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi asked friends from class to assist her after school in order to keep the man away: *“[Be]cause when he calls me I said to him I don’t want anyone to get me so the majority of guys in my class they know how to handle him so ...”* (NA5:206: SWOT).

Influenced by the country’s socio-economic and historical background many people from low socio-economic circumstances reside within township settings, thus an additional intersecting factor (as underpinned by intersectionality as supporting feminist theory – see Section 3.2.1) which impacts significantly on the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households is their unsafe community environment. Due to their low socio-economic circumstances and some being fortunate to acquire the title deeds of their parents’ home, they can only afford to live in them within these unsafe township communities.

Unsafe communities and the presence of motivated offenders were worsened by the absence of parents or guardians and increased the potential victimisation of adolescent girls from child-headed households by virtue of their gender (Lutya, 2010). Girls fall prey to being sexually assaulted and victimised by lurking offenders being part of the social fabric of communities. According to Petersen et al. (2005), South Africa is reported to have one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world, with girls under the age of 18 constituting approximately 40% of reported rapes and attempted rapes nationally. Multiple risk factors which render adolescent girls vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence include traditional notions of masculinity as well as certain forms of violence being viewed as acceptable to resolve conflict, gain power and inflict punishment (Simpson, 1991, as cited in Petersen et al., 2005).

In the patriarchal South African society, hegemonic forms of masculinity facilitate and legitimise violent practices by men towards other men, women and children (Shefer et al., 2010). According to Levant and Brooks, (1999, as cited in Petersen et al., 2005) violence against girls and women within families was regarded as normative, while sexual coerciveness has long been linked with peer groups in for whom “hyper-masculinity” and “hostile masculinity” are perceived as normative. Part of the power that still belongs to the male is attributed to physical strength that can be used against females to intimidate them physically and psychologically. According to Wood and Jewkes (2001, as cited in Petersen, 2005) physical strength and violence is a common method of enforcing discipline and control over women in South Africa. The man or boy is the head of the household with the belongings and final decision-making entrusted to him, while the girls are taken to be the housekeepers and property of the head of the home.

The violence within communities is compounded by alcohol abuse, the threatening and damaging influence of which affects the lives of children from child-headed households (Pillay, 2011). Children had to hide from abusive men and reported that their community was plagued by physical assaults, rape, robbery and murder.

The adolescent girls in this particular study acknowledged that their personal safety was constantly under threat by virtue of being female. Taking into consideration their age as well as being female, they were not as physically as strong as males, which intensified the

threats and vulnerability with regard to harassment, physical attacks and the possibility of being raped by offenders within their community.

Adolescent girls from child-headed families are faced with navigating their way safely within their communities, affecting their psychological wellbeing as well as managing households, caring for younger siblings and going to school. They try to counteract their physical vulnerability by make practical arrangements to stay safe by using public transport to school instead of walking, locking up their homes early in the evenings, not getting involved with any illegal activities or substances and requiring the support of trusted neighbours or friends to keep an eye out for them (Leatham, 2005). According to Walker, (2006, as cited in Dillard et al., 2011) from an endarkened/Black feminist point of view, the task is to remember the struggle for injustices regardless of geographical location and must include an awareness of the historical and cultural context within which oppression is taking place, and to identify within the unity of men and women the effective mechanisms within communities to dismantle threatening forces.

In addition to living in dangerous lower socio-economic communities, adolescent girls from child-headed households also have to care for younger siblings, not knowing if and when financial resources will be available to provide food as well as try and acquire an education. Another main concern for the participants was the financial difficulties they experienced when being responsible for a household.

4.4.2.3 *Financial challenges and management*

During the focus group discussion with the girls they mentioned how difficult it was when, even though at times a family member did find migrant work elsewhere, girls were often left behind without food, thus creating a problem for those with no income: *“Sometimes like you are not working as a girl then the boy is working and then you are at home and sometimes he left for a week and there is no food there is nothing, you don’t have another person who is working, he is the one that is working, he is the one that is suppose to support the house...”* (GF1:166). During the boys’ focus group they were however of the opinion that most of the time it was the girls providing for the household and not the boys: *“If the kid is a boy, he won’t do that (provide for the family)”* (BF2:497). Unlike the girls, the boys explained that they had more freedom and did not necessarily take responsibility for their families: *“If the boy he don’t like the family, he would go and hustle for himself”*

(BF2:341), and when he earned an income: *“He’ll stay alone and he won’t think about the family at the house”* (BF2:341). As an example, Chantelle’s brother was mostly absent from home for weeks without any emotional or financial care towards her. Not having any financial resources impacts on many levels in the lives of adolescent girls from these adverse circumstances.

Basic necessities needed: One of the factors discussed during the girls’ focus group was that the life of a girl was more challenging due to menstruation. Having no funds to purchase sanitary products intensified the challenge faced: *“For me being a girl is kind of boring ‘cause you kind of go through your monthly periods ... I hate that thing ...”* (GF1:24). Chantelle during our photo-voice activity said: *“The next one uhh... is the toiletries ... sometimes I don’t have them”* (CPV7:46). However, the other two specifically selected participants did not also mention this as a main concern, perhaps because they received some kind of financial aid from the NGO, or Nthombi from her aunt. Chantelle at the time of the research did not receive any financial aid and toiletries were of great concern to her.



Photo 4.1: Photo-voice example of basic toiletries

Other basic necessities were also very difficult to attain without financial assistance, such as clothes: *“Being a girl, it’s tough cause if she don’t have anything for an example she don’t have clothes, no one can buy the clothes for her ...”* (BF2:377). As an example of this, Thandi explained that she wore the school shoes the NGO provided for her at home as

well: *“For myself I don’t have clothes. I ask them there at Ikageng to give me the clothes. They give me clothes sometimes and the shoes I wear at home, the school shoes because I don’t have the shoes”* (TA3:165: FamD). Thandi’s late mother left her with a four-room house in which Thandi and her baby lived at the time of the research: *“It is a kitchen, living/dining room and two bedrooms”* (TA3:126: FamD). Living at home, caring for herself and her baby was also difficult when they did not have any food: *“When I don’t have money or something to eat then it is difficult, very difficult”* (TA3:114: FamD). Thandi also at times needed to pay babysitting fees to her belated mother’s friend living in their street, when she looked after her baby while she attended school: *“Sometimes she wants money”* (TA3:92: FamD). In summary, Thandi mentioned that: *“Life it is difficult because sometimes I don’t eat at the night and I don’t have the money to pay at school there are many things...”* (TA3:48: FamD). Life momentarily seemed less difficult when Thandi received her baby’s grant: *“Like when we get the money from the bank for my baby’s grant, yes sometimes we’re okay”* (TA3:134: FamD). As Thandi received a R240 child support grant I asked her to share with us what she was able to use the money for in terms of caring for her baby, who at the time of the research was one year and two months old: *“The kimby’s (nappies), the fake one. Not the Pampers or the Huggies* (TA3:142: FamD), as well as: *“... sometimes I get the small milk”* (TA3:148: FamD) and if there is change: *“...then I buy the trays of meat the small ones”* (TA3:158: FamD).

Crawford et al. (2004) makes a point regarding the experiences of adolescent girls in relation to menstruation as it often carries a negative stigma which is interpreted with a negative social impact. Adolescent girls are continuously concerned about how to conceal it. The findings indicated that the one specifically selected girl participant made meaning of being female in a negative way when related to menstruation. This was intensified as she did not afford sanitary products. Many girls from child-headed households may therefore decide not to attend school during this time, losing valuable academic time.

Other concerns were acquiring basic needs to survive, such as food and clothes, which would alleviate some tension and anxiety and make their daily living circumstances easier. Thandi had added concerns as she was raising a baby and needed basic necessities such as baby formula, nappies and babysitting fees. Although her baby’s father did support her at times with baby clothes, these and educational toys were not mentioned as a priority during the research.

Educational needs and lack of financial support: Not having financial support also impacted negatively on the specifically selected participants' education, as reported by Chantelle: *"And it is sometimes difficult to learn with an empty stomach"* (CA4:202: Dreams & Fears). Although there was a feeding scheme at the school Chantelle found it very embarrassing to stand in the row to receive her food. None of her few friends knew that she came to school hungry most days: *"I don't want to take from it"* (school's feeding scheme) and: *"I want to go home and eat at home"* (CA4:208: Dreams and Fears). The reason was: *"...I think of what my friends would say and stuff"* (CA4:210: Dreams and Fears).

In Thandi's case the NGO did provide her with transport money for travelling to and from school, but only when funds were available: *"Yes, they sometimes they give me money for transport"* (TA3:64: FamD) and when there was no money available: *"When I don't have the money I don't go to school because it is very far"* (TA3:62: FamD). Thandi also mentioned some practical implications of not having any money regarding school: *"When I don't come with fifty rand next week I will lose the place for Saturday school."* (TA3:52: FamD). Although the NGO did provide Thandi with some assistance regarding school fees and a school uniform she at times needed money to attend additional support lessons during Saturday school.

Socio-economic deprivation also influences performance levels as it is more difficult to study while being hungry, as well as confidence levels and school attendance. Maqoko et al. (2007) and Richter (2004) found that some orphans and members from child-headed households felt isolated, embarrassed and ashamed as they did not have money for a school uniform or were not able to pay school fees. Such emotional experiences impact negatively on their education. Bonthuys (2010) also wrote that around half of the children from child-headed households were not attending school due to not being able to afford school fees, books, uniforms and transport (Khumalo, 2003; Subbarao & Coury, 2004; Kuhanen et al., 2008). No stable income also affects their schooling experiences negatively as they often do not have as much time to spend on homework tasks or assignments as they need to acquire an income by some means (Pillay, 2011). Adolescent girls are even more compromised in terms of attaining at least adequate educational qualifications, as they have less time to do homework and complete projects due to their dual responsibility of running a household and caring for siblings.

The research participants had to make meaning of the reality that they did not always have the financial means to acquire supportive educational resources presented at school. One participant struggled on a daily basis by going to school hungry as having no money to buy food meant that she was embarrassed about her financial and socio-economic status. The research findings indicate that the adolescent girls struggled with not having the necessary finances to buy food at times, meaning that they went to school and needed to learn while being hungry. Being hungry and without food was especially embarrassing to Chantelle while at school, as she was a proud girl who did not want to expose her vulnerabilities. Thandi struggled with the necessary financial assistance regarding transport money as well as paying for additional classes during Saturday school. She needed to attend the classes as she was repeating Grade 11, having become pregnant the previous year. The added unplanned financial expenditure and serious lack of financial resources was an ever looming daily struggle adolescent girls from child-headed families have to overcome.

Considering trans-generational relationships and prostitution: During the boys' focus group they mentioned that they had noticed in their community that girls who did not have families might consider prostitution or relationships with older men who had money: *"You see like in that family, that girl of that family doesn't date anyone, always in the house, they have everything they want so she (girls from child-headed households) also wants to have the same that she has"* (BF2:389). Due to peer pressure in terms of having material belongings and food the girls would then consider prostitution: *"Some of the girls they are doing that because of peer pressure"* (BF2:385). The boys' focus group elaborated by mentioning: *"So she sells her body to ... have everything that she wants"* (BF2:389). Experiencing peer pressure was also confirmed by Chantelle, who mentioned during our discussion of her activity booklet that: *"Well here at school there is a lot of pressure because other learners have the things that you don't have"* (CA4:196: Dreams & Fears) and this would include for instance: *"Like they bring their phones to school, they are neat and stuff"* (CA4:198: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi mentioned during her photo-voice discussion that: *"Sometimes they (men or boys with money) want to buy lunch for you, things like that so girls get so attached to them."* (NPV8:136). Girls would also like to lead more 'interesting' lives: *"They want their lives to be more interesting that is why they are doing it"* (NPV8:142). The boys during the focus group discussion described some girls as having ulterior motives: *"Girls that are living devious in this time, they are involved in relationships with big guys, taxi drivers..."* (BF2:381). They perceive girls not to be

interested in boys their own age group: *“like me a guy, going to a girl, she will tell me that I am too small. I won’t even give her money or that thing ja, ...”* (BF2:381). They mentioned that girls would: *“Rather go to the person that he can feed her and ...whatever needs he wants to satisfy at that moment”* (BF2:381).

The participants were aware of girls who considered prostitution and relationships with older men for more serious reasons, such as keeping their homes, providing for their siblings and the need to survive: *“Girls [getting you in] going to Hillbrow,² they didn’t want to go there being girls. It is the situation at home, they need to keep the house and that is why they leave ... in order to live”* (BF2:397). Although none of the core participants were practicing prostitution as a financial option Chantelle did mention that she feared many things that could cause destruction in her life: *“...like [that] falling pregnant at an early age, because most of the time when you are in need you think of things that might help...you get what you want”* (CA4:298: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle elaborated: *“Like having a boyfriend or a sugar daddy that will give you money and things that you want”* (CA4:300: Dreams & Fears). She considered the consequences of what it might entail being in a relationship with an older man: *“Well when you get pregnant that person will leave you and you won’t have money to support the child”* (CA4:308: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle also thought of sexually transmitted diseases as being negative and detrimental to her wellbeing and health: *“You might get sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS or that stuff”* (CA4:308: Dreams & Fears). Ultimately, she decided that: *“Because it is not a solution. It only makes things worse”* (CA4:312: Dreams & Fears). This was also supported by the boys’ focus group discussion when they mentioned and were aware of: *“Those guys give her (girls in older relationships) money then give her something else like STI’S, HIV and that type of stuff, yes”* (BF2:393).

Although Thandi, the other specifically selected participant, did not consider prostitution, she was in a long-term relationship with her baby’s father who was 23 years of age and worked as a street vendor in central Johannesburg. Nthombi advised girls, during our photo-voice activity, not to consider relationships with older men as girls should rather speak out: *“She must speak out. She must tell the one that she trusts about ... her problem. Maybe she can be helped”* (NPV8:160).

² Hillbrow is an inner-city area within Johannesburg, rife with illegal activities such as dealing drugs and prostitution.

As Leclerc-Madlala (2003), Hesselink-Louw (2008) as cited in Lutya (2010) found, adolescent girls, in this case those from child-headed households who are socio-economically deprived, could consider transactional sex, intergenerational sex and child labour as possible survival options, with human trafficking as an additional danger to their lives. Lutya (2009, 2010) reported that social and personal characteristics informed by culture places girls within the South African context at risk of involuntary prostitution. The older male provider may also resort to violence to force the adolescent girl into submission if the financial reward he provides does not include sex (Dunkle et al., 2007; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, as cited in Lutya, 2010). Furthermore, Lutya (2010) writes that intergenerational sex is more prevalent in communities where there are high levels of unemployment and poverty and many communities may be tolerant of these customs for the sake of the gains obtained by the women and adolescent girls. The main concern, however, remains that girls needing to provide for their families may well consider intimate relationships with older males or fall victim to being lured into teenage prostitution. Older males may use physical violence and intimidation to collect on their financial contribution as well as transmit sexual diseases and HIV/AIDS to the young girls in dire financial need. The power thus lies within the hands of the older male with financial means and resources, as is often the case in a patriarchal society.

Interestingly the participants made meaning regarding their gendered experiences as girls and their financial struggle by acknowledging intergenerational relationships as an option, but were deterred from it when considering the long-term negative impact it would ultimately have on their health and safety.

These findings confirm the principles of intersectionality feminist theory (see Section 3.2.2) as explained by Clarke et al. (2009), in which the gender dimension of being girls intersect with marginalising categories of socio-economic class and a patriarchal culture in which male domination is still prevalent. Being an adolescent caregiver is challenging as one is going through one's own physical, cognitive and emotional development, while being confronted with the socio-economic hardship of providing and caring for younger siblings (Richter, 2004). These hardships thus include struggling to complete one's education, difficulty obtaining food as one has little money to pay for it, being at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation by relatives and neighbours, falling prey to child prostitution, and difficulties in getting birth registration and obtaining the necessary health

care and social support grants. When taking into consideration the research carried out in terms of resilience, coping strategies and utilising community resources, girls should be urged to utilise their cognitive thinking strategies and ability to consult with community agencies such as NGOs and religious organisations to alleviate some of the financial burden, no matter how small, before losing their lives due to sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases.

As part of managing a household and their household responsibilities, adolescent girls from child-headed households made meaning from their role as carers and providers to their younger siblings or own babies, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.4.2.4 Caring for the younger ones

The girl participants also made meaning from their gendered lives through their roles as carers and providers to younger siblings. The participants explained that part of the difficulties they faced as adolescent girls from child-headed households was caring appropriately and adequately for the younger children in the home. When their mothers died the younger children became part of the girls' responsibilities: *"Make sure that if your mother is passed away, you have to make sure that uhm... the kids go to sleep and at least have eaten something"* (GF1:223). Becoming the mother of a home is challenging to the participants: *"...To be a girl is hard because you have to look after a house ...like a girl you need to play a role as a mother, what a mother does and do the things and sometimes you find out that when a mother or a grandmother dies I have to take over and do what she had to do, so ja..."* (GF1:217). At times the adolescent girls will sacrifice their own need for food in order for the younger siblings to eat: *"You know like even though you don't eat, at least the kids must eat"* (GF1:223). The girls from the focus group did however mention that the role as mother had positive aspects as well: *"It is fun sometimes because ... you get to know more about being a mother..."* (GF1:225) and adding: *"Like when you grow up you know how to raise kids and stuff like that"* (GF1:227).

Thandi did not have siblings but lived on her own with a baby of one year and two months old. Initially during the family drawing activity she described her family as follows: *"That is my family as we use to be. I was living with my mother. This is me and my mother. That other picture is me and my baby"* (TA3:4: FamD) (see Appendix F). Thandi saw her baby as a blessing: *"We are happy, very much because when we see [saw] the baby, we are*

[were] happy because God give [gave her to] us” (TA3:424&426: Peaks & Valleys of Life). However, one of the major difficulties for Thandi was the care of her baby while she was attending school as she had to make use of different people to babysit for her. Her baby’s father also helped to look after her at times: *“When I go to school, aah, sometimes my baby aah, sit [stays] with her father. Sometimes she sit with that, my mother’s friend”* (TA3:112: FamD). Thandi also asked her boyfriend’s sister to look after her baby even though they did not care much for Thandi: *“When the aunt look to her [babysits] it is difficult because she does many things for her but me they don’t care about me because it is not my sister”* (TA3:204:FamD). Thandi managed her time well, regarding activities at school during the week, additional classes on Saturdays and allocating Sundays as her special times with her baby: *“Last week I did not see my baby a lot because I was at school on Saturday”* (TA3:88: FamD) and, *“...during the week I was busy and Sunday we are playing, talking many things and sharing many things”* (TA3:80: FamD). According to Thandi the baby’s father supports the baby as necessary: *“Yes he is a good father to her. Because sometimes he hugs me about the baby and do for my baby many things”* (TA3:430: Peaks & Valleys); and will provide: *“Like food, clothes. For Christmas or New Year”* (TA3:434: Peaks & Valleys); as well as: *“Sometimes he helps me with the baby, when she don’t have a kimby (nappies) or milk for baby”* (TA3:72: FamD).

The mother of Nthombi, the other specifically selected focus participant, had died, leaving her and her younger sister. Her older sister’s children were also living with them at the time as she had died in 2005: *“It was me my eee ..., sister and my two cousins [nieces] because my sister (older one) died in two thousand and five, so it was hard for me to move on at the house without her (Nthombi’s mother) but I did manage to cope with it”* (NA5:138: Peaks & Valleys). Nthombi is the person the younger siblings turn to when they need advice: *“At home I used to, like when they have problems they used to talk to me and then I tell them what they should do”* (NA5:14: Fears & Dreams). Nthombi’s 14 year old sister also helps her with their younger nieces: *“It was me and my sister the one who is fourteen, we were helping each other”* (NA5:142: Peaks & Valleys). One of the difficulties we are not so aware of is how the older adolescent girls need to respond to the questions siblings have regarding the death of their mothers and grandmothers: *“It was difficult because the questions the young ones used to ask was difficult, I couldn’t even know how to answer them”* (NA5:152: Peaks & Valleys). Nthombi expressed how much she cared for her sister: *“This one is my little sister. Uhm..., she is so good and I love her”*

(NPV8:26). Nthombi also utilised different strategies to keep the children's minds occupied during the initial transition after the death of their parents by playing games at night: *"Just come up with games at night and play and make jokes"* (NPV8:40) as well as play: *"We like hide and seek at the house and it makes us laugh a lot"* (NPV8:44) and: *"Sometimes we play the general knowledge [games]"* (NPV8:17:46). Nthombi also mentioned that the emotional care and support they themselves needed, as did their siblings, was also intensified by concern about their siblings' ability to manage at school: *"To change my life style I live at the moment and this refers to my sister because she is the one who is having problem right now cause she is not coping well at school"* (NA5:180:SWOT). With the same concern as a parent, Nthombi wanted her sister to: *"... focus in her studies to be able to cooperate at school because she is not cooperating as her teacher said she lacks a lot so I think she still has a fear"* (NA5:83:SWOT). Nthombi hoped as her mother did that her sister would reach Grade 12: *"Right now I am dreaming for my sister to work hard in order to make it to matric [Gr.12], because that was my mother's dream"* (NA5:122: Fears & Dreams).

Situated within endarkened/Black feminism (denied by Western feminism) is the acknowledgement of the African women's power in the indigenous relational worlds that celebrate motherhood, sisterhood and friendship (Chilisa et al., 2010) (see Section 3.2). The participants acknowledged that although taking the mother role was a difficult task, they themselves did however find meaning and power in their relationships as mothers, sisters and nieces. In family systems, children learn what the preferred values and behaviours are, as expressed through culture, socio-economic status and engendered experiences. Waldegrave (2009) writes that the family provides a sense of security, predictability and order as it stems from the cultured and gendered experiences of belonging. It is important to acknowledge that in contrast to Western notions, sibling care-taking is a critical protective factor that fosters resilience (Nsamenang, 2009). Nsamenang (2009) explains that sibling care taking is valued in African culture and supports children into responsible family service from an early age and facilitates their transition into adult roles with the death of parents and caregivers. According to Sloth-Nielsen (2004), child-headed households perform the same functions as an ordinary family in which siblings are supported, providing food, clothes and shelter as far as possible and addressing the emotional wellbeing of the sibling members. Due to migrant work and mothers working as domestic workers in towns and cities, adolescent girls have for many years looked after

households in rural areas (Richter, 2004). As Marcus (1999, p.16, as cited in Bray, 2003) found, when female family members and mothers are not available, such as with child-headed households, responsibilities are generally passed on to daughters of the home and “most are able to keep their families going, although almost always at a less effective level”. Although a supervising adult can assist the household, the child heading it makes the day-to-day decisions relating to younger siblings or own children. Donald and Clacherty (2005, as cited in Bonthuys, 2010) however found within a small comparative study that heads of child-headed households were more altruistic towards siblings, skilful in solving conflicts between them, and displayed emotional maturity. They also found that the heads of the household had less free time available due to their added responsibilities, but were able to manage their time appropriately.

Leatham (2005) and Bonthuys (2010) found that children from child-headed households also draw strength from the presence of their siblings, remaining in their physical and social environments. Bray and Brand (2007) and Foster and Makufa (1996) as cited in Bonthuys (2010) have found that children are proud of these skills and derive a sense of self-worth from them. Crosnoe, Mistry and Elder (2002, as cited in Bhana et al., 2011) reported that when a financially poor family display warmth, emotional support, togetherness and collective efficacy children perform better at school and are more likely to improve their life opportunities.

Pillay (2011) found that in terms of the dynamics of their changing roles, girls in his particular study expressed discontentment with taking on the responsibilities of being a mother when they themselves were in need of a nurturing one. They struggled to balance their maternal roles with that of being a student. Chigona et al. (2007) reported that adolescent mothers are challenged when returning to school after giving birth, in terms of managing study and homework time as well as caring for their offspring, missing classes due through poverty and lack of support and stigmatisation. Adolescent mothers are under great pressure as they need to be emotionally mature and make adult decisions. Significantly, Runhare et al. (2011) have found that pregnant learners reset their goals as this redirects new perceptions to and actions in education. Adolescent motherhood has become a motivating factor for some mothers in aiming to pass high school (Runhare et al., 2011). Thandi also saw her baby as a ‘blessing from God’, and this motivated her to go to school in order to better her life as well as that of her infant. When considering

pregnancy, school participation and performance in relation to dropping out of school, it is more likely that the learners who participated and performed well at school before the pregnancy will continue schooling (Runhare et al., 2011).

As indicated from the research participants as well as from the literature review, child-headed households as a recognised family structure within South African society fulfil the functions of a family where they also find support in one another's presence, provide emotional support and guidance and experience a sense of security. It is important to take note that even in financially deprived circumstances families may experience emotional warmth and collectiveness (Crosnoe et al., 2002; Bhana, 2011), which can contribute positively to life opportunities as presented in education. Adolescent girls from child-headed households are also faced with the educational needs and concerns of their siblings, and have to make meaning of their own academic demands as well as supporting, where possible, their siblings to achieve academically. However, they also have to worry about their siblings not necessarily having the school necessities that could facilitate learning (Pillay et al., 2006). This further places those caring for younger siblings under more pressure, which may negatively affect them personally in terms of not receiving positive affirmation of their child rearing efforts.

Additional concerns were however the need for supportive, consistent and safe child-care facilities, as well as being able to answer siblings' questions and addressing bereavement concerns after the death of their parents. An important creative coping strategy for carers to follow was highlighted by Nthombi, who utilised games and general knowledge activities to distract her younger siblings' thoughts during the evenings so as to support them with the transition.

Caring for younger siblings, managing household responsibilities and fulfilling the role of a mother, impacts on a person's emotional wellbeing and experience.

4.4.2.5 Emotional experiences

The three specifically selected girl participants shared their definite lived emotional experiences as their lives changed from being cared for by their mothers to being orphaned. Deeply held emotional experiences were not shared during the focus group

interviews due to confidentiality not having been guaranteed. Each of the specifically selected participant's emotional experiences will be discussed respectively.

Nthombi mentioned that life after the death of the mother was significantly difficult and that it was hard to continue and make meaning from life without her: *"I think it's big because without it I don't think I would be here, ... because it was hard for me to move on with life, it was very hard for me but I did manage"* (NA5:240: Life at School). Nthombi reflected on how sad and lonely she felt after losing her mother, which initially impacted significantly on her schoolwork: *"My lowest point was the after losing my mother, it was so difficult for me to perform here at school. I lacked a lot in my subjects and I am not that person who fail a lot, so after I lose my mother it was so difficult for me and I was living with my mother only"* (NA5:138: Peaks & Valleys). After the death of her mother, Nthombi struggled greatly to go home after school as her mother was no longer there to welcome her, and she had more time to think and longed for her mother after school hours: *"But it was hard when I was about to go back home, because when I was at home I used to think about my mother because she was the only person I used to find when I was out of school"* (NA5:234: Life at School). When discussing Nthombi's emotional experiences she mentioned that her greatest fear was that she would not be able to fulfil her ambition to study personnel management the following year: *"First fear is to be able..., unable to follow my dreams"* (NA5:6: Dreams and Fears), as they entailed having a more rewarding and happier future: *"My dream's to live in a happier world"* (NA5:78: Dreams and Fears). The financial implications of tertiary studies were of great concern to Nthombi: *"And these are the threats ... and be unable to go to tertiary because of fees"* (NA5:184: SWOT). The reason for Nthombi's apprehensive feelings about her studies the next year related to her aunt, who supported them financially as she did not mention if she would be prepared to pay for the studies the following year. For this reason Nthombi studied hard to be able to apply for a bursary: *"I am not sure that my aunt will be able to pay fees for me next year, she didn't say anything about it so I am studying hard to get a bursary"* (NA5:36: Dreams & Fears).

Nthombi also continued to mention that a great concern to her was the possibility of also losing her aunt who had supported them as she had already lost her mother and eldest sister: *"Lose my aunt who is now supporting us at the moment"* (NA5:62: Dreams & Fears) because: *"I don't know if she dies what will happen to us because I can't say with*

other family members, they do not support us...” (NA5:62: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi also struggled with feeling hurt and guilty, as if they were a great burden to her aunt who would complain to her at times regarding the added responsibility she had taken on after the death of Nthombi’s mother: *“My aunt has her own problems, and ours is so difficult for her to move on with her life ... she used to complain a lot that she won’t be able to maintain all of us so we have to find our family from my father’s side so ..., it’s difficult for us every time she says those things”* (NA5:80: Dreams & Fears). It was Nthombi’s wish for her aunt not to hold them responsible for the past as they as children have no control over who passes on: *“For them to forget about the past, it wasn’t our intention for those things [death of their parents] to happen for us to be like this”* (NA5:98: Dreams & Fears).

Unlike Nthombi, who had the financial support of an aunt as well as younger siblings for whom she cared, Chantelle was emotionally and financially neglected and left to fend for herself by her uncle and brother: *“My uncle does not do anything for me”* (CA4:106: FamD). Her emotional experiences included yearning to achieve her goals: *“I dream to achieve my goals, every goal that I set and I dream to get there at the end of the day”* (CA4:138: Dreams & Fears). One of Chantelle’s fundamental goals was to have a loving and happy family in the future as she did not experience any love from her family at the time: *“A happy family. A family that has love”* (CA4:172: Dreams & Fears). In correlation with Nthombi, Chantelle also experienced fear and anxiety regarding her future career prospects: *“I fear that what if my dreams don’t come true”* (CA4:190: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle reiterated her fear by mentioning: *“I fear that I won’t pursue my career”* (CA4:216: Dreams & Fears). She struggled many times with her own thoughts regarding suicide, especially when the suffering and hunger became overwhelming. She reported that she thought of suicide all the time as a way out of the life she was living and had attempted it once before: *“The fear that I will die. Because at times like when I face problems and stuff I think of killing myself”* (CA4:249: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle reflected on the time her mother died and described how difficult it was for her: *“Mom passed away when I was in grade six and this was a very, very bad moment for me because my mom was everything to me”* (CA4:334: Peaks & Valleys).

During this time she also experienced anger: *“The fact that my mom passed away it made me angry...”* (CA4:346: Peaks & Valleys). Anger was at the time of the research still an

emotion with which Chantelle struggled periodically and that influenced her interpersonal abilities: *"I cannot socialise well with other people because at times I have anger and I cannot control my moods"* (CA4:390: SWOT). Chantelle's anger was also fuelled by her experiences of neglect and her struggle to survive daily: *"From everything that is happening around me, at home; everywhere"* (CA4:412: SWOT). She also mentioned that she was often misunderstood: *"So other people cannot stand me because they don't understand me"* (CA4:392: SWOT), mentioning that people experienced her as self-centred: *"They know and they think I am self-centred. That is what they said"* (CA4:426: SWOT). Chantelle however preferred people not knowing her as she wished to avoid school gossip: *"Because if they know, they will keep on talking, gossiping about me. Saying stuff that is not true"* (CA4:442: SWOT).

Emotionally Thandi longed for her mother and missed her, especially in times of need when she struggled on her own: *"Sometimes I need my mother very much. [Be]Cause I miss her very much, my life it is difficult"* (TA3:48: FamD). Thandi's reflections in terms of making meaning of her emotional experiences included the time when her mother fell very ill, during which time she also attended an all-girls' school in Grade 9. She described her emotional and cognitive state of mind: *"Sometimes I think when my mother was sick and I was not clear, living at home because there was that problem (mother being ill) at home,..."* (TA3:331: Dreams & Fears). She was threatened and intimidated during this time by boys in the community and changed her sexual orientation to be safe: *"I (was) changed my life because that boys they have tricked me and fight with me very much"* (TA3:402: Peaks & Valleys). Soon after these experiences, while living with her friend during her mother's stay in hospital, Thandi met her 22 year old (at the time) boyfriend and fell pregnant in April 2008. I mention this information as we explored how her life unfolded with her mother's illness, her mother going to hospital for two weeks and dying. Emotionally, Thandi was confronted with sadness, fear and uncertainty over a period of three years.

From the three specifically selected participants it became clear that they were deeply saddened and distressed by the death of their mothers. Van der Heijden and Swartz (2010) argue that grief is not only an experience on a personal level but also a collective process that is influenced by social (Lofland, 1985) and cultural conditions (Rosenblatt, 1993 & 2001). Cowles (1996, p.288, as cited in Van der Heijden et al., 2010) wrote that grief is a

universal experience but the expression thereof is strongly influenced by socialisation and membership in a cultural group. Within the South African context some African traditions do not mention the names or discuss those who have died, which will complicate the supportive bereavement needs of younger siblings. According to Wood et al. (2006, as cited in Van der Heijden et al., 2010), even though orphans and vulnerable children need direct communication with adults about parental illness and death, adults find it very challenging to identify and manage children's distress constructively or positively. Consequently, caregivers feel helpless in this position and may thus not answer all the questions children have about death.

Literature indicates that less is known of the emotional impact of being an orphan as opposed to the overriding social and economic impact children living in child-headed households have to endure (Foster et al., 2000, as cited in Bray, 2003). The aforementioned researchers have however found that children in Uganda recorded particularly high depression levels, especially after their mothers died, while behaviour of children from Zambia related to self-esteem changes. The children would rather exhibit internalised behavioural changes such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem than exhibit acting out behaviour such as truancy, stealing or running away (Foster & Williamson, 2000, p.282, as cited in Bray, 2003). Pillay (2011) found that children from child-headed households within the South African context often experienced feelings of sadness, depression and anger, which affect their academic performances negatively. In a study by Van der Heijden et al. (2010) regarding children from poor communities attending the Vhutshilo programme (a peer-led bereavement programme), they found that the children's anxiety were more inclined to be outward focused on social and economic conditions rather than on internal conditions such as depression and low self-esteem. The children were anxious and worried about having no money, being exposed to dangerous situations such as drunken people and abuse and becoming ill themselves. They were anxious about household responsibilities and not being able to complete their education.

Some children from child-headed households do however exhibit coping abilities during these adverse realities and manage the hardship, as Eloff, et al. (2007) write. They argue that vulnerable children may have or are able to develop self-esteem, a sense of purpose and interpersonal skill which can contribute positively to endure complicated circumstances. This was also observed and supported by the study by Pillay et al. (2006),

which found that some of the adolescents who head families displayed resilience in their schooling as well as managing their households. In the midst of being able to exhibit these emotional strengths and skills, however, they also suffer from stress and anxiety when they are particularly challenged to fulfil educational and other needs negatively influenced due to poverty (Subbarao & Coury, 2004). In a study by Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2009), which also relates to my study, it was found that girls in late adolescence experienced higher levels of future-related stress, possibly because they needed to make more decisions that would have important consequences for their lives.

The manner in which adolescents may deal with stressful and anxious situations is another important factor in terms of health and wellbeing. The death of the three specifically selected participants mothers' was a critical time as they had to make meaning of their emotional experiences of sadness, loneliness and pain, and this also impacted on the clarity of their cognitive abilities. Thandi, for example, mentioned that she was not clear-minded during that time, whilst Nthombi felt guilty towards her aunt for being a financial burden after the death of her mother and sister. Chantelle, who was emotionally and financially abandoned by her siblings and extended family, struggled with managing her anger at times and isolated her from peer support as she perceived them not to be trusted. She did not have the financial support of an NGO or extended family and experienced adverse circumstances in terms of hunger and not having material goods such as school clothes. This study also confirms that much of the internalised emotional experiences of worry and anxiety (Kirya, 1996; Forsyth et al., 1996, in Foster et al., 2000, as cited in Bray, 2003) were directed to practical socio-economic arrangements in terms of having no money for food or material needs (Van der Heijden, 2010). Although suicide ideation was an ever looming possibility in Chantelle's life, she managed to control it by using functional coping strategies such as internal cognitive processing, continuously evaluating the consequences of her actions (Meehan et al., 2007). All three of the specifically selected participants expressed their constant anxiety and concern regarding their futures as influenced by their attainment of an education and future careers they hoped to achieve in order to better their lives and become financially independent (Bonthuys, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009; Van der Heijden et al., 2010).

Despite experiencing these financial adversities and managing households the participants made meaning from their lives and found power in taking pride in and valuing being female.

4.4.3 Valuing being female

During the girls focus group discussion it was brought strongly to my attention that the girls made meaning of their gendered lives by being proud of being female: *“You have the personality in yourself and being fine with who you are and standing up for being female”* (GF1:51). Another participant tried to emphasise that girls need to make themselves be present and noticed: *“We have to be there (emphasis), to show that ja[yes], we are females”* (GF1:53) as well as believing that girls are competent and capable by stating: *“We think that we can do it so we have to be there”* (GF1:55). Another participant felt that as girls: *“You must be confident”* (GF1:59). A younger participant expressed her opinion regarding the value of girls by mentioning that: *“Girls are special and boys are sometimes silly”* (GF1:180). The meaning for girls being special, in the participant’s opinion, was that that: *“Girls are always working, like cooking, cleaning doing stuff like that”* (GF1:190).

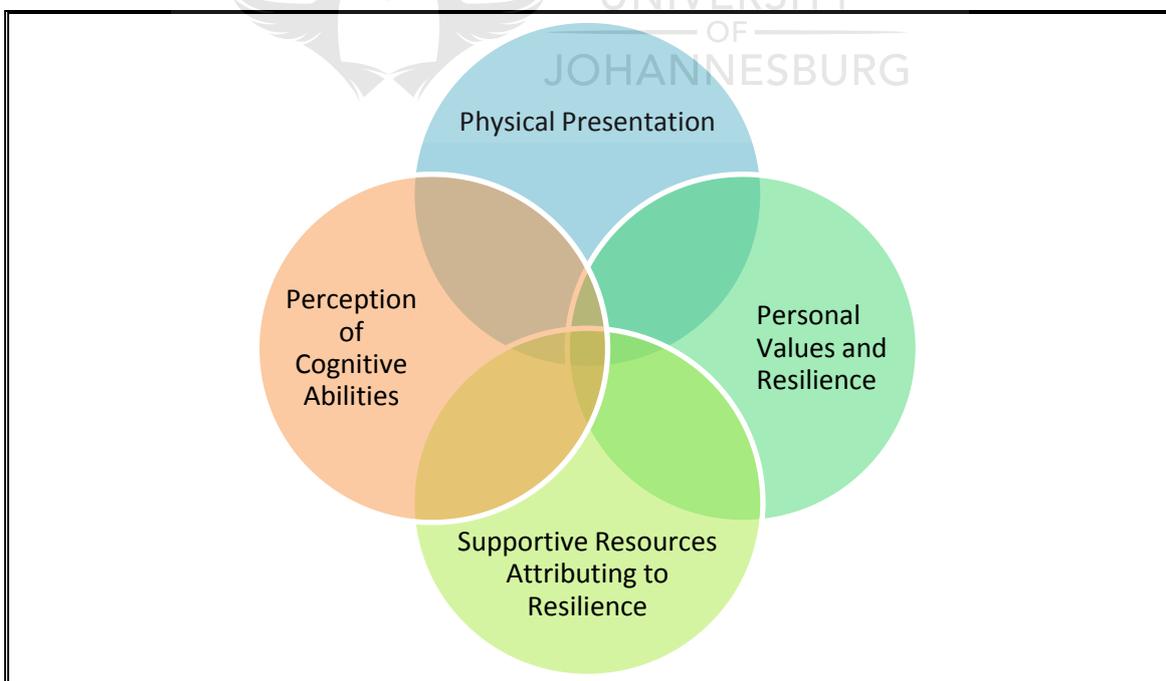


Figure 4.9: Valuing being female

Figure 4.9 (previous page) illustrates the interrelatedness of the attributing factors regarding the third main theme, in which the girl participants felt that despite the hardship they faced each day they were valuable as females. They made meaning of their valued gender through their physical presentation and perceived cognitive abilities and values. Their inner strength and resilience, as well as supportive resources from the community, also contribute to the meaning they made of their engendered lived experiences. The participants were also strongly motivated to prove their value by attaining higher educational levels and achieving financial independence.

4.4.3.1 Physical presentation

The participants from the girls focus group were of the opinion that it was important for a girl to: *“Look like a girl”* (GF1:41) through their appearance and it was important that: *“You must maintain yourself”* (GF1:47). Outward appearances were important as: *“You must always be beautiful, like your hair must be nice (emphasis)”* (GF1:39). One of the reasons behind being well groomed was that it was an attempt by girls to be taken more seriously by males: *“Because like sometimes males like don’t take us seriously”* (GF1:51). According to the boys’ focus group girls were born with the need to be clean: *“Girls, it’s like they were born with it, they like, they like being clean”* (BF2:169). The boys perceived girls to care about their cleanliness: *“Most girls is usually ... a..., take care of themselves”* (BF2:202), and in accordance with the girls focus group the boys realise that the girls go to trouble to impress boys: *“Girls, usually it’s about their appearance, how they look like”* (BF2:206) and mentioned that: *“It’s how they appear to us.”* (BF2:210).

According to Crawford et al. (2004), pubertal changes have a psychological effect on adolescents as they become more aware of their body image and begin to show more interest in their bodies. With these biological changes, girls are informed about what kinds of body are valued by society, peers and the media. Crawford et al. (2004) further mentioned that often girls internalise society’s judgements about feminine roles and stereotypes, which may lead to difficulties with self-esteem. Sexual objectification influences adolescent girls’ relationships with one another as well as with boys, and significant concerns about appearance reflect general social issues such as ambivalence about the role of women. Pubertal changes also have a biological influence on gendered behaviour in adolescence, strengthening the sexual aspects of gender attitudes and behaviour (Basow, 2006; Galambos, Berenbaum & McHale, 2009, as cited in Santrock,

2010). As hormonal levels increase, adolescents incorporate sexuality into their gender attitudes and behaviour when they interact with peers. Feminist researchers, according to Crawford et al. (2004), have researched female development during adolescence in terms of how gender-related behaviour is influenced by home, school and peers. However, it is important to be cognisant of the definitions of femininity and the experiences of adolescents as they differ from ethnic groups and social class, and thus illuminate the social constructions of gender during adolescence and its relation to biology.

Despite the socio-economic difficulties adolescent girls from child-headed families must endure, they are still aware of how their physical presentation and neatness affect their social standing within the community and if they are taken seriously. This was also a finding in my previous research with both genders, where it was indicated that the participants felt they were representatives of their family and that their outward appearance must be neat and tidy (Leatham, 2005). The participants in the current study, however, indicated that girls used their physical appearance as an instrument to impress boys as well as wanting to be taken seriously. To look feminine and maintain their outward appearance was thus still important within their specific cultural group and socio-economic class (Crawford et al., 2004).

4.4.3.2 Perceptions of cognitive abilities

The older girls in the focus group were also outspoken about feeling that girls are more focused academically and enjoy the competitive atmosphere in some classes: *“I like competing with boys, like in class”* (GF1:81). The girls mentioned that they did not back down from academic challenges in relation to boys in class: *“Whatever they say I take it to me [as a challenge], so I am showing them that I can take any challenge they give me”* (GF1:83). A participant responded by mentioning that she thought that she was quite intelligent in comparison to boys: *“I believe that I ... I, a girl am more intelligent than a boy”* (GF1:170). Another participant added: *“What is mostly said is that a girl’s mind goes faster than a boy’s mind, so I believe that I am more intelligent than a boy!”* (GF1:172). This statement was corroborated by the boys’ focus group having a similar opinion regarding the different brain functioning of the different genders: *“That girls are the most mind faster ... boys keep thinking ‘I’m slow’”* (BF2:214). According to the boys’ focus group participants girls also considered future possibilities and think of consequences sooner: *“They’re the ones future thinking, faster than boys”* (BF2:214).

Believing in their own intelligence supported the girls to keep themselves focussed and motivated them to achieve academically: *“I put my mind to it and I go to school every day and I want to get a perfect mark in everything I do”* (GF1:174). Believing in intelligence leads to determination: *“It drives you almost”* (GF1:176). Chantelle also specifically stated that she believed that school was not as difficult for girls as it was for boys: *“No it is not hard because girls are intelligent more than boys and girls exceed in everything more than boys do”* (CA4:454: Life at School).

The boys’ focus group identified some characteristics regarding girls’ cognitive abilities as being able to process different information simultaneously: *“Like if you are talking to somebody and the girl can listen to that person at the same times as listen to music”* (BF2:222). According to the boy’s focus group, girls were also more serious and incorporated reflective pondering in their thinking processes: *“Emotionally girls usually, ahe ... take most things serious what you say to them”* (BF2:325) and *“like boys sitting and make a talk about a girl we don’t stick to that, we can talk and laugh and let it go but the girls ... will think about that and I just ruined her whole day”* (BF2:325). Another participant supported the statement by mentioning: *“Yes, they take things more personally”* (BF2:405).

During Nthombi’s photo-voice discussion she mentioned the influence of gender and power in terms of: *“Girls know everything. Guys don’t know. Like at my class we girls know like everything.... but when it comes to power the boys are best”* (NPV8:126). Chantelle was of the opinion that girls were more vulnerable to physical conflict and thus needed to use their reasoning as primary method of solving conflict: *“Because as a girl there are things that happen to you... A boy can easily handle a situation because what they think of fighting more than reasoning first”* (CA4:462: Life at School) and added: *“We first reason before we do something”* (CA4:468: Life at School).

Although little research has been conducted in terms of the developmental changes of the brain during adolescence, until recently an increasing number of studies are being conducted (Casey, Jones, & Hare, 2008; Whittle & others, 2008, as cited in Santrock, 2010). According to scientists, the brain is still growing during adolescence and is different from that of a child (Giedd, 2008; Neilson, 2010; Shaw & others, 2008, as cited in Santrock, 2010) and undergoes significant structural changes (Casey, Getz & Calvan, 2008; Giedd, 2008, as cited in Santrock, 2010). The implications thereof, according to

Charles Nelson (2003; Nelson, Thomas & de Haan, 2006, as cited in Santrock, 2010), is that although adolescents may experience heightened emotions their prefrontal cortex may not have developed sufficiently to control their passions. It is important however to keep in mind that cognitive development is influenced by heredity and environmental factors (Sternberg, 2009d, as cited in Santrock, 2010). The changing adolescent's cognitive skills also influence how they view their social world.

This study was not conducted to determine the brain's structural differences between adolescent boys and girls, nor who is cognitively stronger. The findings however do illustrate the general qualitative impressions the participants have and what meaning they made with regard to the cognitive abilities of girls within their schooling and social contexts. Both male and female participants were under the impression that girls are academically more focused and compete well with boys within the classroom. Girl's qualitative thinking strategies include being more serious and reflective, as well as future-orientated. Girls are also perceived as being determined in their thoughts, plans and actions. The meaning behind these perceptions is due to the realisation that girls need to be able to think and reason appropriately as they do not have the physical strength as do boys to deal with personal difficulties in a more aggressive and masculine way.

They were under the impression that if all else failed boys could resort to physical reactions as a problem-solving strategy, but girls needed to use their cognitive abilities. This affirms that cognitive development, or in this case selected cognitive strategies, are influenced by environmental and hereditary factors, combining personal abilities and interests with social norms (Grotevant, 1998; Sternberg, 2009d, as cited in Santrock, 2010).

4.4.3.3 Fostering resilience through personal values and abilities

The following discussion will elaborate on each specifically selected participant's values and abilities in terms of fostering their resilience to cope with adverse circumstances. The specifically selected participants found meaning in the values they learnt from their mothers. Values Thandi learnt from her mother was to: "... *finish school and don't like the boys too much ... I will get HIV or sometimes I can get pregnant. Two of them are dangerous for me*" (TA3:325: Dreams & Fears). Furthermore, Thandi's mother

encouraged her as well as taught her to respect people in general: *“She told me many things ..., and to respect people”* (TA3:325: Dreams & Fears). As an example, Thandi mentioned some people she respected as: *“I respect my teachers and I respect my principal”* (TA3:556: Life at School). In part, valuing her and her baby’s safety as well as due to her respect for other people, Thandi also avoided conflict: *“And I don’t fight at school. I avoid talking, I avoid the fighting at school”* (TA3:564: Life at School). Despite the difficulties that Thandi experienced, she valued her life and future as she avoided taking drugs: *“When my friends they say take this one and smoke that one I will get far away from them and said [say] no to them”* (TA3:480: SWOT). Valuing education and being at school inspired Thandi to be a singer and actor: *“When I am at school I sing or sometimes be an actor”* (TA3:494: SWOT). Thandi was skilled in managing her time appropriately and being involved in extramural activities, such as the choir, her study group as well as participating in the research project: *“I have time and I do my studies right after school. I go to choir to sing”* (TA3:544: Life at School), while the rest of the week: *“On Tuesday I go to study group”* (TA3:548: Life at School) and: *“I told that teacher I will attend the choir but on Wednesday I go to Ikageng Itereleng (NGO)”* (TA3:550: Life at School). As mentioned above, Thandi also attended Saturday school and then also went home to do homework, cook, attend to and feed her baby. She and her baby then spent Sunday’s together full time.

Chantelle indicated that she found meaning and value in the belief that each person needs to become successful in life: *“Everyone needs to be successful in life”* (CA4:138: Dreams & Fears) as it helps to achieve independence: *“Being independent and have the money and stuff and you are living the good life”* (CA4:140: Dreams & Fears). She found meaning in working hard: *“One day I have kids they get what I didn’t get. Give them the opportunities and stuff”* (CA4:176: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle mentioned that she believed in living a purposeful life which she was still in search of: *“Hmmm, everyone in life has a purpose, so I am still trying to find my purpose”* (CPV7:31). Until she had found her purpose Chantelle would value coming to school, achieving academically and being self-reliant: *“That it doesn’t matter that I am hungry or something. At the end of the day I become someone, a better person and I will have all the things that they have but I will earn it myself”* (CA4:240: Dreams & Fears). As part of Chantelle’s independence she was a disciplined and dedicated learner, despite her adverse domestic circumstances: *“I learn everything for myself, by myself. Through dictionaries, books and stuff”* (CA4:422:

SWOT). In the event of Chantelle's mother dying when she was in Grade 7 she started to focus on reading to manage her emotional pain: *"The fact that my mom passed away it made me angry and I started reading and reading until I realized that I am a top learner. I was only doing it to just forget everything"* (CA4:346: Peaks & Valleys). This consequently led to her graduating as top student: *"In Grade seven I graduated and I was a top learner and I get all the certificates for all the subjects I was doing"* (CA4:332: Peaks & Valleys). Going to high school she kept herself occupied and excelled in extramural and academic abilities: *"I am a good runner and I am a good basketball player and I am also good with figures"* (CA4:364: SWOT). She also mentioned that: *"I practice my maths every day. I go to practice each and every day after school for basketball"* (CA4:376: SWOT). Despite her difficult living arrangement and neglect, Chantelle identified that: *"In Grade nine I won a medal for athletics. That was also a happy moment for me"* (CA4:334: Peaks and Valleys). She also found meaning in her ability to reason before taking action: *"We (girls) first reason before we do something"* (CA4:468: Life at School). Although Chantelle explained that she went through extreme low emotional difficult times and considered suicide she mentioned that she often found her strength in her ability to make choices: *"I know how to make my own decisions"* (CA4:324: Dreams & Fears). In doing so she considered the consequences before ultimately making a choice: *"Well I first think of the consequences ..., and then I decide whether I must [should] or I shouldn't"* (CA4:328: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle also made use of her reasoning abilities to monitor her behaviour: *"I also think of the consequences because if I do something having that anger, what would happen afterwards"* (CA4:418: SWOT). Ultimately, growth and development as a person and part of her resilience was identified during the photo-voice activity as still being important: *"Even though the rose is alone, the rose is still growing and there is colour"* (CPV7:19).

Nthombi mentioned that although it was very hard for her when her mother died she managed to continue with life: *"It is hard, but I am getting use[d] to it because, life goes on!"* (NA5:66: Dreams & Fears). A number of qualities and strengths stood out for Nthombi which included having good interpersonal skills and taking responsibility: *"Because I think I am good at socialising with people, I do know how to take responsibility of people I know how to handle that"* (NA5:12: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi also reaffirmed it during her photo-voice activity: *"Because I know how to deal with people. I know how to treat people"* (NPV8:72). In terms of having good interpersonal

skills Nthombi mentioned that she also cooperated well with her classmates: *“I am good in cooperating with people as I said I know how to cooperate with people especially my class mates”* (NA5:170: SWOT). She experienced herself as being: *“... capable of only doing anything, I told myself that...”* (NA5:130: Dreams & Fears), as well as acquiring strength from aiming to be successful: *“What makes me strong is because ee..., I want to see myself successful”* (NA5:132: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi was also of the opinion that she aimed at being positive in her life: *“I am positive in everything I do I am positive in life because I think I have a chance in life”* (NA5:170: SWOT). According to Nthombi, even the teachers were aware of her qualities and commitment: *“She told my aunt last year when she came here to release my report that I am good I do not do too much of the playing and I am committed to my work and I know what I want”* (NA5:178: SWOT). Making use of community resources and using reading as a skill Nthombi managed to process the death of her mother: *“I went to the library, there was a book I read one day about losing your parents so it was more encouraging and I learnt from it”* (NA5:134: Peaks & Valley). Reflecting on the discussions Nthombi had, two major life principles that stood out for her: girls needing to be self-reliant as well as to focus on the future and forget about the past.

During the photo-voice activity she reiterated: *“To me I think that people should know that a girl can stand on ..., her own”* (NPV8:78) as well as: *“They expect girls to stand on their own and most of them they don’t, but me I know how to stand on my own”* (NPV8:100). This is a value that has been passed on from Nthombi’s mother: *“She taught us to take care of ourselves, to not rely on people to do things, so that was encouraging because we do know how to do that now”* (NA5:228:Life at School). During her photo-voice activity Nthombi also acknowledged that people are not in one’s life eternally and thus a person will need to be able to continue independently: *“Because at the end you won’t benefit nothing. You rely on that person and then she dies or he dies. Who will help you at the end? So I think the best way is to rely on yourself!”* (NPV8:94). Also gained from Nthombi’s mother was a sense of acceptance of the things that cannot be changed in life, but to continue with life: *“Because my mother taught us that we should never give up in life accept there is something there as discouraging as something would discourage, so I take that words my mother said to us”* (NA5:130: Dreams & Fears). Instilled through the love of her mother, Nthombi valued her family and loved her sister and cousins: *“I told myself that without her I would be nothing but today I am someone who love who loves her cousins and who know how to take care of them without my mother”* (NA5:226: Life at

School). Another important cognitive method Nthombi used was to put the past behind her and to focus her attention on the future, as modelled and encouraged by a social worker and a caring teacher at school: *“Because of the fear of my mother dying, my teacher encourage me that I should never focus on that because I will never go on with life, so I have to forget about the past and face the future. So it did encourage me a lot because I did manage to do it”* (NA5:232: Life at School). During the photo-voice activity she emphasised once again that the key to life was: *“By forgetting about the past. That is what we do”* (NPV8:30). Nthombi ultimately believed that the strength of women comes from God: *“To me I think it is from God”* (NPV8:82).

Resilience has complex variables and has been well researched as a psychological construct. In line with endarkened/Black feminism, ‘spiritual’ connectedness of all Black girls/women and their ascendants makes them part of a universal community that through ages have worked and lived in contexts of and struggled against systems of oppression and exploitation (Dillard et al., 2011). By being young members of this ‘spiritual’ community of Black women, a sense of resilience has sustained their determination to strive for freedom from oppressive structures and practices, to “focus on the future”. As argued by Dillard et al. (2011, p.156), “Black women work and live in context of spirituality and the sacred, holding beliefs in something larger than ourselves”. As also mentioned by the participants, the teachings, encouragements and motivation of their mothers supported them spiritually to be resilient within these difficult circumstances. A critical review regarding youth resilience studies conducted in South Africa by Theron et al. (2010) indicated that in terms of protective resilience resources embedded in the family, Black township youth reported that their mothers were the pillars of strength that supported them by providing a sense of security and by encouraging them actively towards self-actualisation.

Recent literature included the contextual factors and interactional nature between resilience and adversity and the idea of resilience as being collective in itself, with protective contextual factors also playing a role in children’s resilience (Eloff, 2008; Boyden & Cooper, 2007; Boyden, 2011). Resilience is also seen as a process that occurs due to the dynamic interchange between the individual, the family, the community and the dominant culture. Within the South African context, Theron et al. (2010) argue that few of the articles regarding resilience they reviewed linked resilience to cultural values. Of

significance was that extended families typical of indigenous African values were instrumental in encouraging resilience and that the traditional values of *ubuntu* encouraged resilience among the townships participants in her study.

Bhana et al. (2011) identified individual/family level and community level determinants contributing to family resilience. Families' belief systems and values play an integral part in terms of fostering optimism and finding meaning in crises or changing events. Self-reliance and self-determination leads to a sense of personal confidence which helps individual family members to employ their problem solving skills and abilities. Family resilience is strengthened by the belief in a higher power which serves as an important factor in overcoming their challenges (Greeff & Du Toit, 2009; Greeff & Loubser, 2008), however, Secombe (2002) noted that if parents were not able to provide this kind of support other family members, such as siblings, grandparents and close community members, might have a similar effect, thus highlighting the role of extra-familial support which strengthens resilience. Research by Cluver et al. (2007), Operario et al., (2008) as well as Bhana et al. (2011) looked at the role warmth and emotional support plays as a foundation for family resilience among children orphaned by AIDS.

Values: Although it is clear that the research participants did not represent a homogenous group the specifically selected participants were spokespersons of the lives of girls from child-headed households. They provided a broad spectrum of factors that highlighted their values and supported the meaning-making of their gendered lives as well as contributing to their resilience. As indicated in Theron et al.'s (2010) study, the specifically selected participants indicated that their mothers, before their deaths, had played an important role in encouraging their daughters to self-actualisation and striving for independence. The value of independence was also seeded and supported by teachers and a social worker involved with one of the participants. In terms of values the specifically selected participants indicated that education was highly valued, together with respect for other people as well as valuing life and a better future. Valuing a loving family and being able to provide for the children was also mentioned. Independence and self-reliance were indicated as critical principles of life for which a girl should strive. Chantelle also mentioned the importance of being able to value and live a purposeful life.

Skills: The coping strategies and skills adolescents also utilise in their daily lives are also an important variable that influences resilience. These skills and coping strategies also provided them with meaning to their lives as adolescent girls. The various skills that were mentioned by the specifically selected participants respectively, that contributed positively to their resilience, included time management, discipline in learning activities, participating in extramural activities, reading books to gain more general knowledge as well as reading books that supported them with their bereavement process. Interpersonal skills were also an important component of one of the focus participant's protective resiliency factors. Utilising community resources (NGOs and community health clinics) also contributed to the participants being able to foster stronger resiliency and determination (Theron et al., 2010). The girls' abilities to reason and utilise internal and active coping strategies (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009; Meehan et al., 2007) supported them in creating meaning in their lives by managing their households, focussing on the future as well as deterring Chantelle, for instance from considering suicide and intergenerational sexual relationships as problem-solving options.

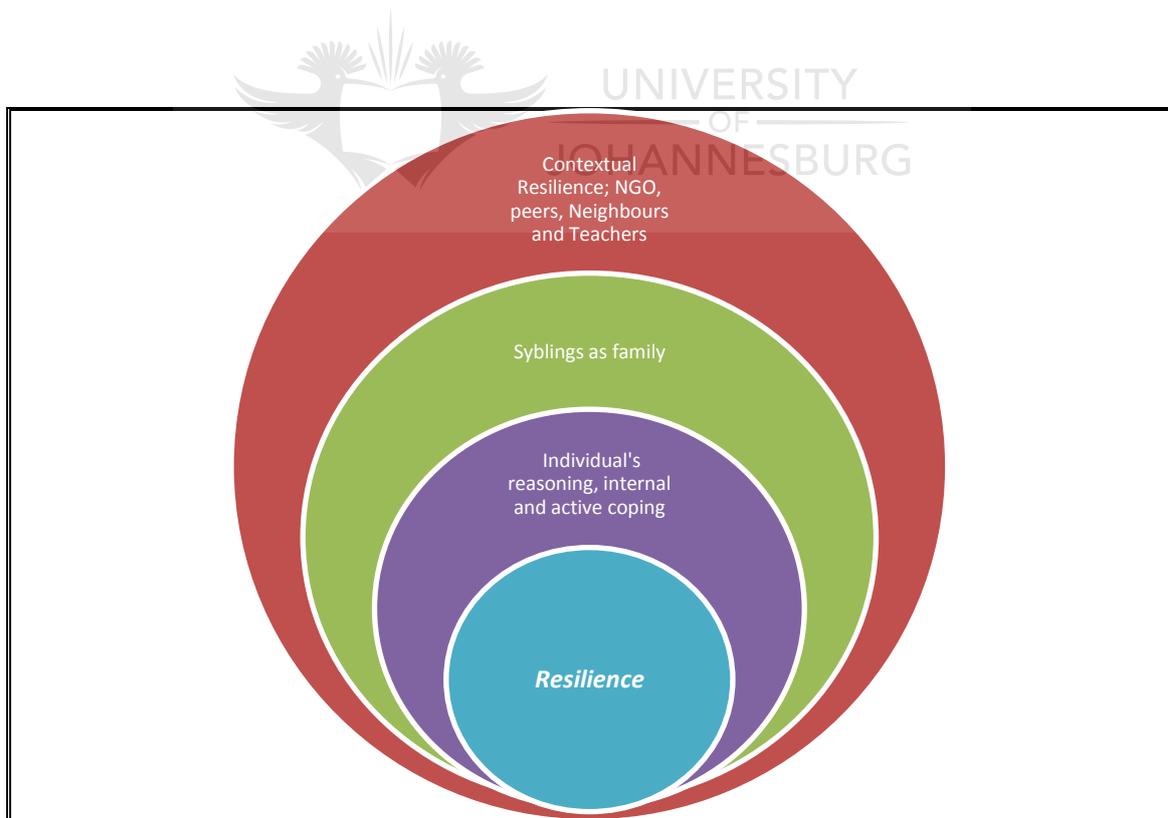


Figure 4.10: Resilience at individual, family and contextual level

In terms of the participants' resilience they made mention of community resources supporting them on a regular basis.

4.4.3.4 Supportive resources attributing to resilience

The lives of adolescent girls from adolescent-headed households are filled with adversity and challenges, in the midst of which and struggle to survive on a daily basis there are people who attempt to support and provide guidance to them. These supportive resources may be seen as contributing contextual factors within communities which facilitated the resilience of the participants and helped them to make meaning of their gendered experiences.

4.4.3.4.1 Practical support measures

At the time of the research Thandi was the only one of the three specifically selected participants who was supported by the NGO as noted above, receiving a Child-Support Grant for her baby. Thandi was introduced to the NGO through a friend after her mother died: “[A friend]...bring me here at NGO and tell Ma Carol about my story, what happened to my mother and Ma Carol told me to join here at the NGO” (TA3:26: FamD). During our discussions of Thandi's activity booklet she explained how the NGO supported her with daily living goods, which changed her life: “Since I was in NGO my life was not difficult like the first one” (TA3:18: FamD) as well as: “I was 15 years old. Then since I was here I get food ..., my life changed since I was[came] here” (TA3:28: FamD). The NGO supported Thandi by providing mainly food and school necessities, depending on their own resources at the time: “Sometimes they say they don't have the money to give me to go to school and sometimes I get food” (TA3:64: FamD). Some of the food necessities would include: “Yes, because sometimes I come to the NGO to ask for the small one and the mielie meel and I buy then tomatoes and potatoes for my baby to eat” (TA3:160: FamD). The NGO also tried to provide her baby with milk: “The first time I get the Nan one but now it is the big one because on the sixteenth of December I have a visit from here, the NGO and they give me the big one milk, Nido. She likes Nido first time” (TA3:152: FamD). Thandi was also being supported by the NGO in terms of basic funds for school: “I don't have the money to pay at school then many things. Then sometimes I come here to the NGO and I don't have money and I lose many things” (TA3:48: FamD). The NGO also provided their members with transport money as well as with clothes: “Yes, they

sometimes they give me money for transport” (TA3:64: FamD), and: *“Because I ask them there at NGO to give me the clothes. They give me the clothes sometimes and the shoes”* (TA3:165: FamD) as well as: *“Because I have the uniform I take it here at Ikageng ...”* (TA3:167: FamD).

During the research process Chantelle came with me to the participating NGO for an appointment with the social worker in an attempt to join their care and support membership, even though her home address did not fall within the NGO’s area. Her supportive ‘granny-neighbour’ also took her to the NGO in their area to apply for a foster-care grant. In the meantime the social worker of that NGO had been to Chantelle’s home to monitor her living arrangement, as explained by Chantelle during our photo-voice discussion: *“Well the social workers came to the house to check the situation and I think we might go to court to talk about the foster care grant”* (CPV7:78). In order for the grant to be processed the social worker nominated her absent older brother to be appointed, Chantelle was however very concerned about this arrangement: *“Because they need an older person to control the money, but I didn’t want him to control the money. I want someone else to control the money”* (CPV7:86), someone else being: *“Uhhh..., the daughter of the grandmother (granny-neighbour)”* (CPV7:90). Chantelle did however not voice her concern as she was not asked and she thought it would delay the process further: *“They didn’t ask”* (CPV7:98), and mentioned: *“No I don’t think it will be solved because the papers have gone through. So if I change it, it will have to start all over again”* (CPV7:103). In the meantime nearing the end of the research Chantelle’s school principal took her return to Ikageng, who are now supporting her.

Nthombi also mentioned that her aunt did apply for a foster care grant for them in 2007 but even with the siblings having the necessary identification documents and with follow-up inquiries did not receive a response: *“She did apply that 2007, when my mother passed away, but there is no response since from then”* (NA5:82: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi’s aunt took them for HIV screening and received the forms from the clinic: *“My aunt went to the clinic one day yes..., for there were forms that we had to fill so they wanted us to test for HIV test so we went there so they gave us forms to go to the community centre in order to get the foster care money”* (NA5:164: Peaks & Valleys). Her aunt used to provide them with feedback regarding the foster care application but had since stopped: *“...but when she told me she said I am not allowed to because I am not 18 this year so I won’t be there, the*

only person who is going to have this foster care is my sister, but I don't know what now because she don't say anything, she used to tell us but now she is not" (NA5:88: Dreams & Fears).

In terms of the literature review the role of NGOs are of critical importance to communities. According to Matthias and Zaal (2009), it is due to the successful collaborative partnerships between NGOs that community- and familial-based care mechanisms in South Africa have been piloted. Notable examples are the Children in Distress network (CINDI) and the Thandanani Association which helped establish neighbourhood networks of childcare communities (Strebel, 2004, as cited in Matthias et al., 2009). Streak (2005, p.35, as cited in Matthias et al., 2009) however mentioned that there was insufficient acknowledgement of the financial crisis undermining the support in NGOs with too few social workers in this sector. Landman and Lombard (2006, as cited in Matthias et al., 2009) also argued that the expectations of NGO social workers are too high with relation to engaging simultaneously in statutory work and community development.

That the government is the main contributor to NGOs directly pressurises them to take on more disproportionately heavy responsibilities within suffering communities. Out of the principle of care and support they would struggle to turn away people in need facing adverse conditions, even more so children, thus contributing to their high case load and insufficient human and financial resources. Social workers at community centres may also provide emotional support while filling in the application forms for grants as they provided inspirational support and focused the participants' attention on the future. Their support however seems to be short-term in nature.

According to Van Dijk et al. (2009) the Departments of Social Development, Education and Health in 2000 released the National Integrated Plan for Children Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS of which the Home-Based and Community Based Care programme is the key feature. The aim of the programme is to support children who are affected by HIV/AIDS to remain within their communities or where possible with family members. According to Van Dijk et al. (2009) the method entails availing Foster Care Grants to extended family members or concerned members from the community to care and support for orphans. The Child Support Grant supports poor caregivers of children between the ages of 0 and 15. The Foster Care Grant as promoted by social workers is three times more

than the Child Support Grant and foster carers do not have to qualify in terms of the income-based means test.

Van Dijk et al. (2009) argue that in theory it may seem as if material support and services are readily available but in practice it becomes complicated, as for instance the head of a child-headed household under the biological age of 18 cannot apply for a Foster Care Grant for his/her younger siblings. In response, the mentorship scheme has been established whereby adult family members or caring community members could access the grant on the children's behalf. However, this option may be complicating the situation even further owing to corruption and exploitation of the funds by the adults, whereby the funds are not used to provide for the members of the child-headed families.

For Chantelle, the involvement of the NGO in her life would mean that she could be able to access a Foster Care Grant with the support of her brother, so hoping to be able to afford basic necessities and some food without needing to rely on the 'granny neighbour' too often. By having the NGO support in her life, Thandi found meaning in having a community organisation as a resource she could turn to for practical support and necessities. The supportive services at the NGO provided a community connectedness and fostered a sense of emotional security on a regular basis.

The NGO specific to this study played a vital role in the lives of many vulnerable children struggling with daily living and adversities. The coordinator and staff aim to provide the necessary financial and practical support by means of food, school fees, school clothes and shoes. It is however important to realise that the NGO is also dependent on financial contributions, which if inadequate the children from child-headed household do not eat or go to school for that week or month, and the adolescent girls of the child-headed household must find food somewhere else. The NGO also tries to arrange subsidies for day-care for toddlers and pre-schoolers, but did not have enough funds during the research study year to subsidise Thandi's daughter.

Although the specific reasons for delays in processing the grant applications of two of the specifically selected participants through the Department of Social Development is unknown, it can be assumed that understaffing and too many applications need to be processed through the Department and the Family Court. This in itself is a challenging process within the South Africans context as these state departments are once more

understaffed and overburdened. In the meantime, adolescent girls from child-headed households and their families are suffering socio-economically and their emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing is at risk, with ever-looming criminal opportunists lurking within their communities.

4.4.3.4.2 *Personal care and support*

Extended family support seemed to be less visible within the lives of the three specifically selected participants, however they received some from neighbours, their selected friends and a supportive teacher from school. Thandi's experience was not positive: *"My family does not care about me"* (TA3:196: FamD), whilst Chantelle felt neglected and experienced a sense of abandonment: *"My sister absconded and my little brother stays with his father"* (CA4:16: FamD). She elaborated by mentioning: *"Well there is no happiness because you see here I made an angry face"* (CA4:22: FamD). She explained that: *"My uncle does not want to take care of us"* (CA4:28: FamD). Making Chantelle feel unwanted in her own home was her uncle, who was also occupying the same living space: *"... tell us that where we are living is not our home because it was my mother's home, not ours"* (CA4:28: FamD).

In discussing Nthombi's family drawings in the Activity Booklet she mentioned that her aunt was the only extended family member to provide them with support: *"It[*she*] is the one who is supporting me right now, but I don't know for next year if she will be able to"* (NA5:38: Dreams & Fears). The rest of her extended family was not involved in their care or support: *"I can't say that other family members they do support us, because they don't come, she is the only person who is supporting us"* (NA5:62: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi also mentioned lack of contact with the paternal part of the extended family: *"From my father's side I don't know anyone, actually I don't even ..., I do know my father, but I haven't seen him for years"* (NA5:64: Dreams & Fears). Despite the difficulties Nthombi's aunt experienced from time to time she stayed committed to their care: *"She played that role of my mother but not exactly as she did. Yes she was encouraging, she did try to be supportive and she is, I won't say she's not, she is"* (NA5:236: Life at School).

Altshuler and Ruble (1989, as cited in Richter 2004) argue that children will turn to available adults and peers for social support as a way to manage their stressful and adverse circumstances, because social support in terms of family, school and the wider community

reduces the effects of pressure (Luthar & Zigler, 1991, as cited in Richter 2004). There is however a lack of social support (Richter, 2004) due to adults finding it difficult to provide financial or emotional support, as well as the depletion of social networks and isolation from regular institutions, thus increasing children's vulnerability. Nevertheless, despite depletion of social resources in communities there is some support and within the wider community, and the three participants did receive some from neighbours, friends and caring teachers.

Caring neighbours: Thandi's neighbours lived on the same property as Thandi and supported her by helping her to keep safe: "*Because the neighbours look after me and key [lock] my gate*" (TA3:518: SWOT). Even when Thandi did not have food for her or her baby she had an alternative source: "*Then we go somewhere to go and get food, next door at home [neighbours]*" (TA3:114: FamD). As we discussed Chantelle's support network she also mentioned a neighbour: "*The neighbour granny*" (CA4:96: FamD), who also nursed Chantelle's mother while she was very ill before dying, and Chantelle continued to rely on the elderly neighbour for support and care after her mother's death: "*When I am not at home I am with the granny that takes care of me*" (CA4:114: FamD). As far as possible she provided for Chantelle: "*Yes she buys me clothes. Uhm and she gives me food*" (CA4:96: FamD).

Traditional African beliefs consider the family to be the most important system within the community and critical to the individual's social reality and personal identity. Moyo (1992, as cited in Hook, 2008) noted that traditionally 'family' included a close-knit community of relatives. Kuo (2007, as cited in Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009), drawing on her research in KwaZulu-Natal, found that the expanded conception of family also includes both kin and kith, where the notion of relatedness includes wider networks of kin, social relationships as well as caring and trusted community members. The study found that neighbours were increasingly looking after or taking care of orphaned children within their community. In Sotho and Tswana it is referred to as *botho*, and in Nguni these qualities are referred to as *ubuntu*. Ubuntu is the practical implementation of one's knowledge of a person's duties and responsibilities within the community, for instance it is seen as a collective responsibility of the community to raise children, illustrated by the saying; 'Your child is my child'. This is consistent with the notion of a person being with and for

others (Hook, 2008), a principle of communal wholeness and wellness also supported by endarkened feminism in the past and prevalent into the future (see Section 3.2).

The participants found meaning and support through the caring relationships of a neighbour from within the community. The supportive relationship formed with the caring neighbours contributed positively to their experiences of meaningfulness and lessening the isolation members form child-headed families may experience outside the boundaries of their schooling communities. Neighbours played a very significant role in the life of Thandi and her baby, as well as in that of Chantelle. Thandi's neighbours and tenants supported her with food at times when the NGO did not have sufficient provisions and helped her with the baby when she had to do homework and study. The neighbours also provided a sense of physical security as they lived around and at the back of her house, meaning that she was not alone on the property. Chantelle's 'neighbour granny' helped Chantelle nurse her mother before her death and was now, when physically possible, looking after Chantelle by providing her with food at times and some clothing items, especially during winter.

Supportive friends: Thandi mentioned receiving help and support from her friends at school: "...friends give me food to eat, and share many things with me" (TA3:202: FamD). Thandi had a trusted few friends whom she enjoyed spending time with: "We are a few. Four" (TA3:540: Life at School) and: "When I am with my friends I enjoy [school]" (TA3:536: Life at School). Although Chantelle found friendships difficult she dared to befriend only particular friends who also emotionally supported her, initially mentioning that: "Because I don't see the point of people so I don't know" (CA4:285: Dreams & Fears) but continued to state that: "I have got a friend at home and a friend here at school" (CA4:398: SWOT). The friendship at school started as a result of mutual school work: "The one here at school we started doing homework and class work together. That is how we became friends" (CA4:400: SWOT). One of her friends also provided her with emotional care and deterred her from attempting to commit suicide: "Well, the talk that I had with my friend" (CA4:279: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi was confident about her friendship during her photo-voice discussion: "This one is my class mates. They ..., they did allow me to take the photo of them. This shows how we are related. Our class and this shows the relationship that we have" (NPV8:8). Nthombi found it difficult to confide in her classmates at first: "When I lost my mother it was so hard for me to tell my classmates

because at first I thought they would not believe me because I am a person who don't talk a lot about my life" (NA5:226: Life at School). Nthombi also mentioned that her classmates had showed a sense of understanding towards her since her mother's death: *"My classmates they do understand me ever since I lost my mother they do understand me and they do know how to cope with me"* (NA5:170: SWOT). Nthombi's friend also supported her when her mother died in return of the support Nthombi provided her: *"Like I had a friend who lost her mother too, and I was encouraging her when mine was still alive and she did the same thing I was doing for her, so it was more encouraging so I just accepted that it happened, so there was nothing that could change that"* (NA5:128: Dreams & Fears).

Nthombi and I further explored what she saw as encouragement from friends as the head of a child-headed household of which the following aspect was identified: *"It's because of my friends, my friends were more encouraging, because every time when I stay with them we used to talk about other things not about that"* (NA5:234: Life at School). Nthombi reaffirmed during the photo-voice activity that her friends also supported and advised her to focus on the future: *"They are most supportive in my life. Most of them they know how to advise me in many things. They don't like me to rely on the past but to focus on the future"* (NPV8:14). As a group of friends they tried and resolved difficulties and focussed on life goals: *"Just tell each other our problems and we try to resolve them and what we should know what we want in life"* (NPV8:16) and she experienced her friend as well as her sister as being her inspiration: *"My friends did inspire me, and also have my little sister"* (NPV8:36).

Peers were also seen as being part of the protective resources situated within communities, as they supported resilience in their friends by affording each other opportunities to acquire social acceptance and the development of positive identities and values. They could turn to their peers regarding troubling matters. According to Gottman and Parker (1987, as cited in Santrock, 2010) friendships provide adolescents with companionship; stimulation in terms of interesting information and amusement; physical support, such as resources and assistance; ego support, which is important in terms of encouragement and feedback regarding competence; attractiveness and self-esteem; social comparison; and intimacy and affection. Apart for the role friendships play in social competence,

friendships are often an important source of support (Brown & Larson, 2009; Buhrmester & Chong, 2009; Bukowski, Motzoi & Meyer, 2009, as cited in Santrock, 2010).

The participants attributed positive and supportive meaning to their friendship relationships, which when with friends added meaning in terms of their ability to resolve difficult concerns and discuss academic work, providing encouragement and direction in terms of goals. Their friends play an important role in encouraging and collaborating with them in terms of academic achievement. The size of the friendship groups is slightly different due to personality and interpersonal skills.

Compassionate teachers: Thandi also confided in a trusting teacher: *“I tell the one of my teacher about me and my life. Sometimes she help[s] me with food”* (TA3:313: Dreams & Fears) and said that: *“But she understands about my life and I happy because the teacher at school, one of the teacher at school like me very much and talk to me about life”* (TA3:550: Life at School). Thandi added: *“I treat that teacher like my mother”* (TA3:556: Life at School), as she also received support from her: *“That teacher advise me about many things and when she advise me I take that things and listen to her and do that things”* (TA3:556: Life at School). Thandi’s teacher liked her because Thandi was hard working and cooperative with her teachers at school: *“She looks after me. She likes me very much because I do the things that she tells me to do and at school I do the right things”* (TA3:556: Life at School). During Nthombi’s Activity Booklet discussion she also experienced the necessary encouragement from caring teachers: *“What makes me think so is because of the encouragement I used to get and because of my teachers are also telling me things that I should rely on”* (NA5:172: SWOT). Nthombi also experienced the social worker at the community centre as emotionally supportive, reaffirming the notion to focus on the future and not the past: *“She was encouraging a lot because she told us a lot of things we should live with, forget about the past so it was more encouraging to be able to cope”* (NA5:160: Peaks & Valleys). The social worker also encouraged Nthombi to speak out when she needed support and not to keep it to herself: *“I was a very private person, but when I was at the community centre at Ipelegeng the social worker told me that I have to speak what is happening around me”* (NA5:242: Life at School).

In terms of social and community related factors, the availability and use of social support and community ties served as a very important resilience promoting factor for families in

lower income households, such as child-headed households (Benzies et al., 2009; Black & Lobo, 2008, as cited in Bhana et al., 2011). According to Theron et al. (2010), schools were identified as the most utilised community resource, well-resourced and aesthetically attractive, maintaining academic excellence with after-school activities that encouraged resilience. Educators were seen as being the most supportive and encouraging source, providing adolescents with safe space in which they felt secure, or in which they could express their emotions. Teachers also often provided adolescents facing adversity with food, clothing, financial resources and advice. Within the research findings it was especially the female teachers who provided the necessary concern and care. Trusting female teachers encouraged and motivated the participants by focusing on their futures and lending a listening ear at school. Schools were also critical agents in supporting the participants to join a NGO as it seemed as though they provided more momentum to the process.

The participants attributed meaning, a sense of security and encouragement from caring staff members at school. The psycho-educational security of the school as a supportive community resource supports the girls to find and attach meaning to their abilities and future goals. The presence of the schooling community adds to the meaning in their lives by providing academic stimulation, a sense of achievement as well as emotional care and support by individual caring educators. They provided a good indication of the people who from the supportive structures within their communities tried to support them financially and socially as far as possible. In conclusion, Van Dijk et al. (2009) explain that a reciprocal relationship exists between children's 'self-efficacy beliefs' whereby individuals believe they can manage a situation adequately and access social support. The children's self-belief and confidence influences how they manage in terms of accessing information or actively seek support. Social support influences these beliefs in a positive manner, stimulating 'active' coping, which in turn creates more social support and/or better material resources. NGOs, peer group friends, neighbours and trusting teachers seem to be the persons mostly supportive of the adolescent girls from child-headed families as they provide positive protective measures in terms of strengthening their resilience.

In an attempt to increase their resilience and social power girls strive to become successful and economically independent. The participants also indicated that they needed to prove their worth and themselves in terms of their abilities more than did their male counterparts.

4.4.3.5 Needing to prove the value of being female

During the focus group discussion with the girls it became evident that they thought it important to prove themselves continuously in relation to boys. Figure 4.11 (below) illustrates that it is important to the girls that they should show their worth also in terms of acquiring higher academic qualifications and becoming part of the working and professional world.

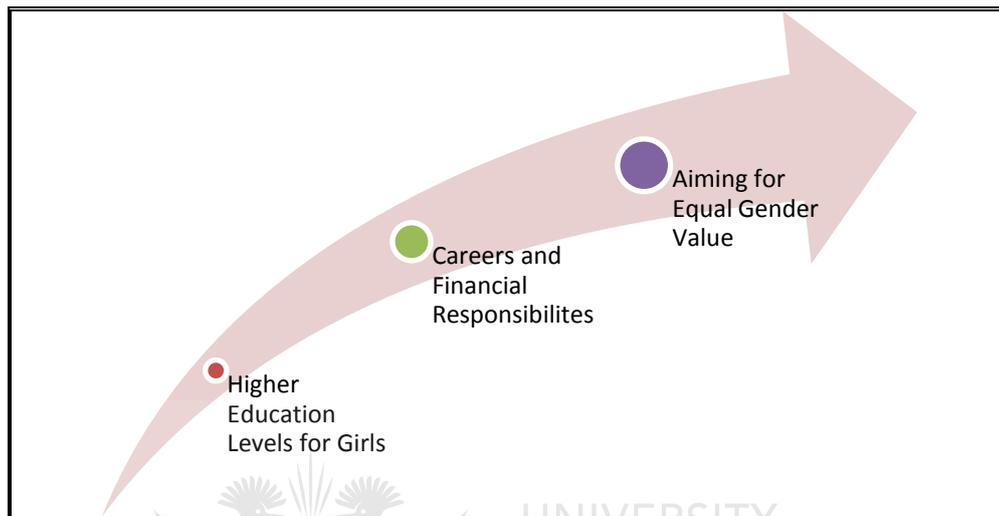


Figure 4.11: The need to prove the value of being female

Compared to the boys the girls felt that they needed to prove their value as being female. One of the participants explained that: *“We have to be there ... so we have to prove a point to them, males”* (GF1:53). Although they felt it important to prove themselves to males it was equally important for them to also acknowledge their abilities and value to themselves: *“And show ourselves we can do it!”* (GF1:57). The following participant tried to explain that she wanted to be able to show that females were not just there to work in the home but could also be actively part of the career world: *“I am trying to show them that we are also ‘bad’ because they say: “No a woman needs to stay in the house, the man has to go work”* (GF1:91). They would prefer a situation at home in which both the males and females were contributing financially to the household: *“I bring the money, he brings the money!”* (GF1:141). For the girls, education is a means to achieve their ambitions of becoming successful and financially independent.

4.4.3.5.1 Higher education levels for girls

The past favoured males to continue with their studies more readily than females: *“The boy has to go on with his studies so that he has to bring money to the house”* (GF1:141). Previously, the elders expected that the girls should stay home and do housework while the boys would continue with their studies: *“[Be]cause they was saying that if you’re a girl you only attend primary then you stay home and do the chores”* (GF1:141) as well as: *“Back in the days the elders say that uhm ... you went to a pre-school and when you can write your name they said: “You know what, you can grow-up at home”, then stay at home do the cleaning and what-what and then the boys would continue”* (GF1:166). Change is however taking place as families are realising that girls need to be more educated: *“I think it is different because we ... we as a youngster now, we get the opportunity ... we have to use these opportunity that we get”* (GF1:147). More participants agreed that educational opportunities and change were becoming more common: *“It is different because they say the girls must be educated”* (GF1:155) as well as: *“Others think that the girl must stay in the house and do the chores but others they say ... they belief that no, the girl must go to school and learn!”* (GF1:164).

Education was a very important part of life as mentioned by the boys’ focus group: *“Yes because it’s my life. If you want to give me that money to go to school I must do something because if I don’t go there, it’s my life, it’s my only education”* (BF2:373), as well as seeing education as the gateway to further opportunities: *“The only key to success is education, there is no other way”* (BF2:481). The importance of education as a means to improve her life was also mentioned by Thandi: *“Because I want a new life. I don’t want to see my life down”* (TA3:570: Life at School). Chantelle expressed during her discussion regarding considering dropping out of school that having no education would complicate finding work: *“Because you stayed home with no education and no one will want to hire you and stuff”* (CA4:228: Dreams & Fears). She also mentioned that dropping out of school would threaten her dreams: *“What is threatening my dream is that coming to school is it is a difficult thing and there might be a possibility that I drop out or something and then I don’t make my dreams come true”* (CA4:192: Dreams & Fears). Chantelle’s need to change her life motivated her to continue going to school: *“That I want to change my life”* (CA4:234: Dreams and Fears). Attending school also helped her to focus on her future and gain more knowledge: *“Because like when I am at school I forget everything”* (CA4:292: Dreams & Fears) and: *“Being at school is a great opportunity for me because I get to gain*

more knowledge” (CA4:380: SWOT). During Nthombi’s photo-voice activity she also added that in order to become successful and knowing what was wanted in the future starts at school: *“To me it is important that I should know what I want in life and I should become what I ..., in order that I become successful and it starts here at school!”* (NPV8:52).

By obtaining an education more opportunities are available to school leavers: *“[Be]cause many people I know who finished school, they have everything they want, like everything... Big opportunities when they finish school”* (BF2:485). The girls however expressed their perception that opportunities favour males as they perceive females not to be as intelligent: *“There’s those opportunities where males ... males, always gets the opportunity because they think females are ... are kind of slow or something”* (GF1:55). In terms of making use of equal opportunities the boys’ focus group were of the opinion that the balancing of gender roles contributes to the girls also needing to enter into the career world: *“I think it is a balance of the girls to get their own job”* (BF2:537). The boys however were of the opinion that due to the attitude changes also favoured girls to obtain higher levels of education, and so they were also receiving more opportunities: *“The most popular people is the girls”* (BF2:489) as well as filling more career positions within companies: *“You go find a job, you find the receptionist is a girl, her boss is a girl”* (BF2:493). The boy’s focus group also perceived the changing workplace as including more females in the responsible positions of hiring staff: *“If she feels like hiring you, she will hire you, so girls are equal now”* (BF2:493).

Traditionally as recently as two generations ago boys were favoured to complete their schooling while it would be enough for girls to be able to read, write and do basic mathematical calculations up until Grade 7. Recent political, global economic and gender equality campaigns internationally and nationally have brought about more equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls (Meintjies et al., 2012). As recorded by Geldenhuys and De Lange (2007), the transformation of the economy and labour market globally, together with the provision of increasing educational opportunities, are major factors in contributing to the changing role of women. The South African government took the opportunity to become part of the UN Millennium Development goals in term of achieving Education of All by 2015 (UNESCO, 2005, as cited in Runhare et al., 2011). The latest statistics from Statistics South Africa (Meintjies et al., 2012) indicated that 97%

of the school-going-age children were attending school, with an equal proportion of boys and girls enrolled in formal education systems in South Africa. It is the perception that orphans and members from child-headed households are more than likely to drop out of school, which will have a negative effect on acquiring the needed skills and abilities for future career opportunities. It is however important to note that education and schools as a community resource plays a pivotal role in terms of the personal and social benefits for future career development and national development, as they provide stability, institutional affiliation and the normalisation of experiences for children, especially those from child-headed households, as well as providing social support as potentially given by caring educators and peers (Richter, 2004; Leatham, 2005).

Although school-drop out is a great concern and an ever looming possibility for children, especially girls of child-headed families, schools provide stability as well as personal and social benefits. Children from child-headed households receive some measure of practical and emotional support from the schooling context. The participants found meaning in the importance of proving themselves academically as well as being able to prepare themselves to enter career fields after leaving school. The participants, being girls, found meaning in their desire to do well academically and have the qualifications necessary to enter into a career field, thus their worth as females will be proven to males and ultimately their social status would increase in a male-dominated society. The participants were very aware that education provided them with more opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions. In order to obtain the desired jobs and to follow their careers attending school would support their envisaged life changes. In terms of opportunities both the boys and girls were of the opinion that the other gender was still favoured. The findings thus also supported a study by Gaganakis (2003, as cited in Geldenhuys et al., 2007) that found girls expressed an sensitive awareness of the prevailing gender imbalances and were pessimistic about the possibility of changing South Africa's patriarchal and discriminatory structures and social practices.

4.4.3.5.2 *Careers and financial independence*

Thandi expressed her understanding of being part of life as being able to work and have a home: “*Do my work and I want to be with my house*” (TA3:474: SWOT) and also to fulfil an ambition: “*My dream is to have my own car and my new house*” (TA3:226: Dreams & Fears). Thandi mentioned during the discussion of her SWOT analysis that she wished to

make use of opportunities such as: *“to achieve at school, my opportunity is to become a teacher. My opportunity is to be an actor, or be a singer”* (TA3:488: SWOT). To Chantelle being successful means: *“...being independent and have the money and stuff and you are living the good life”* (CA4:140: Dreams & Fears). To Chantelle, living the good life means: *“...when you have a nice house, expensive cars, a nice job”* (CA4:142: Dreams & Fears). Her aspiring career was to do: *“Land surveying”* (CA4:144: Dreams & Fears). During Nthombi’s photo-voice activity she explained that most woman had the desire to become successful: *“Most women want to become successful, yes! To rely on themselves and not on other people”* (NPV8:92). As mentioned by Nthombi during the activity booklet discussion, in order to become successful one has to be committed to working hard: *“I think it is easy if you are committed to work, that is the only way you can make it successful”* (NA5:94: Dreams & Fears). The need to become successful also supports Nthombi to focus her attention on the career she wished to follow: *“...need to focus on the career that I want to achieve in life”* (NA5:108: Dreams & Fears). Nthombi mentioned during her photo-voice discussion that she wished: *“To study hard to go further with my studies and become a professional Human Resource Manager”* (NPV8:68).

In the study of South African first-year (late adolescent) female coloured students by Geldenhuys et al. (2007) it was found that the participants were well aware of their increasing career opportunities. The participants exhibited notable self-knowledge relating to experiencing themselves as independent, confident as well as being purposeful. They had high ambitions and ideals but were fully cognisant of the reality that they would need to work hard to realise their dreams. Factors that influenced their career choices were, among others, the need to achieve monetary gain and social status. Financial constraints were however still an ever looming threat to their goals. One of the concerns mentioned regarding the development of their careers was the influence of a still male-dominated society. In terms of recommendations to facilitate the career paths adolescent girls should take, Geldenhuys et al. (2007) suggest that educators can be instrumentally facilitating career exploration and sponsoring career exhibitions. Greater access to the electronic media as well as information software packages of different career choices could assist adolescent girls to make informed subject and career choices. They suggest that it is vital that educators should reflect on their guidance and counselling functions in schools in order to provide better support with regard to learners following the appropriate careers in the future.

As in Geldenhuys et al.'s (2007) study, the participants in the current study also indicated that by obtaining a good education and hopefully continuing into tertiary studies they would like to enter into successful career fields. Apart from gaining material goods it would be important to achieve success as well as be able to live life independently. As mentioned by Nthombi, most women want to be successful, self-reliant, hard-working and committed. One of the participants' greatest fears was however not being able to follow their career aspirations due to socio-economic barriers which do make it difficult to attain tertiary qualifications.

The participants did indicate during the research process that there were resources and protective factors that they did consult in order to navigate their way through day-to-day living.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The above findings are very detailed in portraying the lived experiences and what meaning the participants involved in the study made of their gendered experiences. Table 4.6 (below) provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes in relation to the meaning the participants made of their gendered experiences when faced with adversity and living in a child-headed household.

Table 4.6: Summation of the themes and sub-themes in relation to the meaning-making of the participants

Themes	Sub-Themes	Meaning Making
The Perception of Cultural Influences with regard to Gender-Roles	Past and Present Cultural Positioning of Females in Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Girls not taken as seriously *Voices are undermined due to their gender *Not as valued due to cultural patriarchal practices *Position in home subordinate *Patriarchal practices promoting unequal gender relations in the home
	Gender Roles and the Great Divide of Household Chores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Gender-roles taught and modelled by significant others *Mothers instil family and cultural values *Gendered-roles unequal, workload heavier and more frequent
Challenges Faced by Adolescent Girls Leading a Household	Fluctuating living circumstances and transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Make meaning of the illness and passing of their mothers *Taking responsibility for themselves in child-headed households
	Danger from within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Safety under threat by virtue of being female *Age & being female = not physically as strong as males *Intensifies vulnerability w.r.t. physical attacks

	Financial challenges and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *No financial means *Cannot afford basic needs: food, clothes, sanitary products *Food, clothes & hygienic goods will have positive effect *No funds to access additional educational resources *Going to school hungry; negative impact on learning *Embarrassed about not having money for food *Acknowledging intergenerational relationships as possible solution but deterring from it, considering the long-term negative impact on own health and safety
	Caring for younger ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Meaning & power in their carer-relationships as mothers, sisters and nieces *Adolescent motherhood motivating to pass high school *Perceive baby as a blessing from God *Focus on academic demands & support siblings academically
	Emotional experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Emotional experiences of sadness, loneliness and pain *Impacted on the clarity of their cognitive abilities
Valuing being Female	Physical presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Physical appearance promote being taken seriously
	Perceptions of cognitive abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Academically focused, thinking strategies future orientated *Thinking and reasoning skills preferred instead of physical strength
	Resilience fostered through values and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Values underpinned by self-actualisation and strive for independence *Skills included time management, disciplined in learning activities, participating in extramural activities, interpersonal skills and reading books to gain more general knowledge as well as reading books that supported them with their bereavement process
	Supportive resources attributing to resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *NGO would mean access to foster-care grant; able to afford basic necessities and food *NGO provided community connectedness & fostered a sense of emotional care *Caring neighbours; positive experiences of meaning & less isolated outside the boundaries of their schooling communities *Friends supported discussing difficult concerns, academics & encouragement for future goals *Caring teacher providing academic stimulation, a sense of achievement and emotional care.
	Needing to prove the value of being female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Important to prove themselves academically and entering career field *Hope for tertiary studies which leads to entering career fields *Social status would increase in male dominated society *Gaining financial security & being successful, self-reliant, hard-working and committed

As illustrated in Figure 4.12, the voices of the participants provided a good indication that although gender equality has improved from the more traditional values, the positioning of girls is still however influenced by the traditional cultural practices of the past. In a male-dominated society with patriarchy as an integral part of societies around the world, international human rights legislation has made some positive changes in providing girls within the South African context specifically with more education opportunities and power in deciding to enter the career market so as to improve their socio-economic status. However, as revealed the voice of woman and subsequently girls are still however not being taken as seriously within family contexts. The male still dominates the household and has the final decision-making rights within many homes. The main domestic functions of the girl are to manage the household, care for the children and males, and create a homely atmosphere. In an attempt to increase their psycho-emotional value girls utilise their educational opportunities, as well as wishing to enter into the formal job market. This however does not change their position in the household, which is still patriarchal in nature.

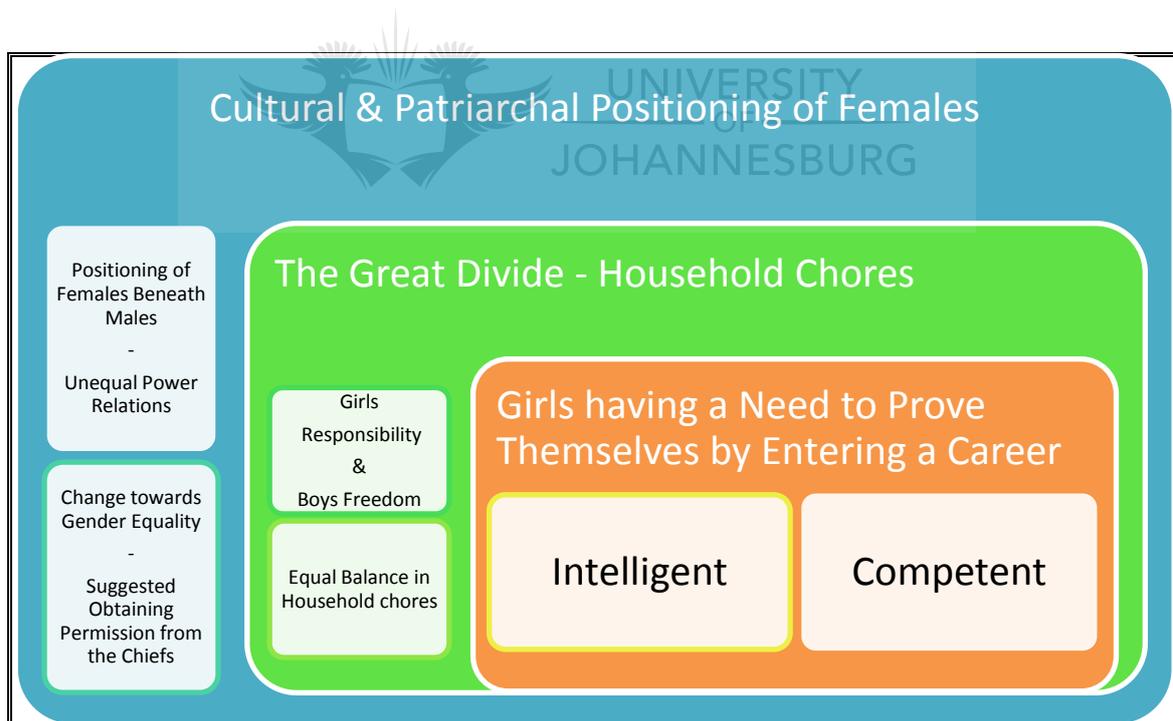


Figure 4.12: Girls, boys and power relations – ‘The Geneva Effect’

In an informal discussion, the very proud and dignified director of the NGO said that within the local communities it was known that males would think that it was acceptable for females to want to improve their education and enter into the job market: “Women can

go do the Geneva thing”, in reference to the Swiss human rights and United Nations conventions, but when they come home the more traditional gender role of females are upheld. The head of the NGO explained that the “Geneva thing” refers to the need of Black African women to assert themselves within their career fields as part of their human rights, but at home the more traditional patriarchal rights remain whereby women are supposed to be submissive to the males as heads of the households. If change is however to take place the permission of the male elders will need to be requested, as arose in the boys’ focus group. Once again, male domination and power prevents possible change within the lives of girls.

Nestled within these cultural principles, adolescent girls from child-headed households still take the main roles of being the provider, home creator and ‘mother’ to their siblings or children. They too desperately would like to attain higher qualifications and be able to join tertiary institutions in order to lead independent and self-reliant lives as learnt from their mothers. Although they exhibit good time management skills their time is still limited by their household responsibilities and caring for the younger ones. Poor socio-economic conditions are a daily challenge as they need to provide food for their siblings and themselves as well as having the physical and mental energy to do homework and tasks for school the next day. State funded feeding schemes at schools are allocated to primary schools while high schools need to use their own resources to obtain support from NGOs and other social support organisations. Despite the feeding schemes that may exist at high school level, adolescents may find it more embarrassing to receive food from school, as mentioned by Chantelle: “*I want to eat at home*”. Financial resources are the main concern in every child’s life coming from a child-headed household, as it could also lay the foundation for them to go and study further within their desired career field, if however their subject choices are correct. The adolescent girls in this study exhibited great courage and strength by hoping for better futures, with education being their gateway.

The adolescent girls from child-headed households lived courageously and with determination each challenging day. The girls’ resilience was indicated on mainly three levels, namely the personal level of attributes and skills; the family level, characterised by sibling love and care; and the community level, on which individuals such as their friends, teachers and neighbours played a vital role in their protective and determined natures.

CHAPTER 5

AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME AS SUPPORT TO ADOLESCENT GIRLS FROM CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter an in-depth discussion was held regarding the results and findings of the data analysis. The themes that were identified were used to design an intervention programme for the youth workers and support staff of the NGO that supported the research study process. The intervention programme can also be utilised by other stakeholders who work in collaboration with the NGO and the schools supporting adolescent girls from child-headed households and vulnerable circumstances. The step-by-step intervention programme consists of activities that are simple to understand and are user-friendly. The intervention programme would be presented to participants within a workshop format (Steinert, Boillat, Meterissian, Liben & McLeod, 2008), as it is a brief intensive intervention programme for a relatively small group of participants belonging to child-headed households.

5.2 THE THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The outline of the intervention programme is based on a feminist theoretical orientation (as discussed in Sections 2.2 and 3.2) and included the findings of the research study that were developed in collaboration with the research participants and the researcher. The data obtained from the study was analysed for themes and topics that guided the selection of the activities chosen for the intervention programme to support adolescent girls from child-headed households. By keeping within the feminist orientation I took cognisance of the participants being part of a community, and so I thought it practical to design an intervention programme that could be used by the youth workers and teachers at schools supporting adolescent girls within the community. As argued by Dillard et al. (2011),

feminist researchers do have a responsibility to the community and the participants who were involved and supported the research process. I highlight the endarkened/ Black feminist view that resistance against oppression and patriarchy as one of the forms of oppression is counteracted within the indigenous relational worlds that celebrate motherhood, sisterhood and friendship (Chilisa et al., 2010). By means of a group being facilitated by youth workers and elder female community members, such as teachers, a sense of community, sisterhood and friendship can be created by means of a support group for adolescent girls from child-headed households engaging in the completion of the intervention programme together. According to Dillard (2009, as cited in Chilisa et al., 2010), within African feminism a common principle is the focus on “healing methods as necessary research tools for life-enriching and transformative experiences as well as spiritual growth for girls/women suffering from multiple oppressions and domination”. It is thus my hope that through the use of the intervention programme the activities would raise awareness in the participants regarding their strengths within themselves as well as their communities, leading to life-enriching and transformative experiences.

According to Chilisa et al. (2010), participatory methods within the feminist framework promote social justice and heal females from patriarchal oppression by culture, religion and males, which is important when resisting gender oppression. It was thus important to provide opportunities through some of the selected activities within the intervention programme whereby the participants could use song, dance and storytelling, even if it is their own life-story, as a means of expressing themselves and making their voices heard. It was evident that listening to girls’ voices through these methods resonates with their indigenous experiences. They also provide opportunities for the girls to reveal their strengths and resistance against cultural ideologies that enforce patriarchal oppression.

5.3 AIM OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME.

As related in Section 1.3, the decisive aim of the study was to analyse how African adolescent girls from child-headed households living in Soweto made meaning of their gendered experiences within their educational and social contexts. It was important to me as researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meaning they made of their everyday existence, as little is known of their lives, specifically within the South African context. The findings were compared with the literature after which an intervention

programme was developed in accordance with the main themes identified from the study. The intervention programme aimed to provide the youth workers from the NGO and support teachers from schools with ‘life-enriching and transformative’ (Dillard, 2009, as cited in Chilisa et al., 2010) activities to facilitate healing and harmony. The primary focus of the topics included in the intervention programme was directly related to the identified themes as provided within the data by the research participants.

5.4 DESIGN AND CONTENT OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The intervention programme was designed to be as concise as possible without compromising the content but also not to confuse and burden the NGO’s support and school staff. The aspects that were considered in designing the intervention programme as suggested by Steinert et al. (2008) were to define the topic that refers to the inquiry in the meaning-making of the gendered experiences of African adolescent girls from child-headed households within their educational and social contexts. The target group was identified as African adolescent girls from child-headed households and by means of the research itself the needs assessment was conducted which related to setting the goals and objectives of the intervention programme.

The variations in selecting the intervention programme activities were based on suggestions made by Du Toit (2004), who believed that learning and, in this case, intervention programme activities should be designed in such a way that it bridges the gap between unique individuals and the design and delivery of learning, therapy or intervention programmes. This means that I had to keep in mind that people have different development and learning styles as well as thinking preferences. The activities selected for the intervention programme thus adheres to Kolb’s (1984, as cited in Du Toit, 2004) learning cycle model, which incorporates different learning styles. Kolb (1984, as cited in Du Toit, 2004) distinguishes between four stages in a learning cycle that he calls ‘experiential learning’, followed in order to come to an understanding of one’s experiences in a natural way. These four stages include learning from feeling, learning by watching and listening, learning by thinking and learning by doing. I thus aimed the intervention programme activities at these four learning stages by involving the participants through feeling, listening, watching, thinking and doing. Figure 5.1. (below) illustrates Kolb’s learning cycle model.

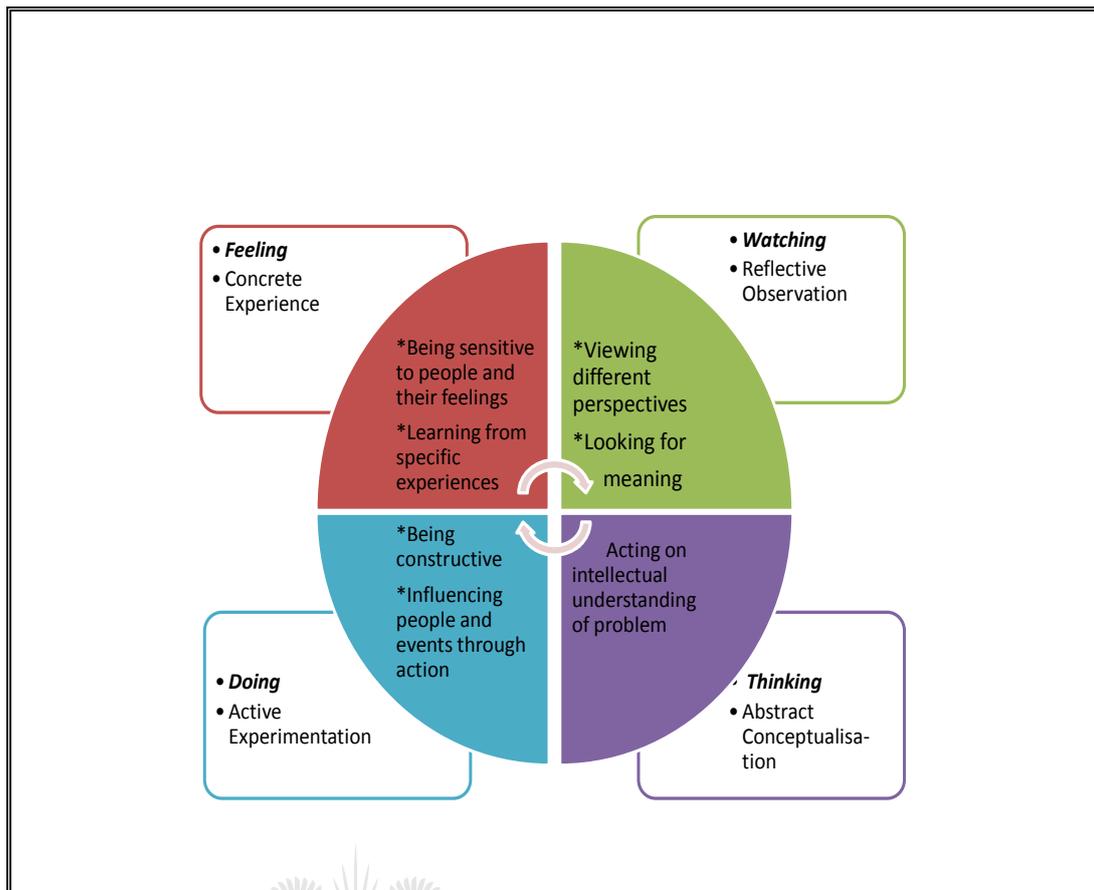


Figure 5.1: Kolb's learning cycle model
 (adapted from Kolb, 1984, as cited in Du Toit, 2004, p.154)

The learning activities and presentation method contribute to an atmosphere of discussion, reflection and interaction between the adolescent girls themselves and the facilitator(s). Talking and sharing stories are part of the oral African tradition.

The content of the intervention programme addresses the main themes of the research study as indicated and explored with the participants and discussed at length in Chapter 4. The themes indicated can in turn be explored and addressed by means of the intervention programme when new members from child-headed households join the NGO aiming to provide them with the necessary information and support as time progresses. In designing the intervention programme there were various practical considerations that I had to keep in mind. Firstly, the content of the intervention programme was based on a realisation that the support staff would require minimal direction or intervention when using the intervention programme. This was achieved by providing the users of the intervention programme with a simple, concise and self-explanatory format. I also paid specific consideration in selecting the activities to the availability of resources within diverse and

socio-economic challenged communities. Secondly, I selected activities that were influenced by Western perspectives as well as African traditions. Some of the selected activities may be familiar to educational psychologists, but only a selected few clients were exposed to psycho-educational supportive interventions within socio-economic challenged communities. Thirdly, the presentation of the activities was also more direct in nature so as to minimise possible confusion when providing instructions regarding the various activities. Diversity will however be evident in the different responses and discussions specific to the varied experiences that will be shared by participants working through the intervention programme. Finally, it was important to me that the reproduction of the intervention programme should be viable for the NGO and the supportive teachers at the school without compromising the quality of the content.

The timeframe, in terms of presenting the intervention programme, could be considered over a two-day period, depending on the group size. I propose that no more than ten participants at a time should participate in the intervention programme so as to provide each participant with enough time to take part in discussions and feedback. The youth workers as well as the support teachers from the SBST will be trained in the facilitation intervention programme once it has been approved by my supervisors as senior peer reviewers of the research. The title of the intervention programme is: “A Supportive Intervention Programme for Adolescent Girls from Child-Headed Households”.

Initially, the intervention programme begins with the main introduction, explaining how the content was derived in correlation with the identified themes. Thereafter the list of contents was given so as to provide the users of the intervention programme with a broad overview of the themes and topics addressed in the intervention programme. The body and content of the intervention programme is then presented. Where applicable I also provided practical examples by means of drawings and pictures as visual images to assist the intervention programme user in understanding the activity more thoroughly. The design is clear and simple to avoid complicated psycho-educational jargon. The ultimate goal is to provide the supportive teacher and/or NGO youth worker with a product that can be used with ease and with confidence. The intervention programme follows a specific and logical sequence and is self-explanatory with an introduction, activities and conclusion.

The specific activities are structured according to the identified themes and objectives, followed by the materials that may be needed to complete the activity. Thereafter a

discussion regarding the background of the activity is provided to offer the youth workers and other users of the intervention programme with more information pertaining to the activity and to answer possible questions about the nature of the activities. Lastly, the instruction for the specific activity and a practical example follows. Each participant will also receive a hand-out with the activities set out in the same sequence and in correlation with the user-guide regarding the intervention programme. The youth workers and support staff are encouraged to allow feedback from the participants after the completion of the activities in order to share their lived experiences and provide each other with practical ideas and support specific to the needs of adolescent girls living within the context of a child-headed household.

5.5 THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The intervention programme (see Appendix R) is based on the following findings and selected in accordance from all the themes that emerged from the study namely:

- The perception of cultural influences with regard to gender roles;
- Challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household;
- Valuing being female; and
- Needing to prove the value of being female considering education and various career fields.

These findings were linked to the feminist theoretical framework (see Section 3.2) as multiple realities obtained from the analysis of the data and shape into themes as well as multiple realities and experiences are bound to emerge from the discussions after the completion of the activities. The findings were produced by the collaborative efforts between me and the participants relevant to their lived experiences through the data which was collected by means of two focus group sessions, individual interviews, and the three specific adolescent girl participants who completed a workbook and photo-voice activities. The themes discussed in Chapter 4 are addressed through the various activities which are presented in the same sequence in the intervention programme. Table 5.1 (below) provides a summation of the overall and encompassing intervention programme activities that addresses the identified themes and sub-themes from this particular study.

Table 5.1: Summation of the themes in relation to the meaning-making of the participants leading to encompassing intervention activities

Themes	Sub-Themes	Meaning Making	Encompassing Intervention Programme Activities
The Perception of Cultural Influences with regard to Gender-Roles	Past and Present Cultural Positioning of Females in Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Girls not taken as seriously *Voices are undermined due to their gender *Not as valued due to cultural patriarchal practices *Position in home subordinate *Patriarchal practices promoting unequal gender relations in the home 	<p>Group discussion regarding three statements related to the value of girls from their own point of view in their own cultural communities</p> <p>Completing open-ended sentences reflecting on their own value as girls within their current families</p>
	Gender Roles and the Great Divide of Household Chores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Gender-roles taught and modelled by significant others *Mothers instil family and cultural values *Gendered-roles unequal, workload heavier and more frequent 	Household Core Management Plan providing each member with their specific age related chore
Challenges Faced by Adolescent Girls Leading a Household	Fluctuating living circumstances and transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Make meaning of the illness and passing of their mothers *Taking responsibility for themselves in child-headed households 	Providing adolescent girls from child-headed households with the necessary information regarding a transition plan/'Succession Plan' including an example of a will.
	Danger from within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Safety under threat by virtue of being female *Age & being female = not physically as strong as males *Intensifies vulnerability w.r.t. physical attacks 	Activity related to sharing the safety measures taken by members of child-headed households and a discussion to generate more ideas in terms of keeping safe from danger in the community.
	Financial challenges and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *No financial means *Cannot afford basic needs: food, clothes, sanitary products *Food, clothes & hygienic goods will have positive effect *No funds to access additional educational resources *Going to school hungry; negative impact on learning *Embarrassed about not having money for food *Acknowledging intergenerational relationships as possible solution but deterring from it, considering the long-term negative impact on own health and safety 	<p>Providing information regarding the different types of grants available from the Department of Social Development</p> <p>Providing an example of a Financial and Resource Management Plan</p>

	Caring for younger ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Meaning & power in their carer-relationships as mothers, sisters and nieces *Adolescent motherhood motivating to pass high school *Perceive baby as a blessing from God *Focus on academic demands & support siblings academically 	<p>Providing colourful pictures of household routines for younger siblings to instil a sense of predictability and emotional security after the death of a mother.</p> <p>Group discussion and sharing ideas regarding creative ideas and games that could be played to occupy younger siblings.</p>
	Emotional experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Emotional experiences of sadness, loneliness and pain *Impacted on the clarity of their cognitive abilities 	<p>Emotion Faces and Discussion</p> <p>The 'Tree of Life' Activity</p>
Valuing being Female	Physical presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Physical appearance promote being taken seriously 	<p>The Circle of Courage Activity addressing physical presentation and personal values and abilities in combination</p>
	Perceptions of cognitive abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Academically focused, thinking strategies future orientated *Thinking and reasoning skills preferred instead of physical strength 	<p>Providing the visual presentation of the problem-solving and thinking strategies utilised when needing to consider consequences for certain choices.</p>
	Resilience fostered through values and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Values underpinned by self-actualization and strive for independence *Skills included time management, disciplined in learning activities, participating in extramural activities, interpersonal skills and reading books to gain more general knowledge as well as reading books that supported them with their bereavement process 	<p>Addressed during the Circle of Courage and 'Tree of Life' activities (see above).</p>
	Supportive resources attributing to resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *NGO would mean access to foster-care grant; able to afford basic necessities and food *NGO provided community connectedness & fostered a sense of emotional care *Caring neighbours; positive experiences of meaning and less isolated outside the schooling communities *Friends supported discussing difficult concerns, academics and encouragement for future goals *Caring teacher providing 	<p>Identifying Support Networks and Community Resources by using a Taxi Bus as a metaphor activity</p>

		academic stimulation, a sense of achievement and emotional care.	
	Needing to prove the value of being female	*Important to prove themselves academically & entering career field *Hope for tertiary studies which leads to entering career fields *Social status would increase in male dominated society *Gaining financial security & being successful, self-reliant, hard-working and committed	Activity guiding the participant to complete a Subject Choice and related Careers form, sensitising them to the possible career fields related to their subject choices at school Providing a flow chart to guide the participants in the relevant questions relating to career choices and the possibility of tertiary studies.
		Concluding Activity	Concluding Activity involves the participants to create a song/poem/dance or story regarding their value, inner-strength and resilience as Black South African girls in relation to their 'spiritual' connectedness to other females trans-nationally (Endarkened Feminist Paradigm)

The intervention programme is unique to the findings of this particular study. It was printed, collated and is located as a product in the back of the manuscript.

5.5.1 Perception of cultural influences with regard to gender-roles

Okpalaoka (2011, as cited in Dillard et al., 2011) mentions that African feminists like Aidoo, Abena Busia, Sofola and Ogundipe-Leslie advocate the consideration of *culture* as a form of oppression for African women. I extend this to include 'girls' so as to highlight their position and not let them be marginalised due to their age, as often their experiences are assumed to be similar to those of women. The three major axes of oppression (race, class and gender) should expand to include oppressive cultural norms in order to avoid thinking of African womanhood in universal terms (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Omolade, 1994; Oyewumi, 1997; Steady, 1981, as cited in Dillard et al., 2011). A further axis of oppression in relation to intersectionality as feminist theory includes age as the girls are not adults and are subordinate within an adult society.

The male participants were united in their discussion that the practices of traditional African cultures, which are mainly still rife with patriarchy, influence the positioning of woman and girls today. The terms ‘undermined’ and ‘not taken seriously’ were used to describe the value placed by males on the voices and opinions of women and girls within traditional African culture. The findings support the feminist paradigm, which assumes that it is usually the more powerful male counterparts who dominate social life and ideology at the expense of women (Sarantakos, 2012). In line with radical feminism (Kiguwa, 2008), which views patriarchy as the most fundamental cause of women’s/girls’ oppression, these undermining attitudes are then carried over into the family, where the male person is seen as superior and receives automatic entitlement due to being a male.

Moletsane (2004, as cited in Pillay et al., 2011) confirms that parents are the primary caregivers and thus carry forward family and socio-cultural and patriarchal values to their children, as they themselves were internally conditioned. This once again supports the feminist paradigm in terms of acknowledging that the social world and reality is constructed and influenced by the ideologies of the ‘powerful’ (Sarantakos, 2012), thus often the elder women in the communities, which also alludes to age as an oppressive mechanism. Both Aidoo (1998) and Zulu Sofola (1998) as cited in Dillard et al. (2011) agree that African women’s burdens of oppression can be traced to both internal influences of socio-cultural and patriarchal structures as well as external influences stemming from colonialism and the postcolonial crises of leadership on the African continent.

Kulkarni et al. (2010) believe that it is fitting to increase adolescent girls’ awareness and knowledge as to the significant influences of gender, economic class, race, and *culture* have on their personal choices. Fitting within the African world view and endarkened/Black feminism (Dillard et al., 2011) (see Section 3.2.1.2), boys and girls who each constitute the critical half of a whole need to work together as a unit. African ‘Womanism’ suggests family-centeredness rather than female-centeredness, such as in Western Feminism (Dillard et al., 2011; Kiguwa, 2008), to inform families, in which men and women come together to oppose oppression of girls by starting with the equal division of household chores within the home. Taking into consideration the

abovementioned feminist principles, activities were developed to create awareness and employ a household plan to address the gender-related concerns.

From my own experience, as well as within the African cultural traditions, discussions are seen as necessary to clarify different opinions when working with adolescents in general. Adolescents enjoy listening to different perspectives and reasoning around different and similar points of view. As an introduction to the intervention programme, discussions regarding gender-related concerns as identified by the original research participants were facilitated by means of three activities, which included discussion statements, four incomplete sentences as well as an activity table the participants need to complete. Firstly, three statements were selected from the research participant focus group discussion relating to the value of girls and the influence of culture, class and gender in this regard. These statements provide an opportunity for a discussion between the participants and facilitators regarding the value of girls as experienced from their own point of view within their own cultural communities. Secondly, a more personal view on their own value within their families was incorporated by including four open-ended sentences they needed to complete. The third activity relates to the suggestion made by the original research participants. The third activity requests the participants write down the names of the members of their household as well as small tasks that are age-appropriate for them to help with in the home, irrespective of gender. This was also seen as appropriate as the research identified that it was also the female elders who continue the socialisation of children in relation to the different gender roles and responsibilities within the home.

After sensitising the participants to the role socio-cultural influences within a patriarchal society plays within their lives, a closer look is given to the practical challenges and management concerns within the household the adolescent girls need to consider.

5.5.2 Challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household

The original research participants discussed their difficulty with transition and financial concerns as sub-themes within the research. The participants also discussed their emotional difficulties and challenges they experienced throughout the different

stages after the death of their mothers and continues in their daily living also identifying persons and organisations that assisted them in their journey thus far. The following information and activities were related to the theme and sub-themes as identified by the research study.

5.5.2.1 Fluctuating living circumstances and transition

The research findings also indicated that adolescent girls from child-headed households identified transitional and adjustment difficulties as a significant challenge in their day-to-day living (see Section 4.4.2.1). First their parents fall ill then die, so the girls have to manage with new arrangements that need to be made in terms of their daily living. During these events adolescent girls go through very uncertain and difficult times, which can have significant impact on their emotional security and wellbeing. Bonthuys (2010) writes of the detrimental effects of parental illness as many households lose their income, the household resources are depleted and children often have to nurse their dying parent or grandparent. Van Dijk et al. (2009) mention that providing child-headed households (the 'new coping mechanism' of extended families) with supervision or mentors assumes that members of the extended family and community provide an effective alternative to moving away from their parents' homes and siblings are divided among family members in order to lessen the financial burden. Children and adolescents thus try under these circumstances by forming a child-headed household to keep their community environments familiar and the sibling unit intact lessening the secondary stressors listed by Hope et al. (2006).

Taking into consideration the abovementioned findings it is important that the adolescent girls could make use of a transition plan that they could, where possible, discuss with their dying parent, giving both, and possible siblings, some peace of mind and emotional security in the event of the parent's death. A transitional plan or a 'Succession Plan' is an approach to ensure that there is continuity in the lives of children after the death of their parents as well as address the protection of the inheritance rights of the child or children. The National Guidelines for Statutory Services to Child-Headed Households (April 2010) includes reference to a 'Succession Plan', amongst others, also incorporating discussions regarding the legal process in terms of applying for guardianship and drawing up a will in collaboration

with their parent. In providing relevant information the girls' knowledge base regarding their living circumstances and information that could assist them in their living arrangements is widened. Added to the Succession Plan that could facilitate the arrangements during the transition phases is obtaining information regarding the financial support for which the orphaned children can qualify.

5.5.2.2 *Financial difficulties and management*

The gender dimension of being a girl intersects with marginalised categories of socio-economic class and a patriarchal culture in which male domination is still prevalent. This is well informed and underpinned by intersectionality, as supporting feminist theory (see Section 3.2.2) as explained by Clarke et al. (2009). Being an adolescent caregiver is challenging as they are going through their own physical, cognitive and emotional developments, while being confronted with the socio-economic hardship of providing and caring for younger siblings (Richter, 2004). These hardships include struggling to complete their education, difficulty obtaining food as they have hardly any money to pay for it, being at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation by relatives and neighbours, falling prey to child prostitution, difficulty getting birth registration and obtaining the necessary healthcare and social support grants.

As Nthombi advised girls, during our photo-voice activity, they should not consider relationships with older men as girls should take a stand: *"She must speak out. She must tell the one that she trusts about ... her problem. Maybe she can be helped"* (NPV8:160). Through relevant government bodies, such as the Department of Social Development, adolescent girls from child-headed households could apply for financial aid to subsidise their household expenditure.

Financial information regarding the different types of social grants available was included in the Intervention Programme to raise their awareness of the type they or their guardians will be able to apply for, according to the Social Assistance Act of 2004. An example of a financial resources and management plan is also provided as to sensitise the adolescent girls to financial management, even though I am aware that some receive little or no social assistance as the process can be extensive. The activity was included to at least seed the idea that they would need to think of a financial and

resource management system as well as additional support structures when they do obtain some income by means of a support grant. Using the financial management plan can also sensitise them to the resources the NGOs could assist them with, such as food and school necessities which they do not need to pay for (depending on the NGO's available resources at the time).

In the midst of attempting to provide financially for their siblings and themselves, the adolescent girls from child-headed households experienced an array of emotions interrelated to the struggle to survive. The following section acknowledges these emotions and takes a person-centred approach in doing so.

5.5.2.3 Emotional experiences

As explained by Dillard et al. (2011) within the endarkened/Black feminism the individual and community is interrelated and the wellbeing of the community is dependent on that of the individual. For this reason I included activities that acknowledge the individual participants' own emotional experiences (Emotion Faces) and wellbeing. Literature indicates that less is known of the emotional impact of being an orphan as opposed to the overriding social and economic impact children living in child-headed household have to endure (Foster et al., 2000, as cited in Bray, 2003). Studies have however indicated that children from poor communities, such as those from child-headed households for instance, are inclined to focus their anxiety outward by worrying about social and economic conditions rather than on internal conditions such as depression and low self-esteem (Van der Heijden et al., 2010). The children were worried about having no money, being exposed to dangerous situations such as drunken people and abuse, and becoming ill themselves. They were anxious about household responsibilities and not being able to complete their education, experiencing feelings of sadness, depression and anger that also affected their academic performance negatively (Pillay, 2011).

The findings of this study also specifically agree with the study by Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2009), which found girls in late adolescents experienced higher levels of stress related to the decisions they have to make regarding their futures. As an example, Nthombi and Chantelle mentioned: "*I fear that what if my dreams don't come true*"

(CA4:190: Dreams & Fears). Anger also influenced Chantelle's interpersonal relationships: *"I cannot socialise well with other people because at times I have anger and I cannot control my moods"* (CA4:390: SWOT).

In terms of their emotional experiences, and acknowledging their inner worlds apart from their practical financial constraints, the Emotion Faces were included as an activity in the Intervention Programme. This semi-concrete activity is practical and provides room for emotional exploration. The activity is structured whereby the Emotion Faces are provided. The adolescent girls are then asked to look at each face and identify when, where, how and what provokes each emotion in its own right. This activity provides the adolescent girls with time to acknowledge their emotions and to become more aware of them within their respective contexts. The facilitators and youth workers have the opportunity to discuss and acknowledge their emotions with them.

The following activity provides an emotional support tool that re-acknowledges their unity with the community and provides bereavement support within the group. True to the endarkened feminist principle, taking a holistic view of African women/girls in relation to their community (Dillard et al., 2011), the 'Tree of Life' activity embodies the individual in relation to their own experiences as well as relating to the awareness and importance of their supporting community and ancestry.

The 'Tree of Life' is also incorporated to highlight and amplify the adolescent girls' lives in totality, as having a past, present and future, including their support structures and abilities. It has also been used successfully in guiding participants through the bereavement process, a truly African metaphor developed by the work of Ncazelo Ncube (2006, 2007), a child psychologist from Zimbabwe and utilised with children who had lost their parents to HIV/AIDS. The aim of the project was to allow the children to believe in their own abilities, acknowledge their ambitions and stand from a safer place in which they could talk about their difficult experiences in ways that are not re-traumatising. It is now used across the world for related or similar reasons to support people in the growth of their inner strength. During the activity the participants are requested to draw a tree in any shape or form to their liking with attention being paid to the following themes: roots, ground, trunk, branches, leaves

and fruits. Prompts are also placed on the wall for them to reflect on while they are busy drawing their trees:

Roots - the roots of the tree are a prompt for participants to think about and write on their tree where they come from (village, town, country), their family history (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family), names of people who have taught them the most in life, their favourite place at home, a treasured song or dance.

Ground – the ground is the place for participants to write where they live now and activities with which they are engaged in their daily life.

Trunk – the trunk of the tree is an opportunity for participants to write their skills and abilities (i.e., skills of caring, loving, kindness) and what they are good at.

Branches – the branches of the tree are where participants write their hopes, dreams and wishes for the directions of their life.

Leaves – the leaves of the tree represent significant people in their lives, who may be alive or may have passed on.

Fruits – the fruits of the tree represent gifts participants have been given, not necessarily material, such as being cared for or acts of kindness (such as helping a neighbour with parcels or helping a friend carry books to the office).

After the completion of the drawings the participants are asked to discuss their drawings with the facilitators. They could also be divided into pairs to discuss their Tree of Life with one another. Thereafter, the participants could then discuss something significant from their drawing with the larger group, only if they are comfortable in doing so.

After the completion of the Tree of Life and raising their awareness of community resources a sense of empowerment may be identified freeing some emotional space up for child care considerations in relation to their siblings.

5.5.2.4 Caring for younger ones

The findings indicated that the adolescent girls from child-headed households were indeed caring, concerned about their siblings and found unity in being part of the household. This was also supported by the literature review, which indicated that heads of child-headed households were more altruistic towards siblings, skilful in solving conflicts between siblings and displayed emotional maturity (Bonthuys, 2010). Although the heads of child-headed household had less free time available due to their added responsibilities they were able to manage their time appropriately. Leatham (2005) found that children from child-headed households also draw strength from the presence of their siblings, remaining in their physical and social environments (Bonthuys, 2010). Even though child-headed families may be financially less fortunate, Crosnoe, Mistry and Elder (2002) reported that the warmth, emotional support, togetherness and collective efficacy positively influence the life opportunities of children.

As an example from the research, participants indicated they were responsible for their siblings, providing dinner and having a bedtime routine as they had to: *“make sure that uhm... the kids go to sleep and at least have eaten something”* (GF1:223). The girls from the focus group did however mention that the role of mother also had positive aspects: *“It is fun sometimes because ... you get to know more about being a mother...”* (GF1:225) and: *“Like when you grow-up you know how to raise kids and stuff like that”* (GF1:227).

In an attempt to empower the adolescent girls with practical considerations in caring and raising their younger siblings, attention was given to Household Routines, Reading and Games within the Intervention Programme as these were some of the coping actions taken by the actual research participants (*Child Care and Practical Family and Household Structures*). The adolescent girls participating in the research project indicated that they as well as their siblings were emotionally vulnerable after the loss of their mothers. Thus, establishing predictable and practical *Household Routines* can provide a sense of emotional security and accomplishment to the children from the household. The Intervention Programme includes pictures of the basic household routines before going to school as well as returning from it. The pictures provided can be used by the adolescent girls from the child-headed households by posting them in a common area within their home where the younger siblings could take note of their before and after school routine. These routines can contribute positively to the management of the household as well as providing the necessary structure for the family.

The following activity relating to the care and enjoyment of family life included the importance of *Reading* as a Life Skill as well as having fun and providing siblings with the opportunity to be playful and play *Games*. Playing games were used as one of the coping strategies of the participant to distract her siblings from the pain they experienced on the death of their mother and grandmother. Games may be simple to the everyday person but seemed to be supportive and constructive coping actions taken by the research participants, so dynamic in their simplicity. During this activity the participants are given ideas as to what age-appropriate games they could play with their younger siblings. Thereafter the participants themselves had to think of the possible games they as a family might enjoy playing by listing a few and sharing them with the group and the facilitator.

I felt it necessary to include an activity regarding safety as this was also identified as one of the sub-themes. One of the research participants indicated for example that: “...there’s still people who still do crime ... they don’t care about your human rights...” (BF2:481). Sources from the literature review also indicated that children living on their own and from poorer communities were anxious and worried about being exposed to dangerous situations such as drunken people and abuse (Van der

Heijden et al., 2010). This activity was included to provide the participants with ideas on how to stay safe within their communities. The information provided as *Safety Tips* could also be used by the facilitators to brainstorm other actions the adolescent girls can take in keeping their homes and households as safe as possible. The suggestions provided were all given by members from child-headed households in terms of the actions they took to secure themselves as far as possible within compromised communities.

The following section relates to realisation the adolescent girl participants had regarding their value within themselves as well as needing to prove their value through acquiring an education as well as furthering themselves within a career field.

5.5.3 Valuing being female

A core principle of endarkened/Black Feminism is the shared belief that Black women/girls are inherently valuable and that liberation from oppressive structures are needed because of “our need as human persons for autonomy...” (Combahee River Collective, 1982, in Dillard et al., 2011, p.155). It was encouraging to realise that the adolescent girl participants in the study realised their value. It would be important for them within the principle of *Ubuntu*: “I am because we are.” (Dillard et al., 2011) to strengthen their confidence as to contribute more effectively to their families and community. During the girls’ focus group discussion it was brought strongly to my attention that the girls made meaning of their gendered lives by being proud of being female: “*You have the personality in yourself and being fine with who you are and standing up for being female*” (GF1:51). Another participant felt that as girls: “*You must be confident*” (GF1:59).

5.5.3.1 Physical presentation and fostering resilience through personal values and abilities

The *Circle of Courage activity* relates to the strengths of the individual with the ability to contribute to other peoples’ lives within the family and community as well. Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1998) explain that the Circle of Courage is

based on the traditional Native American child-rearing philosophies, and provides a powerful alternative to education and youth development. Refined over 15,000 years and preserved in oral tradition, this knowledge was little known outside the 200 tribal languages that cradle the native Indian cultures of Northern America. The fostering of self-worth and self-esteem is one of the primary goals in socialising children as well as children and adolescents who are at risk. Traditional Native American psychological and educational child-rearing practices addressed four values and principles supportive of positive self-worth and self-esteem (Brendtro et al., 1998, p.45):

1. Significance is nurtured in a cultural context that celebrates the universal need for *belonging*;
2. Competence is ensured by opportunities for *mastery*;
3. Power is fostered by encouraging the expression of *independence* through responsibilities;
4. Virtue (worthiness as given by values of one's culture and significant others) is reflected in the finest value of *generosity*.

Belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are proposed as the central principles of positive cultures, embodied in the Circle of Courage – a cultural belonging and birth right of all the world's children. An illustration of the Circle of Courage activity is provided in Figure 5.3 (below).

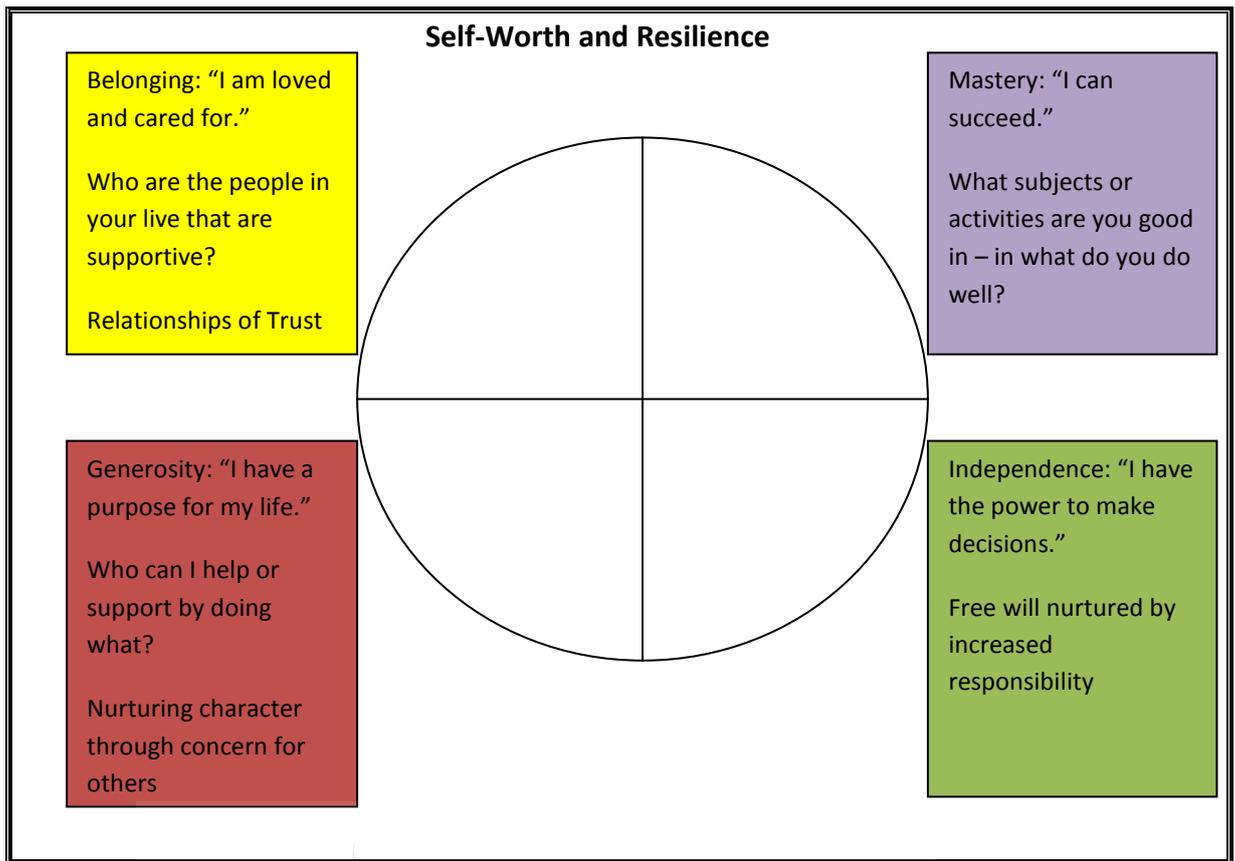


Figure 5.3: Illustration of the Circle of Courage Activity

During this activity the participants are asked to complete the following Circle of Courage as best they can with all the resources and strength that they have as a person. The participants are asked to think of all the roles they fulfil in their lives, as a family member, learner at school, being a friend and teammate. Thereafter they should fill in the four quadrants by using the prompts provided. Related to a sense of self-worth and value is the research participants ability to solve problems adequately even within adverse circumstances and will now be discussed in relation to resiliency.

5.5.3.2 Perception of cognitive abilities

In terms of Resiliency Theory, Theron et al. (2010) indicated that protective resiliency resources utilised by adolescents within the South African context included: problem-solving skills and positive cognitive appraisal, internal locus of control, a sense of self-worth and preference for socially appropriate behaviour. The girls' abilities to

reason and utilise internal and active coping strategies (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009; Meehan et al., 2007) supported them in managing their households, focussing on the future as well as deterring Chantelle, for instance, from considering suicide and intergenerational sexual relationships as a problem-solving option.

Although Chantelle explained that she went through extreme emotionally difficult times and considered suicide, she mentioned that she often found her strength in her ability to make choices: “*I know how to make my own decisions*” (CA4:324: Dreams & Fears). In doing so she considered the consequences before ultimately making a choice: “*Well I first think of the consequences ..., and then I decide whether I must [should] or I shouldn't*” (CA4:328: Dreams & Fears).

For this reason I thought it important to include an activity regarding appropriate and effective *Problem Solving Strategies* as the adolescent girls who were part of the research study were confronted with challenges on a daily basis. One of the most crucial and especially financial challenges was the luring money of older men seen as a possible solution to their financial imprisonment. Through the solution focused steps it is hoped that the participants involved in working through the intervention programme could exercise their problem-solving strategies. These are related to the adolescent girls being able to initiate functional coping strategies, such as using internal (ways of thinking differently and reframing) and active (thinking of things to do and people to approach who are supportive and helpful) coping as opposed to withdrawal strategies (using drug or alcohol abuse as an escape, avoiding people as far as possible, getting involved with activities to distract and take their attention away from the problem, for instance) in dealing with stressful life circumstances.

The activity includes an explanation of the *Problem Solving Steps* and illustrative pictures. The participants are then requested to take a real-life problem they are experiencing at the moment and use the steps as indicated. The facilitators should request the participant first to take a less stressful concern in order to practice the thinking strategies as well as to accomplish some sense of positive feedback in dealing with the problem and then go on to one or two more pressing challenges. The aim of the activity is to become aware of and practice the thinking and solution-focused strategies at first.

5.5.3.3 Supportive resources attributing to resilience

In terms of social and community-related factors, the availability and use of social support and community ties serves as a very important resilience promoting factor for families in lower income households (Black & Lobo, 2008, as cited in Bhana et al., 2011; Benzies et al., 2009.). Utilising community resources (NGOs and community health clinics) also contributed to the participants being able to foster stronger resiliency and determination (Theron et al., 2010).

As a follow-on activity the adolescent girls' support networks are then explored and brought to the forefront. The activity was incorporated to illustrate that their community also holds people and organisations that can provide some necessary support to minimise their isolation and desolation to some extent. By using a taxi bus as a visual metaphor the adolescent girls could write in their different support resources within the community. The reason for using a taxi bus as a metaphor was that it is a well-known means of transportation within the South African context.

During the activity the participants will be asked to fill in and draw comparisons between their own 'live journey' and them as the 'drivers' of their futures. The passengers inside the taxi bus could for example represent the specific people in their lives, such as neighbours, caring aunts and friends who support them emotionally, financially or with practical necessities such as food or household goods. The people may change or vary as the girls' journey forward in their lives. The baggage on top of the taxi may be symbolic of fixed structures, such as school, the NGOs and faith-based organisations, and the Department of Social Development that will also be part of their support. Figure 5.4 (below) provides an illustration of the taxi bus as a visual metaphor to be completed.

Caring and Practical Support Resources



Figure 5.4: An illustration of a taxi bus as visual metaphor

The following section was related to more future orientated information regarding career aspirations.



5.5.3.4 Needing to prove the value of being female through higher educational levels and career aspirations

In light of endarkened/Black feminism, in which human oneness and human wholeness is interrelated to the spiritual concept of communal wholeness (Dillard et al., 2011), the wellbeing of the individual will be ultimately beneficial to the individual's family as well as the community as a whole. As indicated in Theron et al.'s (2010) study, the participants indicated that their mothers, before dying, had played an important role in encouraging their daughters to self-actualisation and striving for independence. The value of independence was also seeded and supported by teachers and a social worker involved with one of the participants. In terms of values, they indicated that education was highly valued together with respect to other people as well as valuing life and a better future. Valuing a caring family and being able to provide for the children was also mentioned. Independence and self-reliance

were also indicated as critical principles of life for which a girl should strive, and which will ultimately also benefit their family and the community as a whole.

Reflecting on my discussions with Nthombi, she reiterated the importance of girls striving for self-reliance as well as focussing on the future and forgetting about the past. During the photo-voice activity she said: *“To me I think that people should know that a girl can stand on ..., her own”* (NPV8:78) as well as: *“They expect girls to stand on their own and most of them they don’t, but me I know how to stand on my own”* (NPV8:100).

The research participants believed that an education as well as tertiary studies could pave the way for women to be taken more seriously. Having a career is seen as adding to their self-worth and confidence within themselves in terms of striving for independence as women. It has however been my experience that many adolescents in township environments may not have the appropriate subject and career guidance information, ultimately being disillusioned when wanting to study at a tertiary institution after completing Grade 12. Often the adolescents do not have the appropriate subjects and marks at senior high school which could help them in terms of gaining entry into the specific course or career they would want to follow. The dire lack of financial resources specifically for members from child-headed household is even more of a challenge. I refer the reader to my fellow researcher Nadia Louw’s research study: *“Creating Supportive Networks to Assist Vulnerable Late Adolescents with their Transition from Secondary School to the World of Work”*. Her study specifically enquired into developing a transition plan for children from child-headed households finishing Grade 12 and leading into a world of work or tertiary studies.

For the purpose of my study I felt it important to inform the participants by means of a *Career and Subject Choice Table* of the link between the various subjects and the possible careers related to these subjects. Taking Geography in combination with Mathematics can assist one to apply for a study field that includes careers such as Soil and Land management, Climatology, or Urban and Regional Planning. I also included a *flowchart of relevant questions relating to choosing a career or job*. The participants need to address these questions to raise their awareness regarding the career paths they envisage as well as to sensitise them to their future career or world of work expectations.

As a concluding activity the participants are requested either to work out a *song or dance or write a story or poem regarding the values, strength and resilience* they share as Black South African girls managing child-headed households, also connecting them to their immediate community as well as the sacred and spiritual 'oneness' with other 'endarkened' girls and women trans-nationally. This activity adds to a positive experience with regard to the termination and ending of the support sessions as established by means of the Intervention Programme. The participants keep the intervention programme with them to refer to for future reference and reflect on in terms of possible future personal growth and development.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the design of a supportive intervention programme for adolescent girls from child-headed households. It was designed to be used by youth workers from NGOs as well as supportive teachers within the school contexts. The activities included within the intervention programme were chosen to correlate with the identified themes that emerged from the research study. The activities aim to raise awareness regarding the roles of adolescent girls from child-headed households as well as to raise their own awareness regarding their inner-strength and resilience. The intervention programme provides relevant information regarding financial assistance as well as career possibilities. The majority of the activities were included to bring to the forefront the possible supportive structures within the participants themselves but also within their communities. The participants keep the intervention programme with them as a resource for future information and can also be used as a reflective source regarding their own values and resiliencies. Although the study was conducted in Orlando West, Soweto, Gauteng, the activities are considered to be relevant to all South African adolescent girls managing their households as the concerns the participants raised were representative of broad living experiences.

CHAPTER 6

CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The voices of South African adolescent girls are less heard within South African research and more specifically the specific gendered voice of adolescent girls within child-headed households. This research *about* adolescent girls, *for* adolescent girls and *with* adolescent girls aimed at pursuing the authentic gendered experiences of adolescent girls from child-headed households as to appropriately inform policies, teachers, caregivers and community support workers of the girls' gendered experiences. By working from a feminist perspective an intervention programme was designed to address the difficulties of the adolescent girls from child-headed households as discussed and raised by the research participants of this particular research study. The intervention programme covers information, skills and emotional well-being activities that could assist the community members who work closely with children from these adverse living circumstances, in providing the necessary support. The specific community members involved would thus include the youth workers from the NGO as well as the teachers providing support at the schools. By providing the research findings it is hoped that this would lead to a realisation of improved care and support for adolescent girls from child-headed families as they are the ones who nurture and manage these vulnerable households.

In this chapter I discuss how the current research contributes to current theory, policy and practice in the field of child-headed households within the South African context. I also present my views on the limitations of the research as well as suggestions for further study.

6.2 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The overall contributions of this particular study will firstly address theory and knowledge development, the benefit to practice will be covered and thereafter the contribution of the study specific to the participants will be pointed out. A more

detailed discussion will follow regarding the specific contribution of the study in relation to each theme. Thereafter the contributions to policy briefs and development will also be stipulated.

This *research study contributed to theory and knowledge development* in terms of the value of child and adolescent participants who through their efforts in becoming involved in the research contributed to hegemonic knowledge, particularly within the South African context. It is important to acknowledge the important insight children and adolescents bring to their own life-worlds as experts of their experiences and identifying the possible needs for support. Although a vast number of gender studies have been conducted in general, no research has been carried out regarding the gendered lives of specifically Black South African adolescent girls from child-headed households living within vulnerable socio-economic circumstances. In addition this research also contributed to the body of knowledge specifically contributing to the cross-cultural and indigenous knowledge development within South Africa and Southern Africa pertaining to the girl child.

In addition, the research study *about girls, with girls and for girls* contributed to the theory of endarkened/trans-national feminism, whereby the experiences of specifically Black South African girls from child-headed households are highlighted and reported. The research participants also corroborated that the notions of patriarchal cultures (endarkened and intersectionality feminism) still plays a vital role in the positioning and value of girls within South African society. Also in terms of endarkened/Black feminism, the study illustrated how relational connections as sisters, nieces and mothers are valued and provides a sense of empowerment. In terms of resiliency theory the specifically selected participants exhibited great strength within their own values and abilities as well as accessed their community resources as far as possible for the necessary support.

In relation to the *benefit of practice* the contribution of this new understanding to existing knowledge regarding child-headed households will support practitioners, teachers and education policymakers to adjust their own understanding and assumptions regarding the lives of adolescent girls managing households in order to

develop and support the sustainable improvement of the quality of lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households and the lives of their families.

The study further contributes to *cross-cultural practice* as it shows that even though the researcher and the participants were from different cultural backgrounds shared knowledge can be explored and co-created within a mutual respectful partnership. The mutual respectful partnership and acknowledgment of the participants as experts of their own lives as well as the quality of the research relationship between the researcher and participants play a fundamental role in terms of trust and the sharing of lived gendered experiences. Although we were from different socio-cultural backgrounds there were also commonalities, such as being South African, female and mothers, which are also important binding factors when working cross-culturally, as not only differences should be acknowledged when doing cross-cultural research but similarities as well.

In terms of the benefit to practice in Educational Psychology this study sensitises the psychologist to become more critical aware of gender related concerns when providing support to clients and communities. The role of the Educational Psychologist will be highlighted in more detail within each theme in Section 6.2.1.

The *benefit of the study to the participants* themselves related to providing the participants with the opportunity for their voices to be heard, as through history Black women and girls have struggled in silence. The research contributes to knowledge through providing rich descriptions of the understanding the research participants and I co-created regarding their experiences as girls, managing a household caring for siblings or babies while also still pursuing an education. The exploration of these experiences provides a voice to the participants who due to their class, race and gender do not readily have the opportunity to communicate their experiences. The study contributed to empowering the participants by creating more awareness regarding social issues such as gender inequality. The research interview questions and activities allowed the research participants to identifying their resources, personal skills and abilities, attributing to skills that they might utilise to their own benefit as well as to that of their community in the future.

The following discussion will include the contributions of each theme as identified within the research study as well as the original contributions of the study.

6.2.1 The contribution of each theme as identified within the study

The following themes were identified namely, the perception of cultural influences with regard to the gender-roles, challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household and valuing being female.

6.2.1.1 The perception of cultural influences with regard to gender-roles

The following sub-themes were identified; past and present cultural positioning of females within culture as well as gender-roles and the great divide of household chores.

6.2.1.1.1 Past and present cultural positioning of females within culture

I found it interesting to obtain a greater understanding of the perception that past cultural principles regarding the position of females as being subordinate within the family, community and society are still influencing girls' status negatively in the present. The girls' experiences included feelings of not being taken seriously and that their voices were still being undermined within the home and communities by the prevailing patriarchal values of traditional African cultures (see Section 4.4.1.1.). For change within the cultural laws to take place the permission of the male elders should be obtained. This suggestion shows the deeply entrenched notion that the males ultimately would condone or approve change in the value of girls' and women's status and are seen as the more powerful. This specific research study supports radical Feminism (see Section 3.2) as supporting theory which brings to the forefront and raises understanding of the influence of patriarchal notions and how patriarchy is deeply entrenched in society and a fundamental cause of girls' and women's oppression in society.

The research findings also supports the call for culture to be included within intersectionality theory and endarkened feminism (see Section 4.4.1.1.) as

acknowledged by African feminists to be included as a form of oppression for African girls, expanding the main intersectionality axes of oppression to race, class, gender and culture (Dillard et al., 2011). By including the recognition of culture as an oppressive mechanism it strengthens the understanding of the specific indigenous experiences of Black African girls in South Africa and Southern Africa.

The study conducted in collaboration with the research participants as well as the specifically selected adolescent girls from child-headed households have given me a unique understanding of the perceived traditionally socio-cultural patriarchal practices still influencing the position of girls within society at present. To me this confirms that within endarkened feminism there should still be a space for deconstructing oppressive patriarchal beliefs in African cultures. The dismantling of these should be addressed in unity by both women and men. As an Educational Psychologist it would thus be important to take cognisance of the perceived traditional patriarchal and authoritative dynamics when working with girls and/or their families within a therapeutic setting. The equal importance and value of girls could then be highlighted and acknowledged during the family intervention.

6.2.1.1.2 *Gender roles and the great divide of household chores*

The findings indicated that the girl participants were resentful regarding the division of household responsibilities as most or all of the household activities were automatically given to the girls, especially also after the passing of their mothers. This practice was also acknowledged by the boy participants, as: “*A house needs to have a girl to be a home*” (see Section 4.4.1.2.). Although the findings suggest that the role of the girl as taking on the household responsibilities are seen as important, especially by the boy participants, the girls felt taken advantage of. Secondly, the finding suggests that the boys were of the opinion that the girls were valuable as they were responsible for these household tasks, but only in-service to making the lives of boys more comfortable. Being responsible for household tasks is however not valuable and important enough to motivate the boys to become involved with it themselves. The boys mentioned that they were not as good with household responsibilities as girls, pleading incompetence and serving their own agenda.

The findings also support an understanding that it is the gender role division modelled within the home that also supports the socialisation of girls into taking responsibility for household chores. It is expected by their mothers, especially the female elders of the community, thus gender roles are instilled within the home through the unequal division of household responsibilities to the boys and the girls. As an Educational Psychologist when supporting families in establishing routines and guidelines in relation to creating caring and more functional family lives, chores and who are responsible for what tasks should also be addressed in order to work towards gender equality and value.

An *original contribution* relates to a greater understanding and distinction between the gender-roles of the adolescent girls in the study and how they experience these roles. They express great resentment regarding the forced responsibility they have for household tasks and chores in and around the home. The unequal division of household chores instils and promotes gender inequality initiated from home as influenced by oppressive patriarchal cultural practices. The adolescent girls were however more positive towards their roles as substitute mothers who care and support their siblings (see Section 6.2.1.2.4) and should be distinguished from the role of housekeeper.

The following contributions of the study lead to a greater understanding of the more practical day-to-day living circumstances surrounding the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households against the backdrop of African cultural influences rife with patriarchy.

6.2.1.2 Challenges faced by adolescent girls leading a household

The following sub-themes emerged within this theme; fluctuating living circumstances and transition, danger from within the community, financial challenges and management, caring for younger ones and the emotional experiences of the participants.

6.2.1.2.1 Fluctuating living circumstances and transition

The study provided a deeper understanding to how fluctuating the living circumstances of adolescent girls from child-headed families can be. As girls and

taking responsibility for the household the instability of their family life is heightened even before their mothers have died during the time they fell ill. Before and after their mothers have done so the living arrangements of the adolescent girls from a child-headed family are highly uncertain and fragile. Five adjustment phases were identified from the findings in relation to establishing appropriate living arrangements from the time their parents fell ill until deciding on living within a child-headed household (see Section 4.4.2.1; Figure 4.8). The fluctuating living circumstances as identified by the research participants is a further *original contribution* specific to this study. The *five transitional phases* as experienced by the adolescent girls from the child-headed families were identified as starting from when their parents fell ill through to continuous uncertain and fluctuating living arrangements after a child-headed household is chosen as the more favourable household option. As Educational Psychologist working within the context school communities it would be imperative to raise the school learners' awareness of the supportive role of SBSTs. Part of the team's responsibility in collaboration with the Educational Psychologist would be to identify learners whose parents are terminally ill in order to involve the relevant stakeholders in providing practical and emotional support during the five transition phases as identified within the research.

The adolescent girls' living arrangements change and may be fragile at times, opening up the opportunity for ill-intentioned relatives or community members to exploit these circumstances. Unstable living arrangements may lead the adolescent girls from child-headed households to experience a sense of disconnectedness, without any sense of belonging.

6.2.1.2.2 *Danger from within the community*

The findings of this particular study contribute to the body of academic knowledge regarding unsafe experiences of members in township communities. The participants felt particularly unsafe within their townships communities, due to the possibility of physically and sexually threatening offenders. The overall presence of illegal substances and alcohol worsened their sense of protection and safety. As mentioned within the power relations at home in Section 4.4.1.1., so too did the general perception of the physical strength of males over females significantly influence the girls' sense of safety within their communities. These findings broadened an

understanding that South African's socio-economic and historical background caused many people from low socio-economic circumstances to reside within township settings. Thus, the socio-economic class of the adolescent girls from child headed-households caused them to live in unsafe township communities when viewed from intersectionality theory as supporting feminist theory (see Section 3.2).

Alcohol abuse, combined with the traditional notions of masculinity as well as the intersecting biological factor in which men are generally physically stronger than girls and woman, intensifies the physical safety risks girls from child-headed families are exposed to within their unsafe communities. An Educational Psychologist working within school communities could liaise with the local community safety forums and police to collaboratively develop a community intervention strategy focusing on key areas specific to the community.

In addition to living in unsafe communities due to their low socio-economic class, adolescent girls from child-headed households are further troubled by financial challenges in their daily living circumstances.

6.2.1.2.3 *Financial challenges and management*

The findings of this study contribute further to a deeper understanding of the gendered experiences of African adolescent girls as a socio-economic class and being female significantly influences their lived experiences. Once again, supporting the viewpoints of intersectionality as feminist theory (see Section 3.2), the socio-economic class, gender, age and patriarchal cultural factors of the adolescent girls from child headed-households marginalises them and places them in severely compromising circumstances. Making meaning of being female and struggling financially influences practical daily living needs such as obtaining food, clothes, money for school and transport as well as sanitary products. Not being able to afford sanitary products influences adolescent girls from child-headed households to not go to school during this time, negatively influencing their education. Grants barely cover the cost of running a basic household as food, household cleaning material, school necessities are expensive.

It was significant that two of the three girls had received the title deeds for their homes after the death of their mothers, without the extended family laying claiming to

them. It was further interesting to note that commercialism stretches beyond the more affluent areas into poorer township communities, where the latest cellular telephones, clothes and accessories are noticed, which places more pressure on adolescent girls from child-headed households as they are unable to afford managing a household, let alone afford luxuries. According to some of the participants this may sway adolescent girls from child-headed households and adverse living circumstances to considering trans-generational relationships with older working men. The main reason, however, for adolescent girls from child-headed households to consider trans-generational relationships with older working men, as observed by participants within the communities, would be that they would like to keep their homes. The girl participants from this study indicated that they could contract sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as well as fall pregnant which discouraged them from such relationships. That they could be sexually and physically abused by these older men was also an important deterrent.

As an Educational Psychologist working in collaboration with the school community or relevant NGOs, support groups could be established for girls from child-headed families with the aim of raising their awareness on how socio-economic difficulties, their gender, age and patriarchal cultural influences, intersect in their daily survival. The support group could prevent girls as far as possible from becoming involved in intergenerational relationships. Furthermore, the group could aim at creating ideas regarding how they in collaboration with the NGO could generate a possible income as well as identify community resources.

6.2.1.2.4 Caring for younger ones

The study contributed to an understanding that the adolescent girls found meaning in their roles as carers and providers for their younger siblings and, in Thandi's case, her baby. Although the participants found their roles as substitute mothers challenging they did not report being resentful of them. The study also contributed to a deeper understanding of the particular difficulties (see Section 4.4.2.4.) the participants experienced regarding their substitute mother role as needing to sacrifice the need for food in order for the younger ones to have food at times. Further challenges would include finding appropriate care for pre-school children during the times the adolescent girls had to go to school and participate in extramural activities. One of the

specifically selected participants also mentioned that she found it difficult to explain the death of her mother and sister to the younger siblings and nieces, as they would ask her questions about the event. Being a substitute mother also means being concerned about the younger siblings schooling and educational progress, which in itself is a great concern for many parents under ordinary family circumstances.

Aspects the participants mentioned which provided a clearer understanding of more positive attributes of caring for siblings were that they experienced being part of their sibling family as positive and that it prepared them for when they themselves would be mothers in the future (see Section 4.4.2.4). The participants tried to manage their time appropriately, even though it was challenging to keep up with academic responsibilities. I appreciated the practical examples one of the participants presented in dealing with the initial transition after the death of their mother in terms of playing games with her siblings at night before going to bed.

In relation to caring for siblings it would be important to take note that the younger siblings or children's ages and developmental stages should be acknowledged as this has a significant impact on the specific childrearing needs and practices that are applicable. Each child developmental stage has unique needs that should be met by the caregiver, which places different stressors on their daily living. For instance, time constraints are experienced in balancing homework but still providing individual attention to the baby or toddler, the availability of baby products during the baby years and educational stimulating activities needed during the toddler years. A further important factor to take cognisance of is that when an older sibling needs to take responsibility for the household they should be assisted by a caring adult or community member with the necessary information and skills to be able to answer questions regarding the death of their parent (see Sections 3.3.2.3 and 4.4.2.4).

As an Educational Psychologist working collaboratively with NGOs and the regional offices of the Department of Social development, heads of child-headed households could attend workshops regarding childhood development and the various needs and developmental activities of siblings at each childhood development stage. This could assist them in understanding their siblings' behaviour and needs more constructively. A booklet with creative and learning-through-play activities could be given to the adolescent girls to help support their siblings' development. As an Educational

Psychologist a culturally user-friendly guide for pre-school and primary school children could be designed to assist the adolescent heads of families during the sibling-family's bereavement process.

The study contributes and supports the theoretical understanding of endarkened/Black feminism whereby a more positive and enriching acknowledgement is given to understanding African girls' power within their indigenous relational worlds that celebrate motherhood, sisterhood and friendship (Chilisa et al., 2010) (see Section 3.2).

6.2.1.2.5 *Emotional experiences*

The study indicated that in terms of the participants' emotional wellbeing they struggled initially to continue making meaning of their lives after their mothers had died (see Section 4.4.2.5). This had a significant impact on their continuing attendance at school and needing to progress academically. One participant mentioned that her mind was not clear during this time, which for an Educational Psychologist's perspective is significant. A deeper awareness was also made regarding the emotional difficulty for them to go home after school soon after the death of their mother. The one participant who was emotionally and physically neglected had no family or sibling support contemplated suicide during times when she experienced great hunger and longed for a caring family life. This finding can suggest that being part of a sibling group within a child-headed household is indeed a protective factor when taking into account resiliency. In addition, it also became clear from the study that the participants experienced anxiety and great concern over the possibility of not being able to attain a tertiary education or afford it financially.

As an Educational Psychologist, relevant stakeholders such as the youth workers at the NGOs and the SBST staff could be trained in basic counselling skills in order to support children from child-headed households when they experience emotionally difficult times. These skills could help the stakeholders support the children in containing and integrating their emotional experiences in a constructive way. Despite the patriarchal cultural influences and the severe day-to-day challenges for survival the participants also portrayed significant psycho-emotional strengths and valued themselves as being female.

6.2.1.3 Valuing being Female

The findings of this study also broadened an understanding of African adolescent girls from adverse circumstances expressing their awareness and needing to be valued and taken seriously as females, which stands firmly within the principles of a feminist paradigm. The study provided a more specific understanding of their living in adverse circumstances and making meaning of the value as girls in relation to their physical presentation, their perceived cognitive abilities as well as their values. Supportive community resources contributed to the meaning they made of their engendered lived experiences. A major aim for the participants was to prove their value by achieving higher educational levels and to become financially independent (see Section 4.4.3).

6.2.1.3.1 Physical presentation

The findings (see Section 4.4.3.1) provided a greater understanding that the girl participants believed that physical presentation affected their social standing within the community. It was also important to look presentable to be taken seriously by males. The participants in the current study however indicated that girls used their physical appearance as an instrument to impress boys and be taken seriously. To look feminine and maintain their outward appearance was thus still important within their specific cultural group and socio-economic class (Crawford et al., 2004).

6.2.1.3.2 Perceptions of cognitive abilities

The findings contribute to the understanding that both male and female participants were under the impression that girls were academically more focused and competed well with boys in the classroom (see Section 4.4.3.2). According to the participants, girls' qualitative thinking strategies included being more reflective regarding the consequences of certain actions as well as being future-orientated. Girls were also perceived as being more determined. By virtue of their gender and thus situated within feminism, the reason for girls perceived cognitive strengths are due to the belief that girls need to be able to think and reason appropriately as they do not have the physical strength of boys. The findings thus contributes to the literature in terms of understanding that selected cognitive strategies of the adolescent girls from child-headed families, particularly in this study, are influenced by environmental and

hereditary factors, combining personal abilities and interests with social norms (Grotevant, 1998; Sternberg, 2009d, as cited in Santrock, 2010).

Being confronted with socio-economic deprivation and the need to transcend these difficult circumstances could motivate adolescent girls from child-headed households to combine their personal abilities and interest to aim for financial independence. Independence was also seeded by the participants' mothers before their death, illustrating the social norms encouraged by women for girls within endarkened/ Black feminism (Dillard et al., 2011).

By utilising their cognitive abilities and being competitive within the classroom, adolescent girls from adverse circumstances aim to affirm their value as being female and that they should be taken seriously. Personal values and resiliency also plays a vital role in the quest to achieve and transcend current living circumstances.

6.2.1.3.3 Personal values and resilience

The specifically selected participants gave a deeper understanding of the overall values that seem to be promoted within the female community are respect for other people, living a purposeful live, valuing education and acquire self-reliance and independence (see Section 4.4.3.3). It was also mentioned that the aim was to focus on the future. These values and goal directedness internally strengthened and fostered resilience with the adolescent girls. The findings support an understanding that the participants were also strongly influenced by the teachings, encouragements and motivation of their mothers to be resilient within these difficult circumstances.

The research also contributed to understanding the importance of coping strategies and skills adolescent girls form child-headed households used in their daily lives. These were also important variables that influenced their resilience. The skills that were mentioned by the participants respectively, that contributed positively to their resilience, included time management, disciplined in learning activities, participating in extramural activities, interpersonal skills, reading books to gain more general knowledge, and reading books that supported them with their bereavement process. The girls' abilities to reason and use internal and active coping strategies supported them in managing their households, focussing on the future.

A significant contribution of this study thus relates to the resilience and inner-strength exhibited by the research participants. Despite the intersecting oppressive factors interplaying with and affecting the lives of the participants it was important to them to value themselves as being female. Secondly, the participants wished to strengthen their value within the view of society by obtaining higher educational levels in order to be able to enter the job market. The participants were confident in their perception regarding their cognitive abilities and being able to manage their resources adequately. It is thus important to acknowledge that although these participants were from deprived socio-economic living conditions, they should not be viewed as victims but as resilient survivors with abilities, hopes and dreams of their own.

Taking into account the individual participants' values, skills and internal strengths the research findings also highlighted the contextual factors which served as protective factors influence the participants' ability to achieve resiliency and make meaning of their lives.

6.2.1.3.4. Supportive resources attributing to resilience

The research study highlighted the importance of community organisations such as NGOs and personal care from community members as important protective factors building resilience within individuals (see Section 4.4.3.4). The NGOs in communities play a vital role in the support of adolescent girls from child-headed households as they provide, when and if funds are available, food, school necessities and transport money. It is however difficult to join an NGO as the process is lengthy and all the necessary legal documentation, such as an identity document and birth certificate, have to be acquired in order to apply for the various grants. The research also confirmed that the NGOs do not always have the necessary finances but struggle daily to adhere to the high demand regarding care and support for their members. The research findings thus also support the literature in terms of understanding that utilising community resources (NGOs and community health clinics) also contribute to the participants being able to foster stronger resiliency and determination (Theron et al., 2010).

The research further broadened understanding of the individual within the communities who take an active role in care and support of the adolescent girls from

child-headed households specific to this study. Extended family support was not so apparent in the lives of the three specifically selected participants however, they did receive more emotional and practical support from neighbours, their selected friends and a supportive teacher from school.

Educational Psychologists working within schooling communities and in collaboration with NGOs could assist the adolescent girls from child-headed households in exploring and raising their awareness regarding their personal values, skills and abilities by means of self-development activities. These resiliency factors could then be allied to the identification and utilisation of resources within their communities.

6.2.1.3.5 Needing to prove the value of being female

The study specifically enlightened understanding of the ways girls made meaning of their lives by needing to prove their value as being female (see Section 4.4.3.5). Although they felt it important to prove themselves to males it was equally important for them to acknowledge their abilities and value to themselves. An additional original contribution within endarkened/Black feminism is that the community interests were seen as being of vital importance, but that it seemed as if the female adults involved in the lives of the adolescent girls from child-headed households also propagated the importance of the girl child to achieve independence and self-reliance.

The study confirms that the adolescent girls from this study were motivated to prove their value by entering the job market and not just be responsible for household chores. The participants were however hopeful with regard to entering the job market, while their greatest concern was obtaining financial support for tertiary studies. Subject choice and career guidance was still highly under-promoted, especially within South Africa's previously disadvantaged communities. Educational Psychologists can play a vital role in supporting and developing career choice workshops in collaboration with NGOS as well as consult with Life Orientation teachers from school clusters within communities in order to provide the relevant information to their learners within the classroom.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned section as a whole a further contribution of the study included an Intervention Programme which was designed in

support of adolescent girls from child-headed households. The youth workers from the NGO and the staff from the SBST, who assisted in the research process, would be trained in utilising the programme to the benefit of the adolescent girl members from child-headed households within their community. The intervention programme is however user-friendly and could be facilitated and presented by Educational Psychologists in various supportive and caring contexts when working with vulnerable adolescents. The study provided some clarity and a critical contribution to the gendered experiences and concerns adolescent girls from child-headed household's experience in daily life. The steps that led to the development of the intervention programme were based on the themes that were identified from the data analysis. The intervention programme included activities that raised the participants' awareness of how culture, gender, social class and patriarchal beliefs influence their daily living and choices. Information is also given regarding a transition plan, drawing up a will and grants that may be accessed during the transition phase, covering the period before and after the death of their parents. In terms of addressing the adolescent girls' emotional support, attention is given to the different emotions they may experience.

The "Tree of Life" activity is very useful and relevant in terms of support participants with bereavement as well as fostering a sense of belonging within their families and community settings. Attention is also given to suggestions regarding household routines as well as emotional supportive activities that could assist the siblings. As education and the possibility of a future career were so important to the girl participants, information was provided regarding possible careers in relation to the subjects choices available at school. A flowchart was also included to illustrate the steps the adolescent girls should follow in choosing a career, taking the financial constraints into account. In the spirit of endarkened feminism and within the South African context the participants are asked to write a poem or song, or develop a dance they as a group could perform, symbolising their inner-strength and resilience as girls as well as illustrating their connectedness to the community.

6.2.2 Suggestions and contributions in relation to policy briefs and development

In general, policy development according to Osler (2006) does not specifically take into consideration the opinions of girls relating to their educational context when compared to boys. The African adolescent girls from child-headed households can be seen as one of the most marginalised groups in terms of their socio-economic circumstances, class, race, culture and gender. It became quite clear from the findings that the policy regarding financial aid needs to be re-addressed in terms of the qualifications criteria as some girls do not qualify to receive a grant before the age of 18 years but take full responsibility for the household. Furthermore, they run an even higher risk of being excluded from adequate educational opportunities due to exploitation by members from the communities and teenage pregnancies. In light of the findings, educational policies and practices need to make practical adjustments to provide more adequate educational and emotional support regarding gender-related power imbalances, ensuring that they achieve their academic and educational aspirations. Sloth-Nielson (2004) argues that the state has a clear duty according to the South African Constitution to ensure that children in child-headed households are linked with some form of care and to provide the necessary resources essential for survival and development. By means of this study it is my hope that policies may be informed more appropriately regarding the needs of the African girl child from child-headed families within South Africa. As suggested by Ewelukwa (2005, p.143): "... female children must be included as active partners in identifying their own needs and in designing, planning, implementing and assessing policies and programs to meet those needs".

The following discussion includes the suggestions regarding the development of more informed policies surrounding the care of adolescent girls from child-headed households.

It is important to highlight the strong oppressive patriarchal beliefs and practices that are still perceived by the younger generation as they still impact on the position of girls within the household. According to endarkened feminism theory it would thus be important for both women and men to become involved with addressing gender issues, starting with the equal division of household chores.

The Departments of Health, Social Development and Education should re-evaluate the awareness that even while a parent is still alive but ill this impacts negatively on children's educational and emotional security within the home. A Supportive Developmental Plan, taking into account the five identified transition phases, could be designed to support children from child-headed homes from the time their parents fall ill until their household becomes a formal child-headed household. As part of this transition plan a guide could be compiled in supporting the older siblings with questions the younger siblings may have surrounding the death of their parents. Games could be incorporated to help alleviate some of the emotional strain and provide opportunities for fun when the siblings are in need of some distraction during the transition phase. A homework structure could also be included in the guide to help support the older sibling in monitoring their younger sibling's homework. The steps to follow when they are concerned about the academic progress of their siblings could also be included within the supportive guide.

In terms of childcare the adolescent heads of child-headed households need specific support with regard to a formal arrangement in terms of childcare facilities while they attend school. It would be of great peace of mind if babies and toddlers from child-headed households were to attend departmental registered day-care and pre-school facilities is subsidised by the government. They would receive the necessary care and cognitive stimulation to advance school readiness as well as be cared for while their older sibling or mothers were at school.

In the process of obtaining the research data and visiting the NGO it became clear from my observations and conversations with the youth workers that they were overburdened with the number of children and families they were supporting at the time. If they could not refer a child and family to their closest NGO within the area, they did not send the child and family away but tried to assist where possible. Financial constraints and being short-staffed with regard to social workers played a significant impact. Well managed NGOs should be supported and subsidised more effectively by the relevant government.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The limitations of this research study were mostly situated in the field of participant selection, augmentation of the research design and personal factors. In the first instance it was quite difficult purposefully to select specific participants who were from a child-headed household as most candidates were from vulnerable circumstances. These included instances in which a primary caregiver had died or the candidates lived with a sick grandparent together with various younger and older siblings who were in their twenties. When I asked the social worker at the NGO what made it so difficult to find adolescent members from child-headed families she mentioned that they were given instructions by the government to avoid forming child-headed households as far as possible. Therefore, within the urban community in which the research was carried out, only a very limited number of possible participants were available, which lessened as some of the participants' involvement diminished due to personal reasons with the NGO, while another participant changed schools and moved further away. A larger sample of participants could have contributed to the richness of the data gathering and could have provided the research with a stronger possibility for understanding the gendered experiences of South African adolescent girls within the contexts of child-headed households.

In terms of the research design a critical ethnography could have provided more in-depth personal observations of the participants' day-to-day living, whereas the current study relied mostly on the interpretations and meanings of the participants of their own lives as they experienced it, that is phenomenological.

In considering the data analysis, critical discourse analysis may have given a more thorough analysis of the findings in terms of the power relations intersecting the lives of the adolescent girls, providing a richer understanding of power relations within the lives of girls indigenous to South Africa.

Finally, as an Educational Psychologist I worked daily within a school context providing emotional support and therapy to high school learners. The participants were themselves attending school, which limited the time we had available to spend together within the research context. Due to the limited time available the participants and I met with each other once a week for a few hours over a period of eight months.

A further limitation relates to language as English was not the participants' home language but their language of learning and teaching. This made it difficult for the participants at times to adequately express their opinions and reasoning regarding the research topic. During our discussions I thus had to paraphrase what they were saying and confirm my understanding with them.

Lastly, being a White South African excludes me from the deep understanding of what it means to be a Black girl living in socio-economic deprived circumstances. Although I hold in high regard the principles of endarkened/Black feminism I will not know what it means to be spiritually connected to the female African ascendants. This research is my attempt to show what the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households are like, struggling to materially survive in poverty and simultaneously utilising relational-spiritual resilience as a driving force.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY

Further studies could contribute to the knowledge, understanding and practice of supporting adolescent girls from child-headed households in terms of managing their own educational responsibilities, as well as in their quest to manage and care for their siblings or own children. I make the following suggestions for future research:

- A longitudinal study regarding the transitional phases children from child-headed households experience when the significant parent becomes ill until the children are cared for by the extended family or form their own child-headed household as well as the transitions thereafter.
- More research is needed related to the perceptions of adolescent boys regarding gender-related concerns regarding patriarchal behaviour towards girls within communities. It is not just girls that need to be empowered in terms of gender equality but also boys and men who need to become involved in the positive actions and interventions towards gender equality within the South African society as a whole. Working within school community context learners could for instance take part in various activities such as plays, signing a pledge and debating relevant gender equality concerns, fostering a unity between girls and boys.

- A study regarding the creation of part-time job opportunities and additional income resources to adolescent girls from child-headed households could also be explored as financial limitations and challenges are of great concern. Financial opportunities and community projects relating to financial aid could alleviate the constant anxiety and worry adolescent girls from child-headed households' experience. This could provide them with the opportunity to spend more emotional and physical energy on their academic achievements.
- Research regarding the funding and resource provisioning of day-care facilities for babies and pre-school children within communities are of vital importance to their development and security. Such a study could highlight the importance of the state funding more day-care facilities or providing grants to babies and toddlers from child-headed households as to attend day-care facilities while their older siblings are attending school.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The contribution to current theory, policy and practice of the research was highlighted in this chapter. I reflected on my views on the limitations of the research as well as suggestions for future research in the field of care and support for child-headed households, specifically for adolescent girls. I was intrigued years ago in my masters' study with the quietness and shyness the adolescent girl participants conducted themselves as compared to the boys even though they experienced significantly difficult circumstances. Working as an Educational Psychologist in various contexts and with girls and women from diverse backgrounds and circumstances I have noticed their resilience which holds and drives their will to survive, conquer their adversities and strive. I wanted to know more specifically without making generalised assumptions what the lives of adolescent girls from child-headed households were like. To give selected participants the opportunity to voice and be outspoken of their challenges and their strengths as well as what supports them to be so resilient. The current research provided me with a richer understanding of how the intersecting social categories, with the main focus on gender, are enmeshed and significantly influences the lives of South African adolescent girls from child-headed households. Despite the adversities they face daily, the participants manage to exhibit resilience which is also supported by caring community members, caring school teachers as well as the guiding presence of the NGO.

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Appendices
OF
JOHANNESBURG

APPENDIX A: Permission Letter to Conduct Research from the Gauteng Department of Education



UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries : Shadrack Phele MIRMSA

Tel. no. : [+2111] 355 0285

12/08/2013

Prof. Jace Pillay
PO Box 1292
Mondeor
2110

Dear Prof. Jace Pillay

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PROJECT

The Gauteng Department of Education hereby grants permission to conduct research in its institutions as per application.

Topic of research : "Child-Headed Household Research within the Context of Education".

Nature of project : Higher Education Institution project.

Name of university : University of Johannesburg

Upon completion of the research project the researcher is obliged to furnish the Department with copy of the research report (electronic or hard copy).

Wish you success in your academic pursuit.

Yours in Tirisano,

p.p. Shadrack Phele (MIRMSA)
TOM WASPE
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER
Gauteng Department of Education



Office of the DDG: IS & KM (CIO)
Room 1807, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000
Tel: (011) 355-1514/1507 Fax: (011) 355-0734/0833 E-mail: tomw@gpg.gov.za or etridar@gpg.gov.za

**APPENDIX B: Approval of Research Proposal from University of Johannesburg
Faculty of Education**



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

☎ : (011) 559-22800
Fax : (011) 559-2292
E- mail : hselolo@uj.ac.za

Enquiries : H Selolo
Ref : 920205644
Date : 2009-06-18

Mrs C P Leatham
P O box 2419
Vanderbijlpark
1900

Dear Mrs Leatham

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL – PhD Educational Psychology

I take pleasure in informing that your research proposal entitled "**An inquiry into the meaning of making gendered experiences of African adolescent girls from child-headed households within their educational and social contexts**" has been approved by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee.

Supervisor: Prof J Pillay
Co-supervisor: Dr H Dunbar-Krige
Co-supervisor: Dr E Fritz

Please ensure that the abovementioned title appears on the front page of your research project. Any further changes must be approved by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee beforehand.

Yours sincerely


Ms H Selolo
University of Johannesburg
Faculty of Education
Kingsway Campus
Room Bring 232
Auckland Park
2006

Copy: Prof J Pillay

APPENDIX C: Example of a Letter of Consent for Guardians/Care Givers



FACULTY OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR GUARDIANS / CAREGIVERS

25 March 2009

Dear Guardian/Caregiver

I am a Doctoral student under the supervision of Prof. Jace Pillay and Dr. Helen Dunbar-Krige in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. I am conducting a research inquiry to find out more about the experiences of adolescents from child-headed households in order to establish helpful support programmes.

I would like to ask your permission to allow your dependent to participate in my research inquiry. The inquiry proposes to gather information on how African adolescent girls from child-headed families understand being female within their school and social worlds. It follows then that the purpose of the study is to use the findings in collaboration with the participants to develop an intervention programme according to their gendered experiences and needs.

Your dependent's participation in this inquiry is completely voluntary and she may withdraw at any time without any penalty. However, emotional support may continue depending on the participant's needs or wishes. I am aware of her school responsibilities and will make every effort to arrange a suitable time so as not to interfere with her studies. Participation will involve a meeting once a week over a period of a year. The data collection methods will include audio and video tape recordings of interviews and group work as well as photographs, diary recordings, art and story-telling regarding their life histories. Due to the sensitive nature of some personal experiences with adolescents from child-headed households, no in-depth personal accounts will be required during voluntary participation in group work. In addition, emotional support will be provided if the need arises during data collection activities by me as a trained educational psychologist and later by a member of the School Based Support Team. I would also like to conduct interviews with their teachers, family and other caregivers within their social worlds as the need presents itself. Another activity will include on-site participatory observations where I visit the schools they attend and spend some informal time with the participants, making notes of their daily living. The transcribed conversations as well as the visual recordings will only be accessible to my supervisor and me and will be stored in a safe and locked space.

There are no known risks involved in this inquiry and your dependent will not receive any financial reward for her participation. Although there is no direct financial benefit for your dependent, the possible benefit of her participation is the development of a more confident gendered self. The identity of all participants will be protected by the use of a name chosen by the participants for the purposes of the

inquiry. The findings of the inquiry may also be presented at conferences as well as appear in books or articles where the assumed names will be used. I will share the findings with you and make a copy of the findings for you on its publication.

If you have any questions concerning the research inquiry or your dependent's participation in this inquiry, you are welcome to contact me on 0823376789 or alternatively via email at leathamcp@yahoo.com or call my supervisor, Prof. J Pillay at 011- 5593017.

Yours sincerely

Charmaine Leatham

Prof Jace Pillay

By signing below, you are acknowledging as a guardian/caregiver, that you have read and understood the above description of the proposed research inquiry and give your dependent _____ permission to take part in this inquiry.

You also provide permission for consent for the inclusion of the following data collection methods (please circle your response):

Audio recordings	Yes	No
Video recordings	Yes	No
Interviews (individual and group)	Yes	No
Life-Histories	Yes	No
Collages (pictures chosen from magazines)	Yes	No
Take photographs of everyday life	Yes	No
Observations by researcher	Yes	No

Signature of guardian/caregiver

Printed name

Date

APPENDIX D: Example of a Letter of Consent for Schools



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
LETTER OF CONSENT FOR SCHOOLS**

25 March 2009

Dear Principal

I am a Doctoral student under the supervision of Prof. Jace Pillay and Dr. Helen Dunbar-Krige in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. I am conducting a research inquiry to find out more about the experiences of adolescents girls from child-headed households in order to establish helpful support programmes according to their specific needs.

I will greatly appreciate your participation, which will involve you providing me access to the identified learners from your school. I would like to ask your permission to allow the adolescent girls from child headed households to participate in my research inquiry. The inquiry proposes to gather information on how African adolescent girls from child-headed families understand being female within their school and social worlds. The purpose of the study is to use the findings in collaboration with the participants to develop an intervention programme according to their gendered experiences and needs.

Your learners' participation in this inquiry is completely voluntary and they may withdraw at any time without any penalty. However, emotional support may continue depending on the participant's needs or wishes. I am aware of their school responsibilities and will make every effort to arrange a suitable time with your as not to interfere with their studies. Participation will involve a meeting once a week over a period of a year. The data collection methods will include audio and video tape recordings of interviews and group work as well as photographs, diary recordings, art and story-telling regarding their life histories. Due to the sensitive nature of some personal experiences with adolescents from child-headed households, no in-depth personal accounts will be required during voluntary participation in group work. In addition, emotional support will be provided if the need arises during data collection activities by me as a trained educational psychologist and later by a member of the SBST, with your permission. I would also like to conduct interviews with their teachers and other caregivers within their social worlds as the need presents itself. Another activity will include on-site participatory observations where I will be visiting the school in order to spend some time with the participants, making notes of their daily living and interactions during school hours. The transcribed conversations as well as the visual recordings will only be accessible to my supervisor and me and will be stored in a safe and locked space.

The possible benefit of their participation is the development of a more confident gendered self as well as looking at how possible intervention strategies at school level may benefit adolescent girls from child-headed households -thus providing schools with possible guidelines on care and support for those learners from child-headed families. The identity of all participants as well as the participating schools

will be protected by the use of pseudonyms and names chosen by the participants for the purposes of the inquiry. The findings of the inquiry may also be presented at conferences as well as appear in books or articles where the assumed names will be used. I will share the findings with you and make a copy of the findings for you on its publication.

If you have any questions concerning the research inquiry you are welcome to contact me on 0823376789 or alternatively via email at leathamcp@yahoo.com or call my supervisor, Prof J Pillay at 011- 5593017.

Yours sincerely

Charmaine Leatham

Prof J Pillay

By signing below, you are acknowledging as principal, that you have read and understood the above description of the proposed research inquiry and give me your permission to conduct the research at your school. You also provide permission for the inclusion of the following data collection methods at your school (please circle your response):

Audio recordings	Yes	No
Video recordings	Yes	No
Interviews (individual and group)	Yes	No
Take photographs of school life	Yes	No
Observations at school by researcher	Yes	No

Signature of Principal

Printed name

Date

School

APPENDIX E: Example of a Letter of Assent for Participants



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

LETTER OF ASSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

25 March 2009

Dear Participant

I am a Doctoral student under the supervision of Prof. Jace Pillay and Dr. Helen Dunbar-Krige in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. I am conducting a research inquiry to find out more about the lives of adolescents girls from child-headed households in order to develop, with your help support programmes according to your specific needs. I would like to ask your permission to spend some time with you over a year. Some of you will only take part in the group discussions, while I would like to spend some more time with three of you once a week over a year. During this time I will like to get information about how African adolescent girls from child-headed families understand being female within their school and social worlds. With your help we will then use the information to develop an intervention programme according to your experiences of being girls.

Taking part in this inquiry is completely voluntary (only if you want to) and you may withdraw at any time without getting into trouble. However, emotional support if needed may continue depending on your needs or wishes. I am aware of your school responsibilities and will arrange a good time with you as not to interfere with your studies. Taking part in this study will involve a meeting once a week over a period of a year. The information collection methods will include audio and video tape recordings of interviews and group work as well as photographs, diary recordings, art and story telling regarding your life histories. We can decide together which ways (methods) you would like to use to give information on how you understand being a girl in school and in your day-to-day lives. Because some information is private and personal you do not have to share it during our group discussions but you may if you want to during our individual talks. To take part in a group discussion is also voluntary. In addition, emotional support will be provided if the need arises during data collection activities by me as a trained educational psychologist and later by a member of the SBST, if you wish. I would also like to conduct interviews with your teachers, family and other caregivers within your lives as the need presents itself. Another activity will include on-site participatory observations where I visit the schools you attend and spend some informal time with you, making notes of your daily living. The transcribed conversations as well as the visual recordings will only be accessible to my supervisor and me and will be stored in a safe and locked space.

There are no known risks involved in this inquiry and you will unfortunately not receive any financial reward for your participation. What you may get from your participation however may be the development of a more confident gendered-self as well as being co-developer of a support programme for yourselves as girls needing to deal with life in a child-headed household. The identity of all

participants will be protected by the use of a name chosen by you, the participants for the purposes of the inquiry. The findings of the inquiry may also be presented at conferences as well as appear in books or articles where the assumed names will be used. I will share the findings with you and make a copy of the findings for you on its publication.

If you have any questions concerning the research inquiry you are welcome to share it with me during our meetings or you can contact me on 0823376789 or alternatively via email at leathamcp@yahoo.com or call my supervisor, Prof J Pillay at 011- 5593017.

Yours sincerely

 Charmaine Leatham

 Prof J Pillay

By signing below, you are acknowledging as a participant, that you have read and understood the above description as well as understood my verbal explanation of the proposed research inquiry and give your permission to take part in this inquiry.

You also provide permission for inclusion of the following data collection methods (please circle your response):

Audio recordings	Yes	No
Video recordings	Yes	No
Interviews (individual and group)	Yes	No
Life-Histories	Yes	No
Collages (pictures chosen from magazines)	Yes	No
Take photographs of everyday life	Yes	No
Observations by researcher	Yes	No

 Signature of participant

 Printed name

 Date

APPENDIX F: Example of a Letter of Assent/Consent for Participants – Boys



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

LETTER OF ASSENT /CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS - Boys

25 March 2009

Dear Participant

I am a Doctoral student under the supervision of Prof. Jace Pillay and Dr. Helen Dunbar-Krige in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. I am conducting a research inquiry to find out more about the lives of adolescents girls from child-headed households in order to develop, with your help support programmes according to the specific needs. I would like to ask your permission to spend some time with you over a year. Some of you will only take part in the group discussions, while I would like to spend some more time with three of the girls once a week over a year. During this time I will like to get information about how African adolescent girls from child-headed families understand being female within their school and social worlds. With your help we will then use the information to develop an intervention programme according to the experiences of the girls.

Taking part in this inquiry is completely voluntary (only if you want to) and you may withdraw at any time without getting into trouble. However, emotional support if needed may continue depending on your needs or wishes. I am aware of your school responsibilities and will arrange a good time with you as not to interfere with your studies. Taking part in this study will involve a meeting once a week over a period of a year with some of you. The information collection methods will include audio and video tape recordings of interviews and group work as well as photographs, diary recordings, art and story telling regarding your life histories. We can decide together which ways (methods) you would like to use to give information on how you understand the day-to-day lives of girls. Because some information is private and personal you do not have to share it during our group discussions but you may if you want to during our individual talks. To take part in a group discussion is also voluntary. In addition, emotional support will be provided if the need arises during data collection activities by me as a trained educational psychologist and later by a member of the SBST, if you wish. I would also like to conduct interviews with your teachers, family and other caregivers within your lives as the need presents itself. Another activity will include on-site participatory observations where I visit the schools you attend and spend some informal time with you, making notes of your daily living. The transcribed conversations as well as the visual recordings will only be accessible to my supervisor and me and will be stored in a safe and locked space.

There are no known risks involved in this inquiry and you will unfortunately not receive any financial reward for your participation. What you may get from your participation however may be the development of a support programme for girls. The identity of all participants will be protected by the use of a name chosen by you, the participants for the purposes of the inquiry. The findings of the inquiry

may also be presented at conferences as well as appear in books or articles where the assumed names will be used. I will share the findings with you and make a copy of the findings for you on its publication.

If you have any questions concerning the research inquiry you are welcome to share it with me during our meetings or you can contact me on 0823376789 or alternatively via email at leathamcp@yahoo.com or call my supervisor, Prof J Pillay at 011- 5593017.

Yours sincerely

Charmaine Leatham

Prof J Pillay

By signing below, you are acknowledging as a participant, that you have read and understood the above description as well as understood my verbal explanation of the proposed research inquiry and give your permission to take part in this inquiry.

You also provide permission for inclusion of the following data collection methods (please circle your response):

Audio recordings	Yes	No
Video recordings	Yes	No
Interviews (individual and group)	Yes	No
Life-Histories	Yes	No
Collages (pictures chosen from magazines)	Yes	No
Take photographs of everyday life	Yes	No
Observations by researcher	Yes	No

Signature of participant

Printed name

Date

APPENDIX F1: An Example of and Educators Permission Letter to use Photos



LETTER OF CONSENT FOR TEACHERS

18 February 2008

Dear Teachers

We are Doctoral students under the supervision of Dr. H. Dunbar Krige, Professor Jace Pillay and Dr. Elzette Fritz in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. We are conducting research inquiries to investigate various issues in child headed families in order to efficiently support them in their new roles as head of their families. This research involves a process of building relationships with teachers and communities. Our aim in conducting the research is to empower the child headed families and the supporting teachers and members of the community through the provision of adequate skills.

As part of the research process and through our gradual entry at your schools we have realised the need to empower teachers with basic counselling skills in order to cope with the various needs of the learners at school hence the workshop. Please note that this workshop is part of our research process and we would like to request your consent to participate in this workshop.

Your participation in this workshop is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any penalty. Please be aware that this workshop may evoke emotional issues which may require you to seek additional support.

If you have any questions concerning the research inquiry or your participation in this workshop, you are welcome to contact: Fatima on 0826878552 or Charmaine on 0823376789 or Cheryl on 083 406 12313

Yours sincerely

Fatima Adam, Cheryl Wright, Charmaine Leatham & Nadia Louw

By signing below, you are acknowledging, that you have read and understood the above description of the basic counselling skills course and give your permission to take part in this workshop.

You also provide permission for consent for the inclusion of the following: (please circle your response):

Procedures	Yes	No
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


Signature of participant

Mkhondo
Printed name

06-03-2007
Date



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APPENDIX G: Process Searching for Three Specifically Selected Participants

The following table illustrates the participant selection process that continued in terms of the timeframe, before being able to find specific participants who were from child-headed households.

	Meeting with	Discussion / Comment	
09/09/2009	Prof. Pillay	<p>Selection of participants continues: We discussed the nature of the participants as I got some background information from the individual interviews. Most of the participants live with older family members, aunts or uncles with brothers and sisters deep in their twenties / thirties already – the participants are more from homes where they are struggling financially and not headed by children. Will use the interviews and focus group interviews as background to the study.</p> <p>Prof Pillay and I decided to keep as close as possible to the research topic of working with children who are from homes headed by children (for whatever reason – parents working away, passed away or too ill to look after the children). I thus need to go back to the NGO to ask for participants who are from homes headed by children or youths.</p>	
16/09/2009	Participant (School)	<p>Individual Interview with last of my participants who was on the list – feels neglected by her father and stepmother – when I transcribe the interview I will need to see if there is information I can use as background to the study.</p> <p>Selection of participants Continue: I also explained to the contact teacher regarding our research that I am looking for learners who are heading a family or who are in a family headed by a sibling. They had one learner and called her in order for me to explain the research and ask if she would be interested. She said she will think about it over the holidays and the</p>	

	Youth Worker (NGO)	<p>contact teacher said she would inform me as soon as the schools reopen in Oct. 2009.</p> <p><i>Selection of Participants Continue:</i> I met with one of the youth workers who works in the High Schools. I explained my situation and the need for participants who are really from child-headed households. She referred me to the social worker who also asked the help of a coordinator at the NGO. They explained that the government does not want child-headed households, so they try and place the children in ‘group homes’ as far as possible (mostly in primary school at the moment). There were quite a few possible participants from youth headed households – where they started off as being headed by an older sister who was in high school and are now youths early 20’s. One participant lives with her sister who is now in her early twenties but has been living with her sister since she was in primary school and her sister in high school. Two other participants will also be contacted for me to meet after the Sept./Oct. school holiday. Will not be able to meet them during the holiday as they have additional classes / holiday school.</p>	
07/10/2009	Meet possible Participants (NGO)	<p><i>Selection of participants Continue:</i> Co-ordinator organised for me to meet with four participants – two participants will work, two not as they are both in grade 12. So my discussions with them included some information regarding careers and studies. Co-ordinator will look for more possible participants and we arranged a meeting for the next week as well.</p>	
14/10/2009	Meet possible Participants	<p><i>Selection of participants Continue:</i> One additional participant was added.</p>	

	(NGO)		
21/10/2009	Meet Participants (NGO)	<p>The three participants were given biographical questionnaires to complete in order for me to get some background on their living arrangements and the Director of the NGO completed some permission letters for the research to be conducted with the selected participants.</p> <p>The three participants and I spent the rest of the session discussing possible activities for a workbook they could complete in order for me to understand their lives better. They liked some of the activities I suggested and we agreed upon the one's I would include in a workbook for them.</p>	
04/11/2009	<p>School: contact teacher regarding research</p> <p>Meet participants (NGO)</p>	<p>I could not get hold of the contact teacher so I went to the school to meet with her as she said she would contact me after the Sept. /Oct. holiday to inform me if one learner we discussed will be willing to take part in the research – I have not hear from her. I also wanted to arrange to take a learner who I met through the individual interviews to the NGO for some support. Both the teacher and the learner have left by 12 o'clock as the school is writing exams.</p> <p>The participants and I went through the workbook discussing the activities we agreed upon and I discussed the use of the camera and the photo voice activity. We made arrangements for them to first focus on their coming exams and will only meet back at NGO on the 9th of Dec. During this session I will meet with them on an individual basis to go through the activity book as some information will be private</p>	

		<p>and confidential. During this meeting I will also collect the cameras to develop the photos.</p> <p>One participant did not make the session!! Will need to meet with her next week if possible – I arranged with Sthembile to contact her.</p>	
11/11/2009	Participant (School)	<p>Although I arranged with the contact teacher that I will pick up the learner at 14h00 to take to the NGO to be interviewed by the social worker – the learner waited from 9h00 that morning!!!! I took her to the NGO, explained the workbook and photo-voice activity. The social worker then met with her.</p> <p>The co-ordinator did not arrange for me to meet with the other learner who did not come the previous week. I will try and meet with her at the school she is attending next week (18/11/2009).</p>	
18/11/2009	Participant (other School)	<p>Will try and meet with participant straight after writing her exam to explain the workbook and arrange a time for her to come on the 9th of December 2009.</p>	
09/12/2009	Participant feedback (NGO)	<p><i>Reflection: “No one arrived today I was very disappointed as I thought it would be a quick process in terms of gathering the most information within an effective period of time. I have to prepare myself for only meeting with them in the new year 2010.”</i></p>	

APPENDIX H: Activity Booklet

**Making Meaning of my Gendered Experiences as an African
Adolescent Girl from a Child-Headed Household within my
Family, School and Social Worlds**

My Name: _____



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A research project by the University of Johannesburg

Researcher: Charmaine Leatham

2009-2010

My Family Drawings

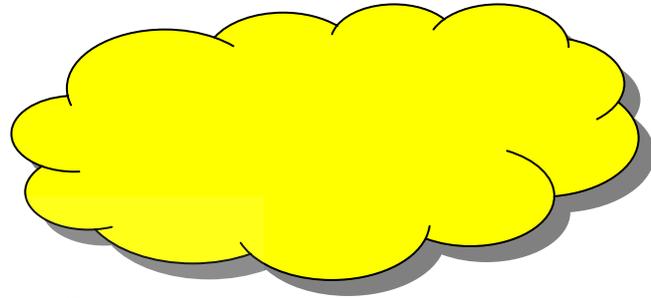
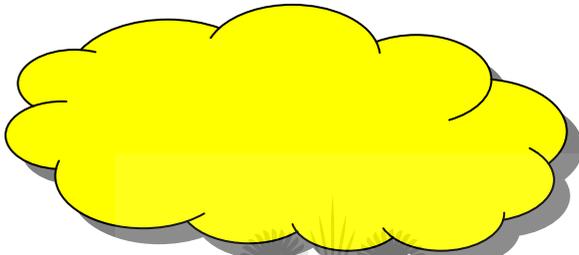
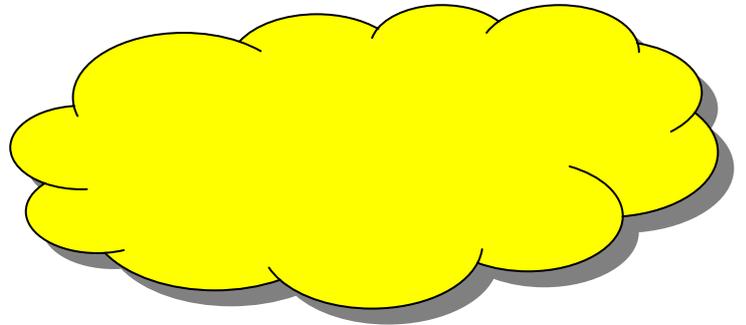
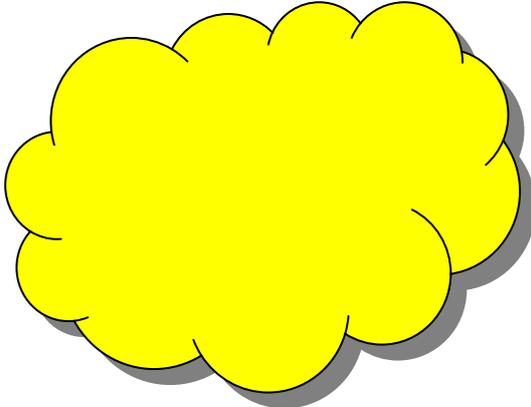
Would you be so kind as to draw me two drawings, one of your family as it used to be before you were part of a child-headed household and one of your family/ household as it is now.



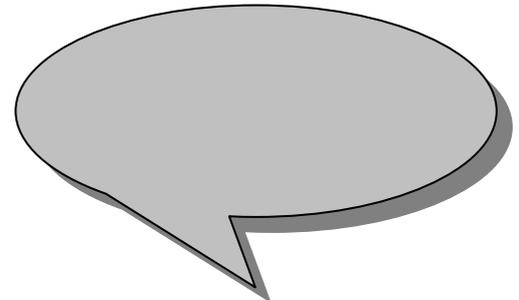
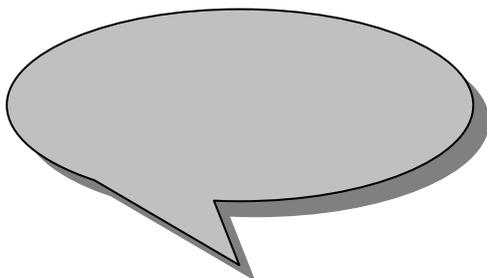
My Fears and Dreams

After identifying your fears and dreams for the future, please write more about how being a girl influences your fears and dreams. How do you understand it?

Dreams:



Fears:



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The peaks and valleys of my life as an African adolescent girl since I can remember

Please draw a time line since you can remember up to know (your present age). Then according to the time line indicate joyful, happy, peaceful times you would like to share. Also indicate the less happy, sad or difficult moments or times of your life up to know.



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S.W.O.T. Analysis of my life as a girl and how I understand it.

In these four blocks please list your **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats as a girl being part of a child-headed household.

<p>Strengths</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>

The logo of the University of Johannesburg is a watermark in the center of the page. It features two stylized birds facing each other with their wings spread, flanking an open book. Above the book are several vertical lines of varying heights, resembling a sunburst or rays of light. To the right of the graphic, the text 'UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG' is written in a light, sans-serif font, with 'OF' centered between two horizontal lines.

My Life as a South African Adolescent girl from a child-headed household at school.

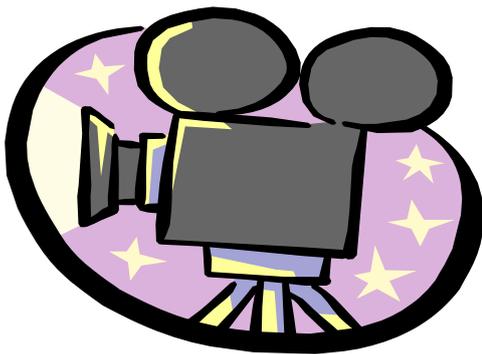
Please write about your gendered experiences as an African Adolescent girl, at school.



My Photo Voice

Take photographs of *issues* affecting your life as an African Adolescent girl from a Child-headed household or Youth-headed household and also provide your ideas on *possible solutions* to the issues. Try to use symbolic representations instead of having people in the photographs.

- 'Stage' the 'issues' and the 'solutions'
- Make brief notes on what you are trying to show or represent by each photo on the notepad pages provided.



APPENDIX I: Example of Participant's Family Drawing

My Family Drawings

Would you be so kind as to draw me two drawings, one of your family as it used to be before you were part of a child-headed household and one of your family/ household as it is now.

My Family as we used to be



My Family as we are now



APPENDIX J: Example of Participant's Fear and Dreams Activity

My Fears and Dreams

After identifying your fears and dreams for the future, please write more about how being a girl influences your fears and dreams. How do you understand it?

Dreams:

I dream to be successful

I dream to achieve my goals and

I dream to drive an expensive car live in a beautiful home

I dream to have a loving family

Fears:

I fear that if my dreams dont come true

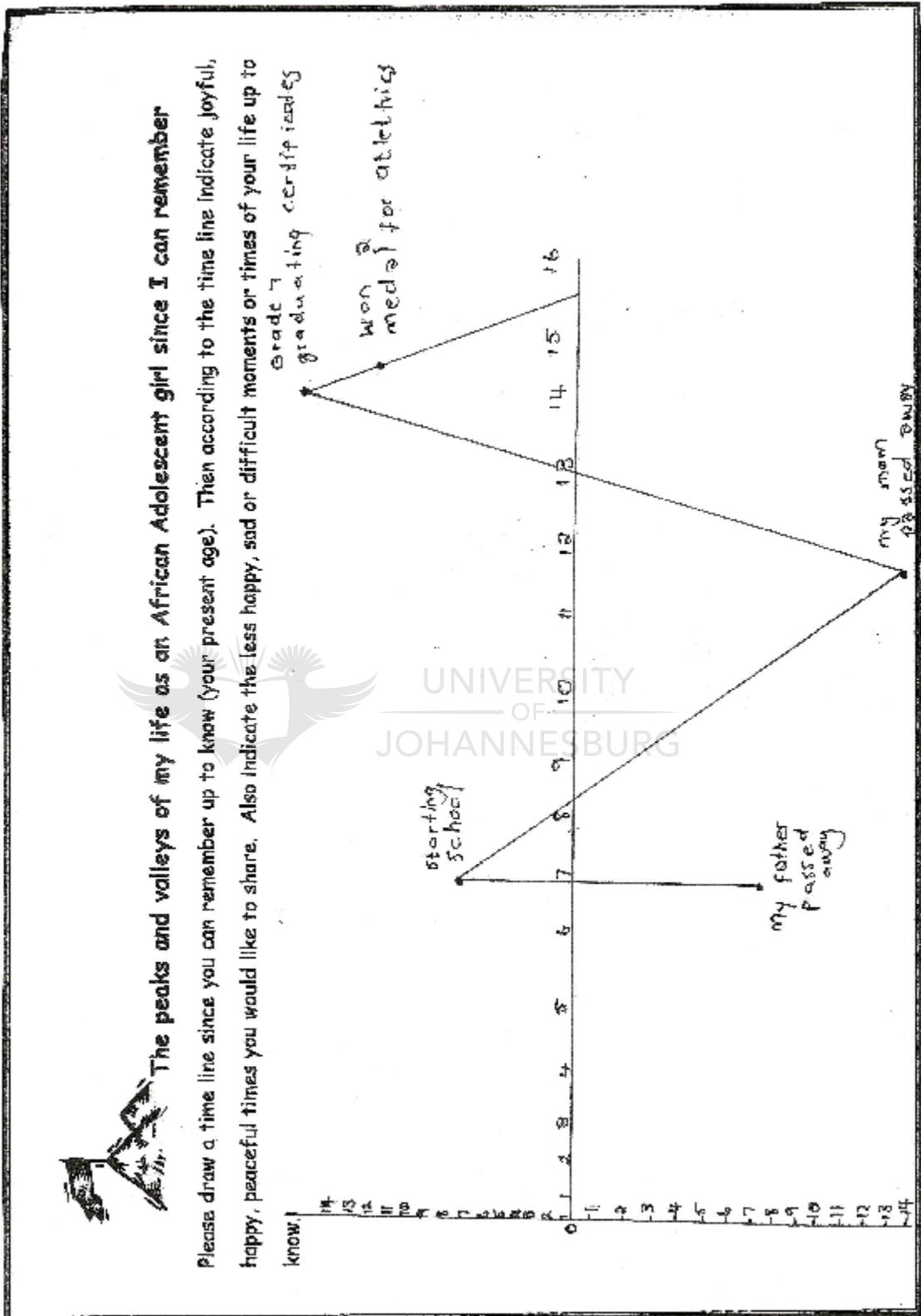
I fear that I wont pursue my dream career

I fear that I will die

I fear that there may be a destruction in my life that like falling pregnant at an early age

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APPENDIX K: Example of Participant's Peaks and Valleys of My Life Activity



APPENDIX L: Example of Written Reflection regarding Life at School as an African Adolescent Girl

My Life as an African Adolescent girl from a child-headed household at school.

Please write about your gendered experiences as an African Adolescent girl, at school.

Every since I started taking care of myself and my cousins was when I lost my mother on 2007 January. It was hard for me but I managed to live with that up until now. I'm a person who always loss hope but for the fact that I have loved ones who knows how to make me love laugh and who know how to take care of me. When I lost my mother it was so hard for me to tell my ~~ten~~ class mates because at first I thought they will not believe me because I'm a person who don't talk a lot about my life but now I've told myself to tell what's in my life so that I can't live with the fear that I used to live with. Ever since I've meet my teachers they are the ones who encouraged me to never focus on the past but face the future. To me I can say I'm a lucky girl because I have people who are able to support me and encourage me in not living up with the fear because I can say my mother was the most supportive person I had in life, and I told myself that without her I will be nothing but today I'm someone who love her cousins and who know how to take care of them without my mother.

APPENDIX M: News Paper Article regarding the Symposium held at the University of Johannesburg in terms of Child-Headed Households



THIS WAY: Elzette Fritz presents her findings during a conference, at UJ's Soweto campus, on a study of the education of children in child-headed homes.

PICTURE: BONGIWE MCHUNU

Child-headed households need skills to progress

Study finds that resilience manifests in kids

NONTOBEKO MTSHALI

THE ONLY adult in their family has died. They keep the news to a tight circle of a few trusted people because they don't want to open themselves or their siblings to exploitation.

They look forward to going to school because it's the only place where they get food to eat and to put aside for their younger siblings. They dread the schools holidays – without the food they get from the school's feeding scheme, they have no idea where their next meal will come from.

This is a glimpse into the life of a child who is also the head of their household, according to research done by University of Johannesburg department of educational psychology master's and doctorate students.

The research explored various aspects of the children's lives and the effect their experiences had on their education.

The researchers, some of whom lived in the communities where the study participants stayed, to get a better sense of their circumstances, found that even though many were very young, the teaching of concepts like financial and time management, and study skills, which are normally reserved for young adults, need to be taught from a much earlier stage.

"The reality is that these are children taking on adult roles," said education psychologist and doctorate student Fatima Adam.

For her research paper, Adam, who works as a education psychologist in private practice, spent time with children from child-headed households to design and implement a life skills programme aimed at supporting them.

To implement the life skills programme, she later ran workshops with the children, some of their teachers and personnel from community centres that support the children.

"Children require skills to manage themselves," she said.

Adam said the children struggled to manage their time between school work and the responsibilities they have at home.

She said the children also lacked financial skills, adding that "some who receive grants don't know how much they get and how to spend it".

Nadia Louw, whose research looked at creating support for pupils from child-headed households when they make the transition from high school to the outside world, said the children were in need of career guidance – something the children themselves can't deal with because of other responsibilities.

"It's even difficult for a child in the lap of luxury to decide (which career they want to pursue). What about that child who is responsible for looking after their siblings and worrying about the day-to-day things?"

Despite these challenges, the researchers found that because of the punches that life had thrown at the children, they have had to mature and find ways of dealing with tremendous trauma.

Master's student Praline Lethale whose research looked at "A positive psychology approach on the experience of adolescents from child-headed households", said that in these children she saw a positive sense of self awareness and resilience.

"They showed the ability to plan and think critically. They learnt to develop problem-solving skills."

APPENDIX N: Extract of the Boys Focus Group Interview

J I think mostly it were our cultures. Like mostly in Zulu's the voice of a woman is not taken seriously. Mostly people who say 'im the head of the house, what I say goes', so women are not taken seriously because our cultures the xxxxxx if they take up a new card and they must make a decision. Most things must be said or told by a man, so mostly the voice of a woman is not taken seriously.

C Ok. KG?

KG Girls are not taken seriously because they don't have a say in any deal, cause as he said, that as a boy you are engaging the marriage thing so the boy is the head of the house and the girl is the body of the man, so whatever he say, you as a girl, you wont say nothing cause you don't have that power to overcome the man. So if he decide to kiss you, you wont say anything cause that's his money, the furniture he had, so you as a girl, girls need to be taken serious because whatever sometimes people face its tough cause you feel like not talking to anyone but there is a girl who can come to you and ask you about whatever, then you will feel like telling her but you don't know how to trust. He will make you feel better in many ways that he will leave you like that being sad and he will just say 'oh that guy he treats me bad'. He will say that and they don't hold grudges.

APPENDIX O: Extract of Thandi's Activity Booklet Discussion

C Okay.

T That is my family as we used to be. I was living with my mother. This is me and my mother. That other one (picture) is me and my baby.

C The way it is now?

T Yes. (Gives a little laugh)

C So tell me about, a little bit about you living with your mother. How old were you? From what age till, tell me a little bit about your life with your mother.

T When I was 15 years old I was living with my mother and my mother do everything for me.

C Since you were born?

T Since I was born.

C Until you were 15?

T Yes.

C Okay.

T I was very happy (shy laugh), and I was very happy and when I was 15 years my mother passed away and many things change from my life. It was difficult. My life was difficult, very difficult.

APPENDIX P: Extract of Chantelle's Activity Booklet Discussion

- C Must I start with the dreams?
- I Which one would you like to start with? Fears or dreams? Which one do you think?
- C I will start with dreams.
- I Your dreams. Okay.
- C Well I dream to be successful. Everyone needs to be successful in life. I dream to achieve my goals, every goal that I set and I dream to get there at the end of the day.
- I Okay. Can I ask you questions first. Before you go on to the next one. You are quick hey? Okay. What, if you say you dream to be successful, what does being successful mean to you? What is your definition or how would you know that you are successful then? If what happens in your life?
- C Well I think being independent and have the money and stuff and you are living the good life.
- I What is a good life for you?
- C A good life is when you have a nice house, expensive cars, a nice job.
- I And your job? What will that be one day?
- C Land surveying.

APPENDIX Q: Extract of Nthombi's Photo Voice Discussion

- R Just come up with games at night and play and make jokes.
- I What games? Teach people. Tell us. What games?
- R Oe, there are many games!!! Laugh
- I Really Nthombi!? Games that you make up yourself? What kind of games? That you make up yourself or games that you have at the house?
- R Most of the time we like hide and seek at the house and it makes us laugh a lot.
- I Hide and seek. That is lovely. What else?
- R Sometimes we play the general knowledge. We identify the artists names, the one who did it best is the winner.
- I Then what happens to the winner?
- R The winner gets happy. (Laughs)
- I Because they won? Great stuff. Well done. That is clever, to play games.
- R Okay, this one is some of my other class mates. This picture to me shows that we are really committed to our school work and we work as a class.
- I How is that important to a girl? To you?
- R To me it is important that I should know what I want in life and I should become what I, in order that I become successful and it starts here at school!

APPENDIX R:

The logo of the University of Limpopo is a watermark in the background. It features a stylized sunburst or fan-like shape with rays emanating from a central point, positioned above the text 'UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO'.

**A Supportive Intervention Programme for
Adolescent Girls from Child-Headed Households**

Facilitator Manual

*An Intervention Programme for
Adolescent Girls from Child-
Headed Households*



(Miss Dread Hyness Art chosen due to the unity of the African Girls it represents)

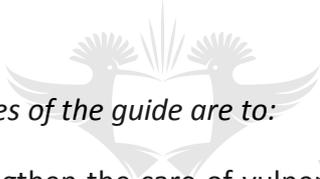
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1. Introduction

The research study was conducted in Orlando West – Soweto, with the support of staff from Ikangeng Itireleng AIDS Ministry. Through the research study of which consisted of two focus groups one of boys and the other of girls as well as interacting over a period of at least eight months, with specifically selected adolescent girls, themes and trends were identified that impact on the lives of adolescent girls living in and managing child-headed households. These themes and trends were then developed as to provide a supportive Intervention Programme to adolescent girls from child-headed households. The guide is designed for the community workers at the NGO and Social workers involved with the research project as a contribution and result to the support they have given to this research project. The guide can be used with other children in similar circumstances, who are heading households throughout the country. The experiences of adolescents living in vulnerable circumstances, orphaned and heading child headed households or taking care of themselves were shared with me and informed the content and the processes that led to the development of this programme.

The objectives of the guide are to:

- 
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- Strengthen the care of vulnerable adolescents through educational activities and make them aware of their value and gender related actions.
 - To raise awareness, understanding and respect for vulnerable children.
 - To sensitise the users of this programme of their responsibilities in support of adolescent girls heading child-headed households.
 - To raise the awareness of adolescent girls heading child-headed households of their rights and responsibilities in managing a household.
 - To raise the awareness of adolescent girls of their value, their strengths and abilities as well as to raise their awareness of supportive structures within their daily lives and contexts.

A Note regarding the Essential Qualities of the Facilitator

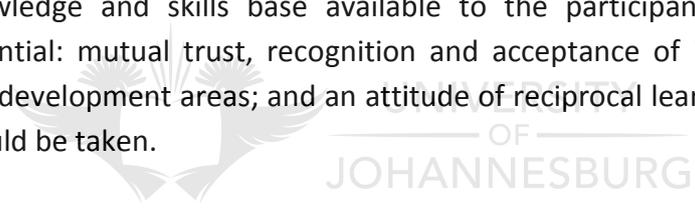
Facilitators have to continuously develop effective qualities in themselves and attempt to:

- ✓ Be flexible, playful, creative and enthusiastic;
- ✓ Have good listening skills;

- ✓ Trust that the participants have abilities and strengths;
- ✓ Respect the opinion of others;
- ✓ Be familiar with the culture, needs, strengths and limitations of the participants and respect individual differences;
- ✓ Be a competent presenter and role model;
- ✓ Help the participants to process their experiences;
- ✓ Help the participants share and work through insights;
- ✓ Be supportive, encouraging and empathetic.

General Considerations the Facilitator should keep in Mind

- It is usually helpful to provide the participants who intended to work through the guide with the facilitator with appropriate information about the content of the guide.
- The guide is designed to enable the facilitator to work through the activities with individuals or with a group of no more than 10 participants.
- When doing group work a co-facilitator can be used to assist in the over-all knowledge and skills base available to the participants. Co-operation is essential: mutual trust, recognition and acceptance of individual strengths and development areas; and an attitude of reciprocal learning and assistance should be taken.



What Themes and Trends are covered in the Programme for Adolescent Girls Managing Child-Headed Households?

The guide addresses selected skills, information and themes which were regarded as highly essential to adolescent girls managing a child-headed household or needing to take care of themselves.

- ❖ Raising awareness of the perception of cultural influences with regard to gender roles; abilities and the value of being female;
- ❖ Information regarding the development of a succession plan and the value of parents drawing up a will;
- ❖ Providing information relating to social assistance and the grants that are available;
- ❖ Drawing up a simple household management plan;
- ❖ Becoming attentive of and compiling a social support network diagram;
- ❖ Becoming responsive of the value of a household routines, chores and emotional support in caring for younger siblings;

- ❖ Becoming aware of their emotional experiences and coping with emotions such as sadness, loneliness and worry;
- ❖ Placing their own lives in context as a whole and becoming aware of strengths through the “Tree of Life” activity;
- ❖ Valuing being Female by completing the “Circle of Courage” activity;
- ❖ Making appropriate decisions and choices in terms of problem solving strategies;
- ❖ Aspect to keep in mind when aiming to complete Gr. 12 and planning for a career.



2. SUPPORTIVE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

2.1. The Perception of Cultural Influences with regard to Gender-Roles

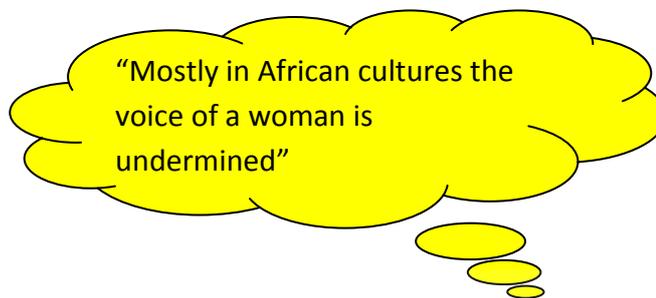
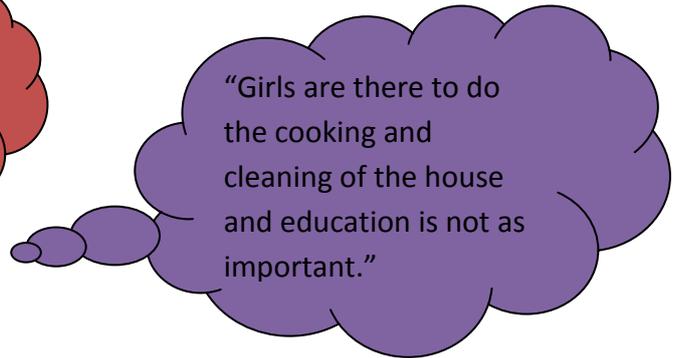
(Source: Research Findings regarding Cultural Influences)

Identified Theme	Objectives of the Activity
The Perception of Cultural Influences with regard to Gender-Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sensitising the girls to the role of culture within their daily living and responsibilities ➤ Initiate thoughts on how they perceive themselves as girls and their self-worth ➤ Reflecting on their family’s perception of the value of girls ➤ Considering options regarding age appropriate household responsibilities that would involve siblings

Materials Needed: **None**

Discussion: In doing the research with the research participants both the boys and girls discussed the traditional roles of women and girls within the household as compared to men and boys. It was very clear from especially the boys’ focus group that girls do in fact not enjoy the same freedom as girls are held responsible for the households. Furthermore the research also indicated that the research participants were also of the opinion that the traditional cultural view of girls still plays a role in the household division of tasks and chores as instilled by mothers. The household responsibilities only being attributed to the girls ultimately influences the voice of girls within society as well as to what extent girls’ opinions and contributions are taken seriously within society being male dominated (patriarchal). One of the suggestions by the research participants was to address the division in household chores in making it more equal in terms of girls and boys being responsible for household chores at home – similar to the division of chores at school: “Today you wash and I sweep, tomorrow the girl sweeps and the boy washes”. This discussion serves to sensitise the participants as to their own role in changing patriarchal and cultural practices starting at home.

Activity: Ask the group or individual participant to think about and discuss the following statements:



Complete the following statement and discuss with your facilitator:

In my family girls are viewed as being:

_____.

As a girl I view myself as valuable because I:

_____.

My role in the household is to:

_____.

People in the household that can support me are:

_____.

Activity: Request the participants to complete the table on page 8, by including the names of the other siblings within their household and then write down a

possible age appropriate task they can help with within the home. Task can then be negotiated with their siblings and rotated after a week for instance.

Name each person and how they can be involved with household chores to support you within your home

Name of the Person	Task in the Home they can Assist You With

2.2. Challenges Faced by Adolescent Girls Leading a Household

Identified Theme	Objectives of the Activity
<p>Challenges Faced by Adolescent Girls Leading a Household</p> <p>Fluctuating living circumstances and Transition:</p> <p>Financial Difficulties and Management:</p> <p>Emotional Experiences:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making the participants aware of the possibility that a transition plan can be utilised when parents are terminally ill as a preventative measure ➤ Providing a Will as an example ➤ Informing participants of the grants available and requirements when applying for financial assistance ➤ Example of drawing up a household management plan ➤ Identifying supportive resources within their community and the nature of the support ➤ Identify specific emotions related to different areas of their lives ➤ Express and discuss their emotions according to different contexts and

<p>Caring for younger siblings:</p> 	<p>circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Tree of Life” activity supports participants in identifying their connectedness to their past, present and future ➤ Receive a level of support from other participants who share similar circumstances ➤ Identifying and acknowledging their strengths and abilities ➤ Identifying their hopes and dreams for the future ➤ Identifying and honouring the significant other people in their lives in past and the present ➤ Considering the importance of routine household practices in terms of establishing emotional security with siblings ➤ Care and enjoyment of family Life ➤ Gaining information from other adolescents from child-headed households regarding safety and security
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2.2.1. Fluctuating Living Circumstances and Transition: Transition plan and living arrangements

Materials Needed: None

Discussion: The National Guidelines for Statutory Services to Child-Headed Households (April 2010, p.23-24) makes provision for the development of a Succession Plan. Succession planning is a preventative measure to help support minimising the extreme vulnerability of children after the death of their parent or parents. Children do not always understand the implications of what is going to happen to them or the remaining family members and adults may be at a loss as to what arrangements to make for the children. “Property grabbing” is also one of the challenges that faces children whose parent(s) have passed as relatives may come to claim furniture or take property and money for themselves.

Succession planning is an approach to address the protection of the inheritance rights of the child or children as well as to ensure that there is continuity in the lives of children after the death of their parents. The inheritance rights of children can be protected by the parents of persons wishing to give property to children by drawing up a Will. The issues relating to the drafting of a Will are governed by the Wills Act No. 7 of 1953, which also regulates the execution of Wills. It is envisaged that succession planning should be integrated into service delivery to child-headed households especially in cases where a parent or guardian is terminally ill.

When working with children whose parent or guardian is terminally ill it is advisable to inform them of the following information as it lessens the emotional strain, worry and anxiety in the midst of their emotional pain and fear of awaiting uncertainty. Social Workers should have a good understanding of the following issues and support children from child-headed households with the following legal processes related to the Succession Plan:

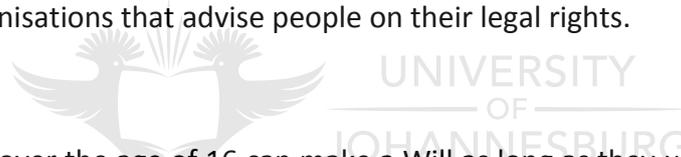
	Legal Process
Terminally ill parent/caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Writing a Will, estate planning. Guardianship and care of children can be passed on through the Will if the Will specifically states this. If the Will does not state guardianship specifically, specific persons interested in the care and well-being of the children can apply to the High court to be appointed as such. *To have a caregiver (like a grandmother, aunt or uncle) appointed as a guardian an application will have to be made to the High Court. *Support and advice with appointing a guardian or guardians, is a process that is done at the High Court
Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Appointed through the Will which should clearly state who will have guardianship of the children and can also include provisions relating to who shall have the care of the child? *A High Court Application by a person having an interest in the care, well-being and development of the child. The application to the High Court is brought by an attorney. Prospective guardians could be assisted by social workers in referring them to legal aid centres or law clinics to obtain services of attorneys. *Only guardians (not caregivers) can assist children in the selling of immovable property such as a house that they inherited in a Will, or help sign documents that relate to the execution of an estate. *An unmarried mother has sole guardianship of her child. *If she is a minor herself, her guardian becomes the guardian of her child. *Non-Governmental Organisations working with children and their families may also be appointed as guardians. <p>These options should be made known to parents who are</p>

	terminally ill as to enable them to appoint fit and proper persons to look after their children when they passed on.
--	--

2.2.1.1. Drawing up a Will

Discussion: The writing and drawing up of a Will is rarely practiced by many African communities because of:

- The belief that preparing for death can cause problems;
- An understanding and belief that the extended family network will take care of the remaining children though most of the time this does not happen in reality – mainly due to the breakdown in extended families due to poverty and the financial burden of orphaned children;
- A belief in the tradition that women and children cannot inherit property but the property is distributed by the remaining elders to whoever is deemed fit to take care of the children after the death of the parents;
- The fact that generally most people are not educated on how to prepare Will and low literacy limits preparations of Wills. Rural areas have limited knowledge and experience with regard to legal issues and there are limited organisations that advise people on their legal rights.



Any person over the age of 16 can make a Will as long as they understand what they are doing. A Will must be made in writing and any two people older than 16 years could be used as witnesses, but should not be beneficiaries or chosen executors. It must be initialled on every page and signed in full on the last page in the presence of the witnesses. The witnesses must also initial on every page and sign in full on the last page – all the persons must be present at the same time when the Will is signed.

An example of a Will (The National Guidelines for Statutory Services to Child-Headed Households April 2010, p.29 – Original source: Adapted from the Basic Legal Advice Handbook, Volume 1, South African Women Lawyers Association, 2007) is given on page 12.

Last Will and Testament of Zodwa Zingitha of 14 Dustpan Village, Ermelo, Mphumalanga

- 1/ I hereby cancel all pervious wills made by me*
- 2/ I appoint as Executor of my estate, my brother, siphon Zingitha (ID No: 00000000000) of 17 Dustpan Village, Ermelo.*
- 3/ I bequeath the following legacies:*
 - a) To my cousin, Nozi Majozi, (ID No: 0000000000) R200 (Two hundred rand)and all my clothes.*
 - b) To Mlawuzi Primary School in Ermelo the sum of R300 (Three hundred rand)*
- 4/ I leave the rest of my estate to my eldest daughter, Noluntu Zingitha (ID No: 000000)*
- 5/ Should I die and leave my children as minors, I appoint my brother Sipho Zingitha to be their guardian.*



Signed by : Zodwa Zingitha, the testator of this will, in the presence of the undersigned witnesses who signed in the presence of the testator and each other, all present at the same time at Ermelo on Date: 15 February 2010.

Zodwa Zingitha

Testator

As Witnesses:

1/ Sophie Nduna _____

2/ Jane Paul _____

2.2.2. Financial Challenges and Management: Social Assistance Act of 2004

Source: National Guidelines for Statutory Services to Child-Headed Households, April 2010; The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, p. 6-7.

Discussion: The Constitution mentions that everyone has the right to social assistance if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants. Social assistance means that the government gives assistance to people who have serious financial problems due to being ill or are unable to support themselves and their families. The Social Assistance Act of 2004 sets out who qualifies for government support and how to apply for such support. The aim of the Act is to: Protect people who cannot work because of old age, illness or physical or mental difficulties.

Types of Social Grants:

Disability Grant

1. *A permanent disability grant: This is paid to people with a disability that is likely to last for more than twelve months.*
2. *A temporary disability grant: This grant is paid to people whose disability may exist continuously for a period of six months or less of in intervals for no more than twelve months.*

Both grants are R1 280-00 a month in April 2013

Social Relief or Distress Grant

This grant is given to people who are unable to meet their own or their family's most basic needs. The grant is offered in the form of food parcels.

Foster Care Grant

This grant is paid to people who look after children that are not necessarily biologically related or the adult wishes to make the care of the minor more permanent in nature. The Foster Care Grant was R 780-00 per month in April 2013.

Care Dependency Grant

This grant is aimed at children from birth to their eighteenth year who are either mentally or physically disabled and who require 24 hour care. It is paid to parent or caregivers responsible for the children. The Care Dependency Grant was R 1 280-00 per month in April 2013.

Child Support Grant

This grant is paid to the primary caregiver of a child up to the age of fourteen. A primary caregiver is any person who takes the main responsibility for the daily needs of a child. The Child Support Grant was R 290-00 per month in April 2013.

What do you need to apply for the Grant?

You can apply for a grant if you:

Are a South African Citizen or a permanent resident

Are living in South Africa at the time of the application

Are between 18-59 years of age if a female and 18-64 years of age if you are a male

Have a submitted a valid identity document and/or birth certificate

Are not cared for by a state institution like an orphanage

Are not receiving another social grant such as an old age grant unless you are the parent or caregiver of a child, you can still access the Child Support Grant as well as a disability grant.

Where do you apply for Grants?

To apply for a grant, you can contact your nearest Department of Social Development office or call these numbers for free from a public phone:

Social Grants toll Free: 0800 601011

AIDS Help Line: 0800 0123 22

Child Line: 0800 0555 55

2.2.2.1. Sample of a Monthly Household Management Plan *(Source: MoneyandStuff.Info + Personal Addaptation)*

Discussion: Making a budget is the most important step in controlling your funds. A budget allows you to track the money that you have (Income) and the money that you spend (Expenses). By writing down your monthly income and expenses you can see how much money you expect to have for the month and plan for how much you can spend.

An Example of a Monthly Household Management Plan.

Description	Income (+)	Expense s (-)	Available	Comments
Grant Money	290.00			
Renting of Outside Rooms	400.00			
Additional Income: Ironing, selling sweets/fruits/veg., platting hair for instance	200.00			
Sub-Total:	890.00			
Baby-sitting		200.00		
Electricity		300.00		
Food (Mieliemeel, potatoes, tomatoes tray of meat etc.) Toiletries		300.00 200.00		<i>Consider the support I can get from the NGO in terms of food and toiletries to make up the difference of -110.00.</i>
Sub-Total:		1000.00	-110.00	
Community Resources	NGO Dept. Social Development Faith Based Organisation		School Fees/ Shoes Transport Potatoes Mieliemeel Tamatoes	

Activity: According to the example, request the participants to draw up their own monthly household management plan according to their possible financial requirements and household needs.

2.2.3. Emotional Experiences

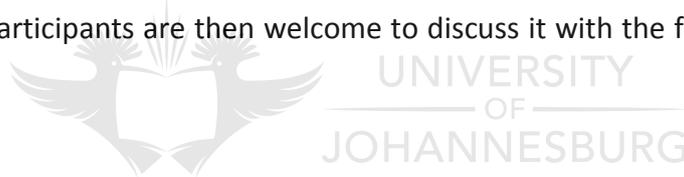
Materials Needed: None

Discussion: The research participants had different emotional experiences at any given time. Sadness and missing their mother were however ever present. Some participants found it challenging to manage her anger due to her sadness which also affected her relationships with friends.

Activity: In this activity when discussing emotions with the participants the facilitator can play two different sets of music: fast and loud for instance as opposed to gentle calm music – the participants should then write down what feelings the music brought about for them while they were listening to it.

This activity illustrates how emotions can change within a short time frame and that emotions are not static or stable experiences – it will continuously change. Rash decisions should not be made in those times when emotions are high and upsetting for instance.

Activity: Ask the participant(s) to look at each emotion and write down where, when and what are the things in her/ their lives that evoke these particular emotions. Participants are then welcome to discuss it with the facilitator or within a group.



2.2.3.1. THE TREE OF LIFE

(Source: Regional Psychological Support Initiative - Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo & David Denborough, 2006.)

The Tree of Life was designed for children and young people aged between 5 (five) and 20 (twenty) years old. It is also useful to older participants and facilitators should do their own Tree of Life to familiarise themselves with the process.

Materials Needed: Colouring pencils or crayons.

Sheets of A3 paper / Flip chart paper

Discussion: The Tree of Life is a psychosocial support tool based on Narrative Practices. The tool is used as part of a tree as a metaphor to represent the different aspects of our lives. The use of the tree metaphor invites children and others to tell the stories about their lives in ways that build their resilience and provide them hope for the future. The metaphor of the tree and its different connected parts also connects to the African spiritual belief system of “We are because of others”. The Tree of Life also provides the option for children to open up in conversations regarding loss and bereavement without remaining trapped in their stories of grief. The metaphor opens up spaces and opportunities to tell, hear and explore stories of hope, shared values, connection to those around them as well as to those who have died.

Activity: Request the participants to draw a tree in any shape or form to their liking with attention being paid to the following themes; roots, ground, trunk, branches, leaves and fruits (also place prompts on the wall for them to reflect on while they are busy drawing their trees):

Roots - the roots of the tree are a prompt for participants to think about and write on their tree where they come from (village, town, country), their family history (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family), names of people who have taught them the most in life, their favourite place at home, a treasured song or dance.

Ground – the ground is the place for participants to write where they live now and activities they are engaged with in their daily life.

Trunk – the trunk of the tree is an opportunity for participants to write their skills and abilities (i.e. skills of caring, loving, kindness) and what they are good at.

Branches – the branches of the tree are where participants write their hopes, dreams and wishes for the directions of their life.

Leaves – the leaves of the tree represent significant people in their lives, who may be alive or may have passed on.

Fruits – the fruits of the tree represent gifts participants have been given, not necessarily material gifts; gifts of being cared for, of being loved, acts of kindness.

After completing the drawing ask the participant to discuss their drawings with you. If it is a group each participant gets an opportunity to show and describe their “Tree of Life” regarding the different aspects about their lives. They could also be divided into pairs to discuss their “Tree of Life” with one another. Thereafter the participants could then discuss something significant from their drawing with the bigger group, only if they are comfortable doing so!

Tree of Life Certificate

A blank copy of the Tree of Life certificate is provided. You as the facilitator can complete each certificate and present it to the participant(s) as symbol and acknowledgement of their inner-strength and resilience.

Tree of Life Certificate

Awarded to: _____.

For proving to herself and others that she has the skills and abilities that have and continue to sustain her in her life. She has special dreams and hopes for the future.

Her skills and abilities include: _____.

Her hopes and dreams are: _____.

She would like to appreciate the following special people in her life:

_____.

Date: _____ Signature: _____.

2.2.3.2. Practical and Caring Support Network

Materials Needed: None

Discussion: It is important for every head of the child-headed family to take notice of the different avenues of support they could make use of as far as possible. Two levels of support can be available namely; those people or organisations that can provide the child with practical support (applying for grants, providing food parcels, etc.) and secondly, the people we go to for emotional support and care.

Activity: Ask the participants to arrange the different support structures in and around the illustration of the taxi in order to portray the support they can make use of on their lives journey! After arranging the different support structures they need to identify these organisations' contact details and indicate what specific needs the organisation can help them with.

Possible Support Structures: Non-Governmental Organisation, Faith Based Organisation, Friends / Neighbours / Family, Caring and supportive adults at school, Department of Social Development, Department of Home Affairs, Local Clinic / Nearest Hospital, School, Community Forum / Policing.



2.2.4. Caring for Younger Siblings

2.2.4.1. Family routines (Source: Raising Children Network)

Materials Needed: None

Discussion: Routines are the ways families organise themselves on a daily basis to get things done, spend time together and have fun. Every family has their own routine and rhythm for knowing when to do what, by whom, in what order and how often. There are daily routines like; getting ready in the morning, bath time, mealtime and bedtime as well as weekly routines for housework, like washing and cleaning.

After the loss of a parent and a lot of changes you as a family have to go through routines can help you and your siblings remember what is important to the family in your daily lives. Keeping to the usual daily routine as much as possible keeps life as familiar to you and your siblings despite all the changes and emotional times you must be going through. An organised and predictable home environment helps to keep a sense of security and structure there for you and your siblings in a very emotional and stressful time.

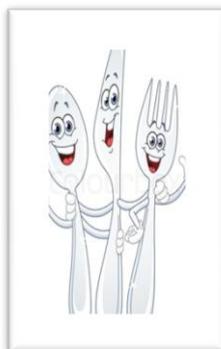
Think of the routines you follow in your household and design your own cards to help remind your siblings. Here are some examples:

MORNING ROUTINE

Get Dressed



Eat



Wash face and Brush Teeth



Make the Bed



Go to School



AFTERNOON ROUTINE

Place School bag at Table



Wash Hands



Snack Time



Do Homework



Do Chores



Play and Fun Time



2.2.4.2. General Guidelines with regard to household arrangements:

When playing or visiting friends during the weekends you need to ask permission!

Be home before 5 o'clock in the afternoon!

ALWAYS know where your siblings are and with who they are visiting

2.2.4.3. Safety Suggestions from Research Participants:

Only let a few trusted friends and adults know if you are now part of a child-headed family – like a supportive teacher at school.

Ask an older cousin for instance to come and visit regularly to show presence at hour home.

Always know where and with whom your siblings can be safe.

Always be home before 5 o'clock in the afternoons

Do not get involved with illegal activity as this would draw more attention to your family and place them in danger!!

Illegal substances, alcohol abuse, and getting involved with older men **are not options** as this will lead to more pain, domination, possible STD's and pregnancy – complicating your life even further! Look to your support network for assistance at all times!!!!!!!!!!!!

2.2.4.4. Suggestions to Support Siblings

The research participants also gave useful suggestions regarding important activities the participants should keep in mind to enjoy with their younger siblings and as support during emotionally difficult times:





Activity: Ask the participants to identify more games and activities they can do with the younger members of their household which they could enjoy.

Alternative - Request those participants who live alone without any siblings to write down those activities they enjoy doing for relaxation or the activities they engage in that is motivational and supportive.

Motivational and Supportive Games and Activities.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for participants to write down their answers to the activity. In the background, there is a faint watermark of the University of Johannesburg logo, which consists of a stylized bird or wing shape above the text "UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG".

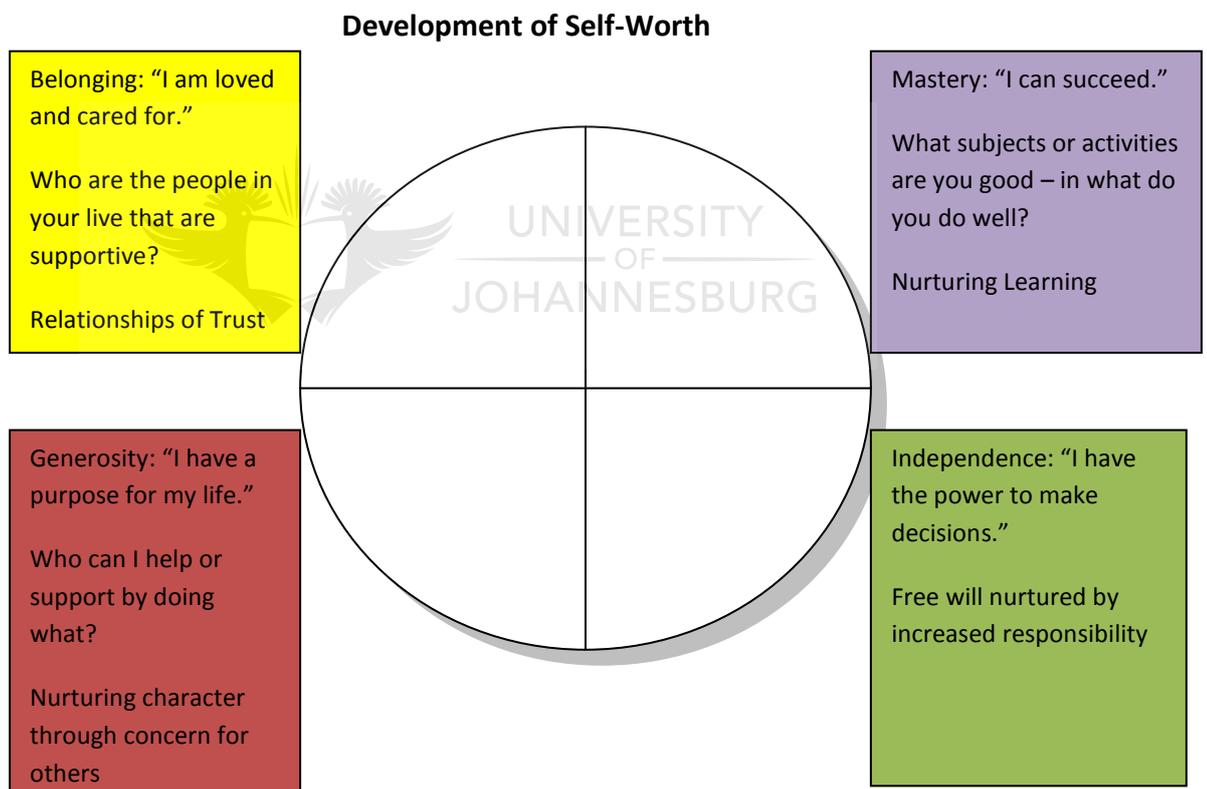
2.3. Valuing Being Female

4/ *Virtue* (worthiness as given by values of one's culture and significant others) is reflected in

the finest value of generosity.

Belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are proposed as the central principles of positive cultures, embodied in the Circle of Courage – a cultural belonging and birthright of all the world's children.

Activity: Request the participant(s) to please complete the following Circle of Courage as best they can with all the resources and strength that they have as a person. Ask them to think of all the roles they fulfil in their lives – as a family member, learner at school, being a friend, team mate, etc.

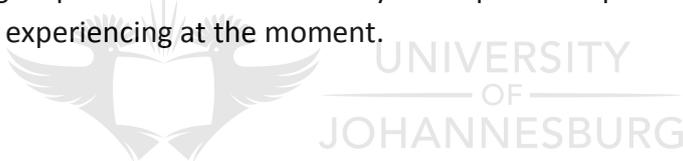


2.3.2. Problem Solving Strategies

Materials Needed: None

Discussion: The research participants indicated that they were confronted with various decisions they needed to make on a daily basis. One of the ever pressing difficulties was to survive without financial means. The ever looming financial resources of older working men are difficult to resist especially if the participants are distressed and without any support and care for trusted adults such as for instance neighbour grannies, caring teachers or concerned family members. Adolescent girls would thus need to think very clearly of the consequences of various choices before considering the most appropriate solution(s) to their challenges.

It is thus important for the participants to be able to think of possibilities regarding solutions to their difficulties and challenges. Encourage the participants as you discuss these solution focused steps with them to also consider the Social Support Network activity (Taxi) and the “Tree of Life “ activity when considering various options and solutions to their identified challenge during the activity. Please discuss the following steps with them before they attempt the steps with a real life difficulty they may be experiencing at the moment.



Activity: When needing to make choices the participants will need to answer the following three questions for themselves:

<p>1. Will I get hurt physically or emotionally if I make this choice?</p>	 A cartoon illustration of a young boy with dark skin, wearing a green shirt and blue shorts. He has a confused expression with his arms outstretched. Three question marks are floating above his head.
<p>2. Will anyone else get hurt physically or emotionally if I make this choice?</p>	 A cartoon illustration of three children walking together. On the left is a girl with blonde pigtails wearing a yellow dress. In the middle is a boy with dark skin wearing a red shirt. On the right is a boy with black hair wearing an orange shirt. They are all smiling and appear to be in a school setting.

<p>3. Will this choice get me into trouble?</p>	
---	--

Thinking of Possible Solutions:

Activity: Discuss with the participants that when they thinking of different options to think of ways that they can look at the problem from a different view or rename it to something more manageable. Think of people you can approach who is trust- worthy that may be able to advise them, help them with things they need or discuss the problem with them as part of the solution. Remind them to avoid thinking of options that can hurt them physically, emotionally or get them into trouble!!



Steps to follow when thinking of possible solutions to a problem

<p>1. What is the problem?</p>	
<p>2. Think of all the possible solutions?</p>	

<p>3. Choice the one that protects you emotionally and physically!</p>	
<p>4. Put your choice into action!!</p>	

2.3.3. Subjects in Correlation to Possible Careers

Materials Needed: None

Discussion: The research participants indicated that they had the driven need to become independent and not to rely financially on any one by studying at tertiary level after completing grade 12. The girl research participants where outspoken about the need to prove themselves and the need to be taken seriously by following a career.

It is however very important that the participants be clear on which subjects fit with which career field. Also mention to the participants that each tertiary institution and faculty also have their own criteria in terms of what marks are needed to be able to enter into the study course regarding the career field.

What Subjects do you need to study to follow the different Careers?

(Source: Career Portfolio Activity Book, Grade 9 – M Brink, University of Johannesburg)

Field		Careers	Subjects you Need
<p>Social Services: To work with people, give advice, training and caring for them.</p>		<p>Social Worker, teacher, Clergyman, Human Resource Management</p>	<p>Do well in chosen subjects. Teacher (subjects you would like to teach) HR (Business studies recommended)</p>

<p>Business: To work in an office and manage the finances of the company or to persuade people and like to market and sell products.</p>		<p>Accountant, Credit controller, Pay role manager, Human Resource Management (BCom), Marketing agent or Manager</p>	<p>Mathematics! Accounting! Economics (recommended) Business studies (recommended)</p>
<p>Clerical & Administration: You are a good organizer, processing (typing) data on computers, doing filling, counting stock, issue receipts and documents.</p>		<p>Secretary, Clerical assistant, Office administrator.</p>	<p>Accounting (recommended) Business Studies (recommended)</p>
<p>Tourism & hospitality: to work in the tourism field</p>		<p>Hotel Management, Chef, Tour operator, Tour guide, Tourist Office worker</p>	<p>Accounting (Recommended) Hospitality studies (Recommended) Consumer Studies (Recommended) Tourism (Recommended)</p>
<p>Performing Arts: To perform music, act, dance, sing.</p>		<p>Musician, Actor, Singer</p>	<p>Music on an advanced level if you want to study music at university! Dance studies (Recommended) Dramatic art (Recommended)</p>
<p>Visual Art: To create something artistic, such as painting, photos, designing buildings or clothes.</p>		<p>Painter, Photographer, Sculptor, Fashion designer, Interior designer, Architect</p>	<p>Visual Arts (Recommended) <i>Architect: History, Mathematics and Engendering and graphic design (highly recommended)</i></p>
<p>Life and Physical Science: To</p>		<p>Scientist, Zoologist, Biologist, Physicist</p>	<p>Mathematics Physical Science</p>

conduct experiments and study physics, chemistry and mathematics.			Life Science
Trade: To work with your hands using tools and machinery to fix or build things.	 Mechanic www.clipartof.com · 76536	Mechanic, Electrician, Plumber, Carpenter, Builder, Fitter and Turner	Mathematics Physical Science (Recommended) Civil Technology (Recommended) Engineering and Graphic design (Recommended) Mechanical Technology (Recommended)
Other Practical Vocations		Hair dressing, Florist, Painter	No specific subjects Business subjects (Recommended)
Health Sciences: To care for people who are ill or need health care.		Doctor, Nurse, Dentist, Psychologist, Medical technologist, Laboratory technician	Mathematics Physical Science Life Science
Sport Science: You are good at sport and want to pursue a career in the field.		Athlete, Sportswoman, Couch, Referee	Mathematics (Recommended) Life Sciences (Recommended) Business Studies (Recommended)
Communication and Language: You want to write stories, poetry, newspaper and magazine articles and read the news		Writer, Poet, Journalist, Translator, Editor, Film or TV Script writer	Languages
Engineering: Using mathematics and science to design and develop new products, manage large		Engineer: Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Electronic, Chemical.	Mathematics!! Physical Science!!

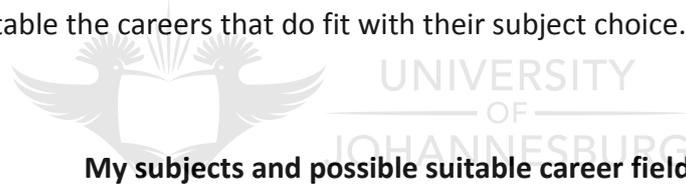
<p>projects in the building, mining, electrical, electronic and mechanical industry.</p>			
<p>Law Enforcement and Protection: To protect people, maintain law and order, investigate crime and work with the police.</p>		<p>Lawyer (attorney, advocate, judge, prosecutor), Police woman, Traffic officer, Fire-fighter</p>	<p>Lawyer - Languages and History (Recommended)</p> <p>No specific subjects regarding the others</p>
<p>Animal, plants & Environment: To study and work with animals, plants and environmental conservation.</p>		<p>Farmer, Agricultural officer, Landscaper, Zoo keeper, Game ranger, Environmental educator, Veterinarian, Veterinarian nurse.</p>	<p>Mathematics Physical Science (Recommended) Life Sciences (Recommended) Agricultural Sciences (Recommended) Geography (Recommended) Veterinarian - Mathematics, Physical Science are compulsory & Life Science (Recommended)</p>
<p>Computer Specialist: You are good at mathematics and like to work with computers.</p>		<p>Programmer, Network analyst and manager, Soft or hardware developer.</p>	<p>Mathematics Computer Science Technology</p>
<p>Creative Services: You like to create, work with your hands and design products.</p>		<p>Beautician, Interior decorator, Tailor or clothes designer, Baking & Cooking</p>	<p>Life Sciences (Recommended) Consumer Studies (Recommended) Hospitality Studies (Recommended)</p>

<p>Politics and Social Sciences: You would like to study political issues, culture and history.</p>		<p>Politician, Foreign affairs officer, Anthropologist, Historian, Sociologist</p>	<p>History (Recommended)</p>
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Please Note: Most courses require good marks in Life Orientation!!!

The requirements are different for different Tertiary Institutions and that the participants should make very sure of what marks they need to obtain in Grade 11 and Grade 12; as well as making sure their subjects fit the chosen possible career field!!!!

Activity: Request the participants to use the following table and write down the subjects that are required for the careers they have chosen. The participants should now reflect on whether or not the information correlates – do the subjects they have at school allow them to follow the career fields of their choice? If they do not and they are already in grade 10, 11 or 12 request them to find on the above mentioned table the careers that do fit with their subject choice.



<i>Possible Careers I am Interested in are:</i>	<i>Subjects required for this career field are:</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

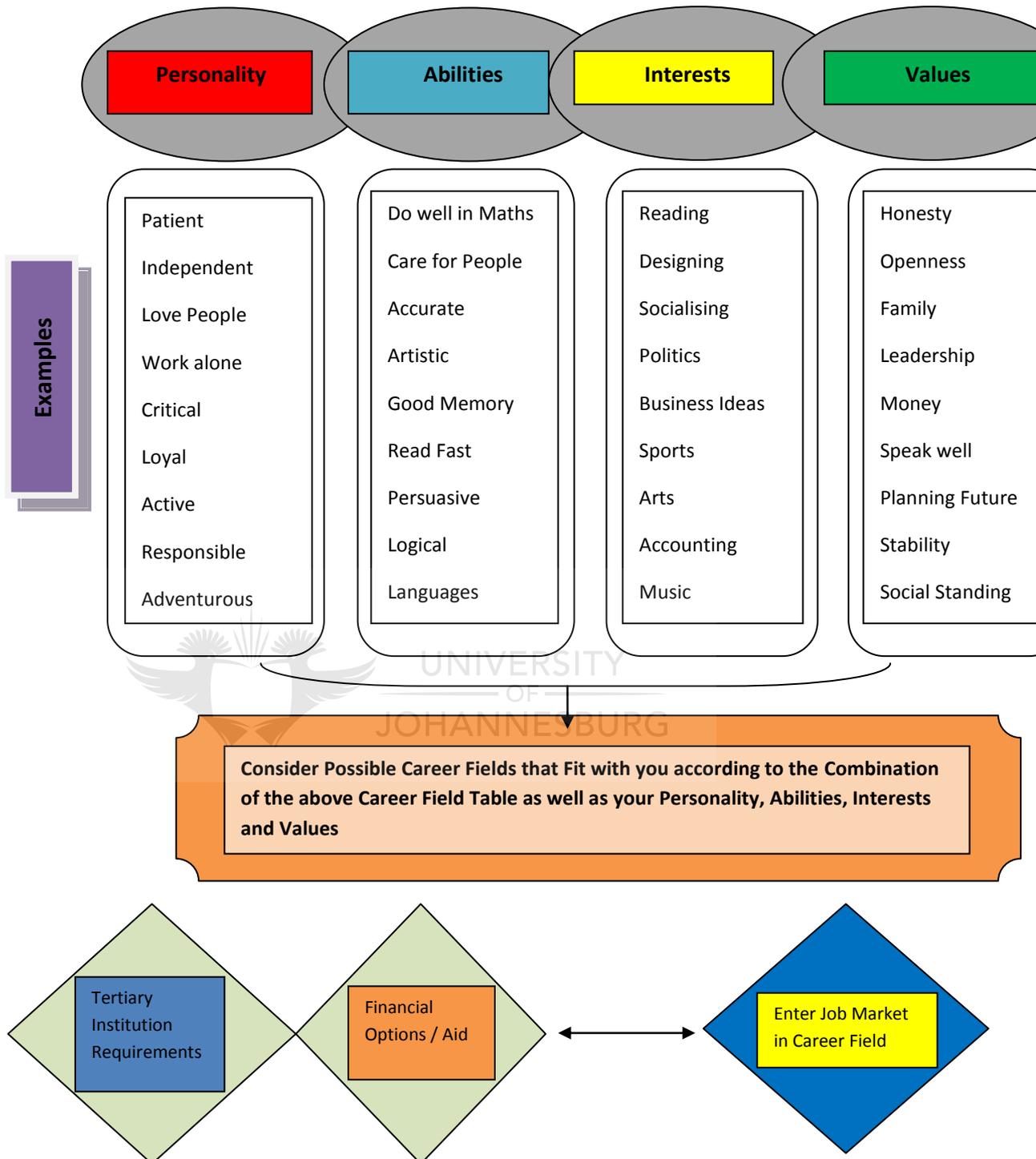
2.3.4. The Process and Considerations in Choosing a Possible Career Field.

Materials Needed: None

Discussion: Sensitise the participants that when they do consider a career field it is important to have a holistic view of oneself in terms of being clear on one's academic abilities, interests, values as well as the kind of person you are. The participants should also be realistic about the requirements as well as the possible financial means that would be needed in considering tertiary studies. Please discuss the possibility with the participants that they may need to go into the job market initially and work themselves up gradually to the point that they could go and study part-time for instance. Learnerships and vocational training should much rather be considered in the career fields of interests especially due to insufficient funding available to members from child-headed households.



The Process and Considerations in Choosing a Possible Career Field.



2.4. Concluding Activity: Our Song, Story, Poem or Dance.

Objective: Increase positive self-statement

Experience a positive termination from the intervention process and support

Materials Needed: None.

Discussion: This activity serves as a positive reminder of the intervention process. The poem, song or dance becomes a transitional object for the participants as it is a positive reminder of their supportive experiences. This is particularly important for children as they may sense abandonment when supportive intervention process has ended. Give a gentle reminder however that the adolescent girls involved and members of the Non-governmental organisation will receive continuous support by means of other support measures as discussed by the youth worker facilitators.



Activity: Request the participants to develop a dance, write a poem, story or song **regarding the values, strength and resilience** they share as black South African girls managing child-headed households also connecting them to their immediate community as well as the sacred and spiritual 'oneness' with other 'endarkened' girls and women trans-nationally.

3. CONCLUSION

It is my sincere hope that you as the facilitator have found the activities useful to the participants as it tried to acknowledge various and diverse aspects of the participants' lives. The activities that were included in the guide were selected according to the research findings as discussed and shared by girls who were already members of child-headed households or who were taking care of themselves. It is hoped that the activities are useful and enlightening to the strength and abilities that are within the adolescent girls who are becoming part of your organisation, despite the sadness and hardship they have to face.

I also wish to thank Ikageng-Itireleng AIDS Ministry as Non-governmental Organisation for all their support during the research process. Thank you so much for all that you as an organisation are doing for so many children and families in need within your community.