THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS OF OFFENDING YOUTH IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Paisley Gustav Duister**, declare that ***The lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth in the Western Cape, South Africa,*** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

2021/01/20

Signature Date

P.G.Duister

ABSTRACT

The family unit, in all its variances, is viewed as the cornerstone of any society. However, over the last few decades a trend away from the nuclear family towards single parenthood has become more and more visible. Research conducted with single parents substantiated that in most instances single parenthood has been identified as challenging on numerous issues such as disciplining their children, financial and social accountabilities, employment and accommodation to name a few. This qualitative study added the offending behaviour of the youth to these challenges and explored how this additional pressure on an already strained situation played out. Salient factors that was revealed through semi-structured interviews with single mothers in the Western Cape, South Africa, were in agreement with the literature reviewed and included the effects of absent fathers and economic issues; the part neighbourhood characteristics played; the incentives behind the youths' offending behaviour and how effective and accessible support structures were to single mothers. The study further laid the foundation on which more intensive research can be conducted to identify factors to assist single mothers in managing their offending youths' behaviour, curb recidivism and the subsequent overcrowding of correctional centres, and identify risk factors to prevent youth offending behaviour altogether.

Key words: Single mothers, offending youth, Western Cape, resilience, Correctional Services, risk factors, support systems, Ecological Systems Theory

Abstrak

Die gesinseenheid word in al sy afwykings as die hoeksteen van enige samelewing beskou. Oor die afgelope paar dekades het n neiging weg van die kernfamilie na enkelouerskap meer sigbaar geword. Navorsing wat onder enkelouers gedoen is, het aangevoer dat enkelouerskap in die meeste gevalle as uitdagend geidentifiseer is oor talle kwessies soos dissiplinering van kinders, finansiele en sosiale aanspreeklikhede, indiensneming en verblyf, om maar net n paar te noem. Hierdie kwalitatiewe studie het die wetsoortredende gedrag van die jeug by hierdie uitdagings gevoeg en het ondersoek hoe hierdie addisionele druk op n reeds gespanne situasie afspeel. Belangrike faktore wat deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met enkelmoeders in die Wes-Kaap, Suid-Afrika, gedoen was, het onthul, die gevolge van afwesige vaders en ekonomiese kwessies; die rol wat omgewingskenmerke speel; die aansporings agter die jeug se wetsoortredende gedrag en hoe doeltreffend en toeganklik ondersteuningsstrukture vir alleenouers was. Die studie het verder die grondslag gele waarop meer intensiewer navorsing gedoen kan word om faktore te identifiseer wat enkelmoeders kan help om hul jeug se wetsoortredende gedrag te bestuur, die herhaling daarvan te voorkom en die daaropvolgende oorbevolking van korrektiewe sentrums aan bande te le, en laastens om risikofaktore te identifiseer om te voorkom dat die jeug die gedrag aanstoot gee.

Sleutelwoorde: Enkelmoeders, wetsoortredende jeugdiges, Wes-Kaap, veerkragtig, Korrektiewe Dienste, ondersteuningstelsels, Ekologiese Stelselteorie, risikofaktore

Isicatshulwa

Iyunithi yosapho, kuko konke ukwahluka kwayo, ijongwa njengelitye lembombo kulo naluphi na uluntu. Nangona kunjalo, kule minyaka ingamashumi idlulileyo umkhwa oshiye usapho lwenyukliya usiya kubuzali obungabodwa uye wabonakala ngakumbi. Uphando olwenziwe nabazali ababodwa lubonisa ukuba kwiimeko ezininzi ukuba ngumzali ongatshatanga kuye kwabonwa njengocelomngeni kwimiba emininzi efana nokuqeqesha abantwana, uxanduva lokuphendula ngezimali nezentlalo, ingqesho nendawo yokuhlala ukukhankanya nje ezimbalwa. Olu phononongo olusemgangathweni longeze indlela yokuziphatha yolutsha kulomceli mngeni kwaye luvavanye indlela olu xinzelelo longezelelekileyo kwimeko esele inengxaki. Izinto ezibalulekileyo ezithe zatyhilwa kudliwanondlebe noomama abangatshatanga eNtshona Koloni, eMzantsi Afrika, bebevumelana noncwadi oluqwalaselweyo kwaye kubandakanya iziphumo zootata abakhoyo kunye nemiba yezoqoqosho; icandelo leempawu zobumelwane ezidlalwayo; Inkuthazo ebangela ukuba ulutsha luziphathe gwenxa kunye nendlela efanelekileyo nefumanekayo ngayo imibutho yenkxaso koomama abangatshatanga. Olu phononongo luye lwabeka isiseko apho uphando olunzulu lunokuthi luqhutyelwe khona ukufumanisa izinto ezinokunceda koomama abangatshatanga ekulawuleni indlela yokuziphatha kolutsha ekhubekisayo, ukuthintela ukuphindaphinda kunye nokuxinana kwamaziko ololeko, kunye nokuchonga umngcipheko wokuthintela ulutsha ukuba luziphathe kakubi ngokupheleleyo.

Amagama aphambili: Oomama abangenamaqabane, ukona ulutsha, iNtshona Koloni, ukomelela, iinkonzo zoluleko, iinkqubo zenkxaso

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The four single mothers whom made the study possible

Acronyms/Abbreviations

AIDS: Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CJS: Criminal Justice System
DCS: Department of Correctional Services
HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus
JCPS: Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster
NPO: Non-Profitable Organisation
NGO: Non-governmental Organisation
NICRO: National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders
NYDO: National Youth Development Outreach
SA: South Africa
SANCA: South African Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
SAPS: South African Police Services
SES: Socio economic status
Stats SA: Statistics South Africa
UNISA: University of South Africa
US: United States
USA: United States of America
UK: United Kingdom

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

Introduction

This chapter contains the introduction to the study on the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth and explains the background and my individual experience that led to the motivation behind the chosen topic. I motivate the rationale, objectives and significance of the study and briefly introduce the research design and methods adopted, such as how study participants were selected and recruited, data collection techniques and the selection criteria. In conclusion, the ethical protocols that were followed, definition of the key concepts and the demarcation of the study are outlined.

Framework of the study

Single-parenthood in general, and single-motherhood in particular, have increased dramatically over the last few decades globally (see for example Moghadan, 2005) and locally as indicated by Statistics South Africa (2018). A General Household Survey showed that 37, 9% of households were headed by females caring for 43, 1% of the population's children. Considering such statistics, the importance of the family as a social unit and the role of the parent-child relationship, the increase in research studies concerning single-mother households are not surprising and many of these studies identify the difficulties single mothers face locally (see for example, Greeff & Fillis, 2009; Ntshongwana, 2010; Roman, 2011; Youngleson, 2006) and abroad (see for example, Bodenhom, 2007; Cancian & Reed, 2009; Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert & Stephens, 2001). Evident from these studies and which will be discussed in more detail, one may come to the conclusion that being a single mother can be a daunting task by itself, but what is it like when this task is combined with the multi-dimensional and interactional influences brought about by an offending youth?

Many studies, however, when identifying offending youth behaviour as inadvertently occasioned by single-motherhood seem not to consider the impact the offending behaviour has on the mother on a personal level (see for example, Parks, 2013; Young, Fitzgibbon & Silverstone, 2014). To indicate this effect to some extent, Glaser, Calhoun and Puder's (2005) prospective study on the needs and risk assessment of youth offenders in the United States (US) found that parents of youths behaving antisocially and reoffending reported feelings of hopelessness with regard to their children, difficulty in monitoring their children's behaviour, fear of physical harm from their children, lower parenting self-efficacy, greater mistrust of law enforcement and the justice system, and perceptions that their children had been exposed to more violence than the parents of children who did not recidivate (Glaser et al., 2005). In a similar vein, Nieman's (1998) study on one of the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders' (NICRO's) diversion programmes to prevent youth offenders from obtaining a criminal record, indicated that parents of youth offenders felt anger, disappointment, shock, felt that they failed their youth, frustration, humiliation and embarrassment concerning their youth's offending behaviour. Both studies mentioned above were borne out of a desire to create a programme or instrument to tackle the phenomenon of offending youth by focusing on their parents, not single mothers in particular, in an attempt to identify risk or protective factors to assist parents and the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in dealing with offending youth. What is evident from these studies is the complex indirect and psychological tension parents may endure in dealing with their youth's offending behaviour and how these expositions may impact on all domains of their lives. Throughout the study, the hardships that single mothers in particular face in connection to their offending youth are highlighted and explored.

On the other hand, the study recognises, as identified by numerous studies, (see for example, Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Cheeseman, Ferguson & Cohen, 2011; Greeff & Fillis, 2009; Mackay, 2003) the resilience and ability of the many single mothers who overcome obstacles and the diversity and uniqueness of each family to thrive beyond their circumstances. It acknowledges the structural, political and cultural processes from within a uniquely South African (SA) context and how these processes and factors may have influenced single-mother families and their offending youth.

Lastly, I took cognisance of how my idiosyncratic experience of single parenthood and my axiology and epistemology (i.e. what is truth and real to me from my own subjective experiences growing-up in a single-parent household and being a single parent myself) have influenced my worldview on single parenthood. This simultaneous position of being an insider (a single parent myself) and outsider (researcher) provided the personal experience that influenced my fundamental beliefs and bracketing (distancing my beliefs from those beliefs participants held) was not easy as will be explained in subsequent chapters.

Background to the study

Growing up in a single-grandmother- headed household in an underdeveloped suburb in North-West province, South Africa, I have experienced first-hand the difficulties of an overcrowded and economically stressed home, coupled with an absent biological father since birth and a migrant mother who, restricted by her employment obligations, visited occasionally. This type of family structure was not a new phenomenon in my area and hardships were visible everywhere, as evident in the almost daily cup of sugar and maize meal my grandmother, born in 1904 and almost completely blind, had to share with other struggling families. Circumstances worsened with the death of my eldest brother in 1990, who was also the sole breadwinner and father figure; and the passing of my grandmother four years later subsequently led to the formation of a child-headed family structure although none of us explicitly headed it. Eventually, and for the most part, the end product of this single-grandmother household was productive, law abiding and resilient individuals.

Twenty years later I find myself the single parent of two children and an absent father for the most time to a third child. Exploration of the literature, as evident in the reviews in the next chapter, made me question, on a simple binary level, whether my family would be classified or viewed as "dysfunctional" or resilient. On this point, as an example, Monama (2007) in her study on widowers as single parents, cited that any household that departs from the two-parent, nuclear-type arrangement is seen as dysfunctional rather than as a viable alternative. Nevertheless, I find it unquestionable that my past experience and circumstances influenced my present state and it is against this subjective background that my interest in the current study was sparked. It is this personal understanding of the difficulties of single parenthood and working as a correctional officer at a correctional centre which houses approximately 2800 offenders (i.e. persons detained in correctional centres, whether awaiting remand detainees, those not yet found guilty of an offense and attending court proceedings; and sentenced individuals, those offenders convicted of an offense and serving imposed sentences handed down by a court of law). Personal observation dictates that significantly more female than male members of the public visit their loved ones in correctional facilities. I often wondered how mothers who frequent the Centre during visiting times cope and what motivates them to continue mothering their offending youth.

Considering research such as that of Glaser et al. (2005) and Nieman (1998) gives the idea that single mothers, and perhaps single fathers (see for example Monama, 2007), although not the focus of the present study, may have difficulty in dealing with their offending youth, apart from the adversities identified by various studies ensuing from single parenthood *per se*. The increase of single-mother households and, according to the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) (2005), the increase of youth offenders guilty of offenses, with an escalation in the severity and violent nature of these criminal acts (also see, Maderthaner's, 2005) a study of significant factors contributing to youth offending) begs the question whether there is a connection – is youth offending behaviour more likely to occur in single-parent households in general, and, more specifically, in single-mother households? This is an important question that requires attention. However, this study's focus on the lived experiences of single mothers with their offending youth and not whether offending youth are prevalent in single mother households.

The picture, however, is not one solely of gloom and doom for all single mothers, as studies showed how some single mothers display resilience and in spite of adversity demonstrate endurance and perseverance whilst overcoming obstacles (see for example, Greeff & Fillis, 2009; Mackay, 2003; Youngleson, 2006). It is on this premise that I endeavoured to gain an intimate understanding of the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth. I furthermore anticipated that the factors that steered these mothers to their single motherhood status and their current circumstances, such as their neighbourhoods and poverty, may have played a role in their youth's offending behaviour. Furthermore, the current study acknowledged the cultural, political and social diversity and historical background of South Africa and how these factors may have impacted the participants’ past and current situations.

Rationale of the study

There is an abundance of theoretical and empirical data on single mothers and their offending youth (Arthur, 2005; Bodenhorn, 2007; Young et al., 2014 to name a few) but with less focus on how single mothers experience this phenomenon from a first person perspective; what meanings and values they attach to it and what coping mechanisms and structures they have in place and use. Glaser et al. (2005) and Jiang (2016) substantiated this when they contended that research on parents and parental factors are minute when it comes to their offending youth. Murry et al. (2001) argued that family adversities and environmentally hazardous conditions that place mothers and children at risk have been studied extensively due to the concerns they engender about possible negative consequences, but research indicating how some single mothers rear competent children (that is, socially well adjusted, responsible and emotionally healthy children) in the midst of these conditions has been sparse. It is this identified gap in literature, especially in the South African context, which motivated the current study.

Inspired by personal interest and out of curiosity, and working as a correctional officer, I found myself wondering what impetus is behind the perseverance (in other words a continued effort to succeed despite difficulties) and optimism (a positive attitude towards life and the family's future) parents, mostly single mothers, display when visiting their children at the correctional centre. Considering the difficulties I have experienced growing-up in a single-parent household and presently being a single parent myself, whether these were economical, psychological or developmental in nature, I felt a sense of sympathy and empathy towards single parents.

On numerous occasions I had the privilege, in the course of my duties, to talk to parents telephonically when they called to make a simple enquiry, such as: *I would like to make a booking to come visit my son,* or *My son has a chronic illness; he has just been arrested, and I would like to know how I get his medication to him*. I would find myself engaged in conversations, at times for almost half an hour, listening, rather than speaking to these parents. It is from these telephonic conversations that my interest in the topic was sparked as I felt the sense that these mothers had a desire to talk to someone and wanted their stories to be heard. Although the single motherhood status may not have been made explicitly clear, at times, during these conversations, the caring and nurturing voices of these mothers made me want to hear more. I found it interesting that no fathers phoned to enquire about their sons, and it is from this observation, and being a single father myself, that I wanted to get single mothers' views on, and experiences with their offending youth. This curiosity, interest in, and sympathy with single mothers and the identified gap in the literature on single mothers' perspectives and lived experiences with their offending youth motivated the present study.

Objectives of the study

This study set out to describe the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth by exploring what coping mechanisms and strategies, if any, these mothers have and how they use them. The primary aim set out to achieve the following objectives:

Through the use of constructivist phenomenology explore the meanings and values single mothers have attached to their experiences of the phenomenon of single motherhood of offending youth. To describe the support structures and networks single mothers have at their disposal and how they make use of it. To gain an in-depth understanding of the resilience, perseverance and optimism that motivates single mothers to continue to care for their offending youth. To interpret the contexts or situations that typically influenced these single mothers' experiences of the phenomenon. Lastly, to describe the needs/concerns single mothers have identified through their experiences of this phenomenon.

Significance of the study

The DCS recognises the family as the basic unit of society and the primary level at which corrections should take place; communities, including churches, schools and organisations at secondary level and the state as overall driver and facilitator, with the

DCS rendering the final level of corrections. The degree of dysfunctionality at these levels has to be addressed if the rate of new convictions and recidivism rates are to decrease. To be successful, according to the DCS, the anomalies that put South African families at risk should be addressed (Department of Correctional Services, 2005).

South Africa's Department of Social Welfare views the family as the basic unit of society in relation to meeting human needs in the different stages of their life-cycle, and the family-centred life-cycle approach should be followed to address their needs. This approach focuses on each member’s lifecycle within the family to achieve the best results for the family as a whole with the view that the whole is bigger than its parts. The aim of family and child welfare services is to preserve and strengthen families so that they can provide a suitable environment for the physical, emotional and social development of all their members. To achieve this, according to the Department of Social Welfare, efforts must be made to involve families, especially previously disadvantaged poor and single mothers with children in decisions which affect their lives as far as this is appropriate (Department of Social Welfare, 1997).

This recognition of the family as the basic unit of a functional society and the South African government's endeavours, through its different departments, to assist its people to make it a realisation makes this study, even on a preliminary basis, significant to achieve such ideals, or at the least identify strengths and weaknesses directly from those mostly affected- single mothers themselves. Taking the ever increasing number of single-mother families and the increase of youth offenders into account, notwithstanding the reason/s or cause/s leading to it, a better understanding of what matters to these mothers from grassroots or personal level, may not only produce interventions/policies that may have direct and personal influence on them, but more importantly, may give single mothers a voice and some sense of ownership of interventions designed to assist them. For example in Brown-Luthango, Reyes and Gubevu's (2016) study on informal settlement upgrading and safety in Cape Town, South Africa, showed that interventions, even when well-intended and beneficial to recipients, may not live up to their expectations without their participation and active involvement. In agreement is Youngleson’s (2007) study on low-income, coloured single mothers in Kylemore, Cape

Town and how they voiced their opinions on the impossibility of ideal motherhood when their circumstances and sentiments are not taken into consideration.

Statement of the problem

Working as a correctional officer, I have observed how some offenders return to the correctional centre after short periods of time after being released. On numerous occasions I have noticed how parents, predominantly single mothers, queued during visiting periods to visit their children. As mentioned, I also had the privilege of speaking to parents telephonically during enquiries. It is through these observations and conversations that the primary research question was identified: What are the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth? To explore the research problem, this question was refined to read: What coping mechanisms and strategies do single mothers of offending youth have in place, if any, and how do they make use of it?

The following are sub-questions in support of the primary research question: What support systems or networks have single mothers identified in relation to their experiences? What needs/concerns have single mothers identified; and whether spirituality or religiosity (i.e. belief in a higher power) plays a role in their resilience?

Research design and research methods

A qualitative research design was adopted, following a constructivist/interpretivist phenomenological approach as the fundamental mode of inquiry. Qualitative research provides the means to explore deep and rich research data in the natural settings of participants and strives to create a coherent story as seen through the eyes of those who are part of the story, to understand and represent their experiences and actions as they encounter, engage with, and live through situations (Wagner, Kaluwich & Garner, 2012).

Following a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, permits participants had the freedom to express their experiences of the phenomenon under study from their own worldviews. Constructivism is how people view and create their own ‘realities’ through the meanings they link to situations or events in their lives and can only be understood through the narratives they are willing to share (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2008). Thus when participants feel the topic is important to them and they can trust the researcher, they will feel more open to share their experiences, beliefs, views and opinions.

The constructivist/interpretivist paradigm is informed by the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenological studies focus on the meaning that certain lived experiences hold for participants (Wagner et al., 2012). A common theme in hermeneutic and phenomenological accounts of social life is the identification of the meanings, intentions and context of the social actor in his/her natural setting and how individuals interact and make sense of the world (Smith, 1998).

To attain this richness and depth of exploration through the narratives of those who hold the data required, an interview, according to Wagner et al. (2012) may be the only way to obtain such data. According to these authors, an interview is a valuable source of information, provided that it is used correctly. Although the current study used a semi-structured interview (i.e. a list of basic questions) to guide the line of inquiry, a conversational approach was followed which created a relaxed and open atmosphere in the comfort of participants' homes and allowed them the freedom to express their views openly and honestly.

Interviews were audio recorded with the permission from participants and field notes were made of non-verbal cues and observations. Laher, Fynn and Kramer (2019) contend that this triangulation (that is, the combination of data from different sources, such as the interviews plus observations) increases the trustworthiness of a study. On reflexivity (i.e. the researcher's own beliefs, experiences and values linked to the phenomenon under study), the authors caution researchers to recognise how their own reflexivity may influence the study and its findings. The research design and methods followed by the present study are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Selection of study participants

Study participants were recruited using two non-probability sampling techniques, namely convenience and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling was accomplished by identifying two single mothers, from my personal contacts, residing in the two target areas to recruit participants. There was an interesting twist because these two mothers did not participate as study participants but were approached to merely recruit participants. These single mothers were familiar with the purpose of the study, volunteered to help and were well acquainted with their surrounding areas and communities. This familiarity with the people made the introduction of the study less intrusive to prospective participants and made acceptance/refusal to participate more convenient. Each of these mothers was requested to identify two single mothers (that is, four single mothers between the ages of 30-60 years mothering an offending youth between the ages of 15-30 years) in their respective areas in Cape Town, South Africa.

Snowball sampling was not intended to be used for the purpose of this study, because the above sampling technique was supposed to identify all four participants needed for the study. This, however, appeared to be necessary because some prospective participants were hesitant to participate when approached by the two recruitment mothers. This was interesting because there was no shortage of participants fitting the required criteria and mistrust in research, fear for their own safety and invasion of privacy and the perception that the study would not bring about any positive change to their current situation was given for their refusal to participate. Snowball sampling, however, ensued when one participant single mother identified another single mother in her area. The reader is directed to Chapter 3 for a more detailed account of the participant inclusion criteria and the techniques employed to recruit participants.

Ethical considerations

The following ethical considerations were observed to ensure that no participant would be negatively affected due to their participation; and that the study adhered to the ethical and scientific criteria required by ethical protocols. Ethical clearance was granted by the ethics committee of the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Informed consent was requested on two separate occasions from participants and participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, for example, pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names and a confidentiality agreement form was signed by the recruitment single mothers. Ethical considerations are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Definition of key concepts

For the purpose of this study, the following key concepts are used and defined below:

Single-headed households:

Single-headed households are those with head (or acting head), no partners, and at least one child under 18 years. If these conditions are satisfied, the following definitions apply: (a) in a "female single-headed household", the head or acting head is female. (b) In a "male single-headed family", the head or acting head is male (Statistics South Africa, 2018). For the purpose of this study, single motherhood, lone mothers and female single-headed households are used interchangeably to refer to a household headed by a single female, without a partner and at least one dependent.

Offending youth:

Offending Youth is defined according the White Paper on Corrections (Department of Correctional Services, 2005) as young offenders, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and under the category of people who, even after serving a lengthy sentence, still have the chance of making something of their lives.

Gangsterism:

A gang is defined according to Young et al. (2014) as a durable, predominantly street-based group of young people which (1) sees itself (or is seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar gangs.

Resilience:

Resilience is defined according to Cheeseman et al. (2011) as not a matter of overcoming or taking away adversity, but managing challenges by taking advantage of, and increasing the number and value of, external factors. It is more than just survival; rather, it is survival with some level of growth.

Transcendent/Religious beliefs:

Transcendent or Religious beliefs is defined according to Oh and Chang (2014) as the family's shared beliefs or religious beliefs that provide purpose of direction to the individual members' lives, which assist in finding meaning or reason in the acceptance of adversities. Although acknowledging the differences in these concepts, for the purpose of this study, religiosity, spirituality and transcendent beliefs, are used interchangeably.

Coloured:

The "Coloured" racial classification under the South African apartheid bureaucracy included people regarded as being of mixed-race decent. The other three legally defined racial groups are Black, White, and Indian (Mahajan, 2014). Coloured people were caught between the privileged white group and the underprivileged black group (Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991).

Integrated Justice System:

Department of Social Development; South African Police Services; National Prosecuting Authority; Department of Justice; Department of Correctional Services

Social Sector Cluster:

Department of Education; Department of Social Development; Department of Arts and Culture; Department of Sports and Tourism

Demarcation of study

This study focused on the lived experiences of four single, coloured mothers, between the ages of 30 to 60 years of age, of offending youth, between the ages of 15 to 30 years of age, in two suburbs in the Western Cape, namely Elsies River and Delft, which are geographically approximately 20km apart from each other. The selection criteria excluded other types of family structures, such as married mothers and single fathers and other racial groups. Subsequently, the results cannot be generalised to other family structures and racial groups as there may exist economic, cultural and political differences.

Outline of the study

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to and description of the study and an indication of what will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 critically evaluates the existing literature relevant to the topic under study and the theoretical framework adopted by the study. Chapter 3 discusses the research design, sampling procedures, the procedures followed in obtaining the data and the techniques of analysis used. Chapter 4 evaluates and discusses the results of the study. Chapter 5 concludes the study, discusses limitations identified, and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter summary

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and summary of the study, including the background of the research problem, rationale for the research, significance of the study, objectives of the study, statement of the problem, research design and research methods, ethical considerations, definition of key concepts and the demarcation and outline of the study. Chapter 2 critically evaluates and discusses the existing literature and theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature review and theoretical framework

Introduction

A comprehensive literature review on available knowledge on the subject under study which contains information, ideas, data and evidence and the effective evaluation of these documents is a major component of research studies as it provides the reference and backdrop against which to determine the value of a new study and its addition to the existing literature (Hart, 2000). In this chapter I review available literature on single parenthood in general, and single motherhood in particular, from a local and global perspective. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological systems theory is explored and its appropriateness for the purpose of the current study demonstrated. Subsequent sections provide previous research findings on reasons leading to single motherhood, factors that may influence youth offending behaviour, adversities single mothers may face and how they may overcome these through their resilience and the effects of religious beliefs and absent fathers, to name a few. In conclusion, I look at the economic and political factors and its impact on single-mother households. To start with, in the next section, I orientate the reader to the study through a brief overall presentation of the complexities embedded in the phenomenon of single motherhood of offending youth documented in the literature.

Orientation

Studies concerning single mothers of offending youth have three important factors that must be explored and illuminated: single mothers and offending youth, and by implication absent fathers. The literature on these three concepts produced an abundance of research, albeit focusing on different aspects and interests, highlighting and documenting its popularity and significance, not only for the families and individuals involved, but also because of the global impact of the phenomena (Franklin et al., 2014; Mbanefo, 2013; Mabusela, 2014; Ntshongwana, 2010; Roman, 2011; Samara, 2005; Sylvester, 2010; Young et al., 2014 to name a few). What is interesting, is what these studies confirm by focusing on the multidimensionality and complexity of each phenomenon separately, that is, either single mothers (Goebel, Dobson & Hill, 2010, Mbanefo, 2013; Youngleson, 2006), offending youth (Kheswa & Tikimana, 2015; Sylvester, 2010) or absent fathers (Kimani & Kombo, 2010; Londt, Kock & John-Langba, 2016).

The current study brings into focus the interconnectedness and interrelatedness, the adversities and troublesome nature embedded within these three concepts from the perspectives and lived experiences of single mothers. In other words, whereas studies investigate the hardships or resilience of single motherhood, or the effects or factors contributing to youth offending behaviour or absent fathers, the present study combined the three. Exploring it from an ecological perspective highlights not only the bidirectional and multidimensional impact the transition to and/or status of single motherhood has on the mother (thus referring to the absence and effects of the absent father), but also what effect the youth offending behaviour has on her and how she copes and experiences it.

Exploring the structural and contextual processes and causes leading to single motherhood and youth offending behaviour is parallel to understanding their adaptation to overcoming obstacles and risk factors. In other words, to explore single mothers' experiences of offending youth, one has to gain a full understanding on how these mothers found themselves in this situation to begin with so as to get an idea of how they cope and where they are headed. On this issue, however, Biblarz and Stacey (2010) reckoned that there are an array of different processes that select men and women into single parenthood and many of these selection effects are impossible to explore to its full extent. When considering these multidimensional factors important questions come to mind, such as: is there a clear bidirectional interactional link between single parenthood and offending youth in as much that certain parental factors or psychological constructs play a contributory role to youth offending behaviour (Glaser et al., 2005)? Is there any significance to the gender of the single parent and his/her youth offending behaviour (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010)? Why do some single mothers, despite adversities, display resiliency and perseverance, while others do not (Mackay, 2003)? And for the purpose of the present study, what are the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth within a South African context from an ecological perspective?

The life-course of single mothers has attracted much attention over the last few decades from different disciplines, albeit focusing on different aspects of interest and professional perspectives, such as developmental psychology (Berk, 2013); criminology (Jiang, 2016); sociology (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010), economics (Bodenhorn, 2007) and feminist perspectives (Akujobi, 2011). These views and interests are explored in more detail in subsequent sections.

Offending youth received much attention due to the impact their behaviour has on the family and society at large (Glaser et al., 2005; Maderthaner, 2005; Meldrum, Encalada & Connoly, 2016, Samara, 2005, Sylvester, 2010, to name a few). The magnitude of the problem is evident in the South African correctional population where overcrowding has become one of DCS's major concerns. For instance, according to the DCS, at the end of the first decade of democracy, South Africa had one of the world’s highest ratios in terms of offender population in relation to actual population total. Four out of every 1 000 South Africans are incarcerated in correctional centres (Department of Correctional Services, 2005).

The reasons and effects of absent fathers have been well documented as well and many explanations and alternatives offered, such as the traditional conceptions of fatherhood and how these may affect fathers’ perceptions and actions that may lead to their subsequent absence (Mavungu, 2013). Another reason for absence is the fathers’ incarceration and the effects it has, not only on the family and the ripple effect it causes, but also how it affects the fathers themselves (Londt et al., 2017; Murray & Farrington, 2008) and the possibility of their sons following in their footsteps and becoming offenders themselves (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). Needless to say the negative effects of absent fathers are undeniable, but this can also apply in cases involving the presence of a harsh and abusive father, where the mother and children may be better off without him (Berk, 2013).

The above makes it clear that the causes, processes and factors leading to single-motherhood are complex and diverse, and often exert major effects on how families adapt to fundamental changes in the structure and circumstances of the family. Greeff and Fillis (2009) provided some ways families become headed by single parents and mentioned divorce, death, estrangement, out-of-wedlock births; women becoming increasingly economically independent, marriage disincentives, such as welfare support; the inability of men to obtain stable family-wage employment and cultural factors. Consequently, I will discuss these in more detail later in the chapter to highlight the multidimensionality, complexity, and in some instances, the unique impact it has on single mothers even when commonalities and similarities are considered. In the next section I will discuss Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and examine its applicability to the phenomenon under study or as Kalof, Dan and Dietz (2008) placed it that a theoretical framework is supposed to be judged by both its logic and by how well it describe what we observe in the world.

Theoretical framework

This study is guided by the theoretical principles of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Ecological systems theory views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. All these relationships are bidirectional and the environment consists of a series of structures that forms a complex functioning whole, or system (Berk, 2013). Murry et al. (2001) contended that ecological theory is useful in describing the ways in which contextual influences may explain variations in family functioning, parenting processes, and child outcomes and may provide an explanation why and how particular single-mother families are able to manage effectively in challenging environments. Amoateng and Richter (2007) are in agreement and argued that the institution of the family is essentially multidimensional in nature in that it affects and is affected by the various social, economic, cultural and political institutions which together form the social structure of any society. Thus, changes in the structure and functions of the family are fundamentally occasioned by other changes in other institutions in the family's environment (Amoateng & Richter, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that every ecological transition (that is whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role or setting, or both) is both a consequence and an instigator of developmental processes.

The layers of the environment consist of the microsystem, mesosystem, macro system, exosystem and the chronosystem. To gain some clarity and understanding, these systems are discussed with examples from the available literature specific to single mothers of offending youth to show its applicability.

The microsystem

The microsystem includes the immediate surroundings of the individual (for example the home, marriage). Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that if the relationship in the immediate microsystem breaks down, that is the parent/child relationship, such as ineffective supervision and child support due to attempts to overcome economic hardships for example, the child will look to others for affirmation, and this is more evident in youth looking for attention in inappropriate places/persons that could lead to deviant and criminal behaviour, such as criminal gang leaders as substitute parent figures or role models (Sylvester, 2010).

The mesosystem

The mesosystem refers to the connections among immediate settings (for example school, neighbourhood). A mesosystem is thus a system of microsystems in which the developing person actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this system, for example, Murry et al. (2001) argued that when families live in dangerous neighbourhoods single mothers may adopt a more authoritarian parenting style through more rule setting and stricter boundaries to protect their children. Therefore, viewing all families’ parenting techniques from predetermined parenting styles (as explained in

Berk, 2013), without taking structural and contextual influences specific to a particular family into account, may subsequently lead to flawed conclusions.

The exosystem

The exosystem refers to social settings that affect, but do not contain the person (e.g. employment, religious institutions). For example, according to Mickay (2003), members of a church congregation link people with similar values and may provide each other with instrumental or financial assistance in dealing with problems. Furthermore, employment and religious memberships build social capital that may serve as a protective buffer against adversities. Although the offending youth is not actively participating within this system of the mother, the single mother may find strength in these affiliations to help support herself and her offending youth.

The macrosystem

The macrosystem consists of cultural values, laws, customs and resources. Here, for example, the DCS reasoned that historically, factors like poverty and underdevelopment are key factors in understanding increasing crime levels. However, the DCS argues, that poverty alone does not directly lead to higher crime levels, but together with a range of other social, political and cultural factors, it and the social wealth differential contributes to conditions conducive for an increase in crime and the growth of criminal syndicates and gangs (Department of Correctional Services, 2005).

The chronosystem

Lastly, the chronosystem states that the environment is not a static force that affects individuals in a uniform way. Rather, it is ever-changing. As an illustration, the interplay of forces within the family is dynamic and ever-changing, as evident in Oh and Chang's (2014) argument that resilience is not a fixed condition that a family holds throughout its life stages because of the contextual variations, nature of stressors, and the combination of family's vulnerabilities and resources at the times of hardships and will thus affect how resilient a family is. Furthermore, what may be a stressor to one family may not be a stressor to another or as Bhana and Bachoo (2011) noted that risk is a subjective matter, this means if a family perceives something as a major stressor, it should be seen as a risk factor for that family.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecology model was successfully integrated and influenced the development of the Juvenile Counselling and Assessment Program (JCAP) which was developed in the US with the goal to intervene in the lives of youths before the patterns of crime are ingrained, and before these youths develop a lifestyle of criminality (Glaser et al., 2005). Although the latter used a quantitative design and is closely linked to the current study's aim in understanding parent's with offending youth, it showed how Bronfrenbrenner's theory can be applied successfully. For South African examples using Ecological Systems Theory view Meinck, Cluver and Boyes (2015) study on the risk and protective factors for physical and emotional abuse and victimisation amongst vulnerable children in South Africa and Routledge’s (2005) study on substance abuse and psychological well-being of South African adolescents in an urban context. In the following section I will review the literature on single mothers from a local and global perspective.

Single motherhood

"We know the statistics - children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of school and twenty times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioural problems, or run away from home, or become teenage parents themselves." Barak Obama, former president of the United States of America (quoted in Biblarz & Stacey, 2010, p. 3).

These sentiments are echoed in numerous research studies, see for example Antenol and Bedard (2007), Bodenhorn, (2007), Parks (2013) and Simmons, Steinberg, Frick and Cauffman (2018). Such sentiments bring into question the gender of parents, and as such, how the gender of single parents matters. In answering this question and in contrast to the above statement, Bilblarz and Stacey's (2010) analysis of the literature on how the gender of parents matters provided some answers: single-parent studies cited did not support popular claims that fathers are better able to keep boys in line or command authority and respect from their children. Surprisingly, studies cited by Biblarz and Stacey (2010) revealed that more often single mothers achieved greater control, in part through more rule setting and supervision. They furthermore found that, counter intuitively, findings contradicted stereotypical claims that masculinity better equips fathers to inhibit antisocial behaviour in children. Several studies cited found that single mothers suppressed problematic behaviour and delinquency more successfully than single fathers and reported that children in single-father families abused alcohol, marijuana, and other substances more than children with single mothers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). Goldberg's (2014) South African study conducted in Cape Town, which explored family instability and pathways to adulthood, found that neither of the parental sexes matter, but revealed that the absence of a mother or father per se underscores the benefit of stable living arrangements for youth, even in non-intact household structures.

Furthermore, if in Obama's observations above, he was referring to the absence of a father in the custom of a marriage or the so-called nuclear family, consisting of a father, mother and children, then Roman's (2016) study on maternal parenting in single and two-parent families in South Africa would not have supported it, because it found no significant difference between single and married mothers' parenting practices, which suggests that marital status, and arguably the presence of a father, does not account for better parenting practices. In agreement is Parks' (2013) study on the effects of family structure and juvenile delinquency and showed that family structure does not matter as long as families exhibit signs of parental monitoring (i.e. more supervision by parent/s), involvement (i.e. participation in conventional acts that leave little time for crime or deviant behaviour), and attachment (i.e. affectionate ties with parent/s that make committing crime undesirable). Monama (2007) argues that to define a family as functional does not mean that it has to have a particular structure and that single parent families are capable of being cohesive, warm, supportive, and favourable to the development of children and children can grow into happy, responsible and emotionally healthy children. From a feminist perspective, as cited in Smith (1998), feminists would argue that Obama's sentiments were borne from androcentric social science which is to a greater or lesser extent conducted by men, on men and for men, and that social scientific knowledge ignores women's concerns, sees them as synonymous to men's concerns, represents women as passive objects, and/or is openly prejudicial against women.

What are the statistics or extent of single motherhood from a local point of view? Statistics South Africa (2018) describes a female single-headed household as a household with at least one child under the age of 18, headed (or momentarily headed) by a single female, without a partner. For the purpose of the present study this definition of single motherhood will have to suffice, simply to prove the extent or the percentage of single mothers in SA, because no statistics are available for single mothers or fathers of youth between the ages of 15-30 years of age. According to Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey (2018) there were about 3.9 million single-headed households with children in South Africa and 43,1% of children lived with their mothers. To obtain a simpler idea of the extent of single-mother households, Sylvester (2010) conducted an informal survey of one school's grade 8 to 10 boys in the Western Cape for his study on the experiences of adolescents boys with absent fathers and found that out of 432 scholars 219, that is 50%, grew up in female headed households without a father in their lives.

The factors leading to single-mother households are manifold and diverse, such as HIV/AIDS and mortality, divorce, estrangement, desertion, children born out of wedlock and the decline in marriage. Luker (1996, as cited in Edin, 2000) expanded on the decline in marriage and added four generally focused areas: women's economic independence; the inability of men to obtain stable family-wage employment; the role that welfare has played in creating marriage disincentives among the poor; and what may be called cultural factors, such as the stalled revolution in gender roles, for example men's refusal to share household chores and childcare tasks (Edin, 2000).

From an African cultural perspective, for instance, Amoateng (2014) explained lobola (bridewealth), as an age-old African custom that entailed a gift in the form of cattle from the bridegroom's family to the bride's family, symbolising the commitment of the two families to the marriage, a fact that ensured longevity of the marriage and a symbol of appreciation by the bridegroom's family for having nurtured their son's future wife. However, this custom has been commercialised to the extent where potential husbands are increasingly asked to pay large sums of money instead of cattle, forcing some potential married partners to live together outside the sanctuary of marriage (Amoateng, 2014; see also Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011; Mavungu, Thomas- de Boor & Mphaka, 2013). This type of arrangement, however, can lead to children born out of wedlock and the possible desertion by the father. In the following subsections I take a closer look at some of these factors or reasons and how they may intentionally or unintentionally lead to single motherhood.

Reasons for single-headed households

Marriage and divorce

Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane and Rama’s (2014) endeavours to provide a description of the nature and structure of families and households in SA indicated that the proportion of never-married women has increased slightly from 54 percent in 1996 to 55 percent in 2001 and that more than half of women in childbearing are single. Furthermore, recent decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the proportion of all births that occur out of wedlock, from 5 percent in 1960 to 27 per cent in 1989 and the consequent paralleled delays in the age of first marriage and increase in female labour force participation (Amoateng et al., 2014). It goes without saying that these high levels of non-marital fertility, according to Goldberg (2014), lead to a situation in which many children grow up never co-residing with a biological father, and this inevitably affected youth's experiences of family. Hunter (2006) provided some insight in why marriage is not attainable for many and argued that marriage has always been a process and not an event and the task of setting up an independent household, is not achievable for many South Africans today in an era of chronic unemployment (e.g. inability to pay lobola and to fulfil the provider role).

In my opinion and experience with the many single mothers I am familiar with, whether they are acquaintances or colleagues, it would appear that a woman with children has a lesser chance of getting married than those without any children. This, however, may differ among cultures, sexual orientations and even at times by choice not to get married. Here, for example, Mbanefo (2013) compared the levels and correlates of single mothers in southern Africa to three other African countries (Lesotho, Botswana and Zimbabwe) using their demographic and health survey data and how these differences play a role, such as the age of the mother, how many children she has and her sense of independence. In this study, for example, my opinions were proven to be wrong, because it showed that the more children a woman had, the better her chances were that she would be married. It concluded that the prevalence of single motherhood is high in southern Africa and the rapid spread of single motherhood both reflects and reinforces the declining significance of marriage as a family status and the context for bearing and raising children, which may have negative implications for children and the mothers alike (Mbanefo, 2013).

Apart from the decline in marriages, in 2015, 14 045 (55,6%) of the 25 260 divorces had children younger than 18 years, affecting about 22 966 children (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The Department of Social Welfare (1997) argued that children of divorced and divorcing parents are a vulnerable group and require special attention, which may be mainly due to the adaptation to changes in the family structure and support systems available. According to Cheeseman et al. (2011), one factor in adaptation was time, with research demonstrating mixed results. They found that some people benefited from the experience; others experienced temporary psychological distress and returned to similar functioning shortly thereafter; yet some experienced on-going distress without recovery.

On divorce or separation Jekeliek (1998, as cited in Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011) argued that having both parents who are married to each other reflects nothing about the quality of the parental relationships or children's relationships with parents, and when the negative consequences through continuous parental conflict outweighs the benefits of an intact family structure, everyone fare better should a divorce or separation occur. This is consistent with Berk’s (2013) argument that marriage to the child's biological father benefits children only when the father is a reliable source of economic and emotional support, compared to when a mother pairs up with an antisocial father, her child is at far greater risk for conduct problems than if she had reared the child alone.

When the separation occurs due to the father's incarceration, Loudt's et al. (2017) study on the effects of incarcerated fathers on their adolescent children found that incarceration elevates the risk of divorce and separation and discourages marriage and family formation, both directly, by making it more difficult for men to live with their spouses and children after release, and indirectly, by reducing their employment prospects and earning capacity. In a similar study to explore the long-lasting effects on boys internalising problems over the life course because of parental incarceration conducted by Murray and Farrington (2008) found that in the context of parental divorce, stressors other than parent-child separation (including inter-parental conflict, strained relationships between children and custodial parents, and a decline in the standard of living) appear to have more impact on children's adjustment than separation. On this premise one can perhaps argue that the offending behaviour the youth display may be the youth's adjustment strategy to cope with the stressors. These microsystem effects of decline in marriage, children born out of wedlock and divorce, lead to children living with one parent and predominantly the custodian parent is the mother. The permanence of certain events in life (e.g. chronic illness or death) can have long-lasting effects that cannot be modified to ease the consequences it brings about, but for those who suffer it, it can become a wake-up call, heightening and diverting attention to what matters and foster resilience against the odds (Walsh, 2003).

HIV/AIDS and mortality

The total number of people living with HIV/AIDS is estimated at approximately 7,8 million in 2020 and an estimated 18,7% of the adult population aged 15-49 years is HIV positive from an estimated mid-year population of 59,62 million South Africans (Statistics South Africa, 2020). HIV/AIDS was the second leading underlying natural cause of death for males and sixth leading cause of death for females in 2015, accounting for 11275 (4.7%) and 10545 (4,9%) reported deaths respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The 2020 statistics, however, indicated that the number of AIDS related deaths declined consistently since 2007 from 272 093 to 79 625 in 2020 as access to antiretroviral treatment and care became available and estimated life expectancy at birth at 68,5 years for females and 62,5 years for males.

Amoateng (2014) and Mbanefo (2013) found that the slight increase in the number of widowed women may be due the increase in mortality among adult males probably arising from HIV/AIDS, leaving single mothers to care for children in the absence of their fathers. Hunter (2007, as cited in Rotich et al., 2013) attributes socio-economic inequalities for the suffering of many South Africans and argued that poor housing and lack of employment opportunities generate socio-cultural problems, which ultimately lead to prevalence of HIV/AIDS and heighten vulnerability, especially among women. Kretzschmar, Bentley and Van Niekerk (2009) added feminised poverty (i.e. more poor women than men which influences women’s ability to negotiate safer sexual practices), the social disempowerment of women (i.e. the pervasive male dominance in all aspects of a woman’s life), socio-economic issues (e.g. the migrant mobility that led to men contracting the virus elsewhere and returning home to spread it) and physiology (i.e. the vagina has a greater area than a penis and is thus more susceptible to the virus) that contribute to high rates of infection among women. Research shows that, even when more women than men are infected, the mortality and morbidity rate of HIV/AIDS is higher for men, thus increasing the number of single mothers surviving to care for their children. A simple reason for this may be due to the fact that women seek medical attention more frequently than men.

Today, many people live with HIV, as revealed by the numerical data provided by statistics, but in many instances, as with any traumatic event, the severity and its effects can be measured on how those who are experiencing and living with it, handle and cope with it. Burchardt (2010) offered a good presentation of the autobiographical accounts of three HIV-positive South African women in Cape Town and found that after the initial shock, people are challenged to adapt to their new physiological condition and its social implications on multiple levels. Disclosure to family and friends, securing economic livelihoods, medication, and coming to terms with the infection with intimate partnerships are just some of the areas in which uncertainties arise. Changing one's life seems inevitable and the sociological question is: in what forms do these changes play themselves out? One way may be the dissolution of a marriage or intimate relationship, many times due to ignorance containing the virus; fear of contracting it; the reasons for how the infected person got infected and stigma.

Apart from the mortality brought about from HIV/AIDS related illnesses or co-morbidity, death by other means as was evident in the present study, created a permanent and irreversible vacuum in the family that is accompanied by much despair and feelings of hopelessness. One can reasonably argue that this permanent state of departure remove the option of reconciliation, as may otherwise be the case when the absence was due to desertion, incarceration or the inability to support the family financially. These microsystem occurrences, such as being diagnosed HIV-positive or the death of a partner, and depending on amongst others, the support structures available, the meanings given to it and resilience can lead to diverging trajectories that are linked to the reproduction and re-shaping of social domains (Bulhardt, 2010). For example, in the present study one participant acknowledged that after the death of her husband she found relief abusing alcohol and became a self-professed alcoholic, while some enjoyed the independence which I discussed next.

Independent women

When women have their own resources or earnings and outnumber men concerning income, a large segment of the female-population invariably favours out-of-wedlock childbearing (Bodenhorn, 2007). Cancian and Reed (2009) are in agreement and reason that women's decisions to have children outside of marriage may be reflecting their increasing ability to support a family independently, or the short supply of men with family-supporting earnings. The authors argue that contemporary women are less likely to have a husband to contribute economic support, but they are also less likely to have a large family to support. Paralleled to this, is Biblarz and Stacey (2010) who contend that when socioeconomic attributes were held constant, more single mothers than fathers were skilled at developmental styles of parenting and actively involved with their children, and proved to do just as well as their married counterparts. Considering the above arguments, one may come to the conclusion that when single mothers are financially independent, being a single parent does not seem like such a daunting task.

This independency, or modernisation, according to Kalule-Sabiti, Palamuleni, Makiwani and Amoateng (2007) has been a recognisable trend in respect of improvement in women's status through education, urbanisation and employment, choice of marriage, parenting, divorce, dissolution of marriage and casual unions. That being said, according to Parry (2014), even when none of the women in her group believed that they had been afforded the opportunity to choose the role of breadwinner, but have taken the responsibility due to circumstances of necessity, they felt that the role had improved their lives and gave them a sense of independence and empowerment. This absence of choice force many single mothers to be resilient and to adapt to their new status of being single. The other side of the coin, however, at least according to Demuth and Brown (2004, as cited in Parks, 2013) may be why single-father families are the fastest growing family structure and the modernisation of women may arguably be one of the reasons for this tendency, probably due to urbanisation and economic freedom outside the home, historically accustomed to men.

It is on this premise that Cancian and Reed (2009), argued that women's increasing economic independence may be both a cause and a consequence of greater marital instability. Another important factor to consider is that many women grew up in the absence of their own fathers and when this cycle is repeated with their own children, they are not much distressed by it and substantiate this by arguing that they themselves "turned out fine" without their fathers present and so will their own children.

Absent fathers

The literature offers many reasons why fathers are absent from their families, such as abandonment, divorce, death, migration and incarceration, to name a few. Although there are racial differences on family matters concerning fathers, as explained for example in Franklin, Makiwane and Makusha's (2014) study on male attitudes towards children, fatherhood and childrearing, the current study limits itself to representing the effects of absent fathers on single motherhood and the possible effects this may have had on the offending behaviour of their youth, and not so much on the racial differences that may exist.

The mistrust in men and their inability to adequately provide for their families spreading from past experience by women may be one of the reasons why single mothers prefer the fathers to be absent. For instance, Edin's (2000) study which included 292 low-income single mothers in three US cities showed that some mothers have learned the dangers of economic dependence upon men through the pain and financial devastation that accompanied a separation or divorce, and the profound disappointment at their baby's father's reaction to the pregnancy and their failure to live up to the economic and emotional commitments of fatherhood; this ultimately led to these mothers' attitude of "I can do bad or better by myself". Likewise, Parry’s (2014) study on female breadwinners in South Africa, where her female participants took over the role as breadwinners within their families, the balance of power in relation to the traditional, patriarchal home model and the instances of violence and manipulation often resulted in the dissolution of relationships with intimate partners and the subsequent wariness of these women to form new unions (Parry, 2014). In contrast, Konami and Kombi's (2010) study on absent fathers in Kenya, offer nagging and assertive wives who were never taught to respect their husbands and making the fathers feel inadequate in their roles as heads of their families, alcohol and drug use and unemployment as reasons for why fathers were absent.

The traditional role of men as providers and breadwinners have been challenged by the rising rate of high unemployment and numerous other social and economic factors so that a number of men cannot play the traditional role expected of them. This influences males' attitudes towards participation in childrearing, affects their masculinity, and these lead to discouragement in fulfilling their roles as fathers and the subsequent crises of fatherhood in South Africa (Franklin et al., 2014). This crisis is directly linked to the conceptions of fatherhood and intricately connected to the broader historical, social, economic and cultural settings within the SA context (Mavungu et al., 2004).

In agreement with this, Mavunga (2013) points out the provider expectations and father involvement in Gauteng, South Africa, and the prevalent construction of fathers as mainly agents for financial and material support of children and families that precludes the emergence of alternative fatherhood roles, the subsequent absence of fathers from their families and the cycle of fatherless families. This cycle of growing up without a father I can relate to as I find myself absent from my daughter’s life and the financial obligations and provision of material needs provide her the only knowledge that she has a father. On this cyclic behaviour, Rashberry (2005, cited in Sylvester, 2010) observed that fatherless boys ended up becoming ineligible as husbands though not less likely to become fathers and that their male children, too, fall into the pattern that renders them ineligible as husbands. Consistent with this pattern is that absent fathers cannot model what a father should be like to children, leading to attitudes of ‘I cannot teach what I was not taught’ or the reluctance of fathers to take on a fatherhood role which has not been demonstrated to them (Muvangu et al., 2004).

When one considers that the majority of the South African correctional centre population are male and thus absent from their families; one wonders how many of them are fathers? On this issue Londt et al. (2017) revealed, spreading from their study at one correctional centre in the Western Cape that incarcerated fathers regretted being isolated from their families; concerned about the financial difficulties their families had been subjected to, and their exclusion from being involved in their children’s development. Among the findings indicated that some of these fathers, however, were absent fathers prior to their incarceration and the causal factors of growing up without their own fathers, their constant re-offending and the loss of relationships were identified for their absenteeism. The incarceration of the father/husband have an array of direct effects on mothers/wives, as contended by Morris (1965, cited in Murray and Farrington, 2008) and the most common problems identified by mothers/wives were the deterioration in their financial situation, in their work, in their present attitude to marriage and future plans, social activities and in relationships with friends and neighbours. These multiple stresses might, in turn, affect the children in the single mother household, such as stigma, bullying, depression, anxiety and criminality among youth.

It is clear from the above discussion that the absence of fathers has a major impact in basically all spheres of the mothers’ lives and an impact on the development of the children he leaves behind. It also become apparent that at times people do not have control over all aspects of their lives, for example the wide-ranging macro system influences from cultural and political factors which will be explored next.

Political factors.

After 25 years of democracy the words of Foster and Louw-Potgieter (1991) still appear to be true when they contended that racism is seen as an ideological construction which facilitated the economic exploitation of categories of people defined in racial terms. Ideology constitutes the dominant sets of ideas in a society and is an instrumental factor in producing perceptions of social reality. This social reality was not more evident than with the segregation of different races within South Africa during the apartheid era that has still not be rectified leaving the poor to remain on the periphery of the country, suffering economic inequality and living in disorganised geographical areas lacking adequate infrastructure and services.

If one consider the young democracy of SA, and although the majority of South Africans will attend to the following, that from the year 1994 (SA's first democratic national election that set the stage for freedom from apartheid and colonisation) which may not have had any or much significance on the majority of South Africans, except for the benefits they expected to come with it, such as housing, employment and non-discrimination to name a few) to the year 2020, nearly 26 years later, most South Africans still await these benefits. Needless to say many South Africans are very frustrated with the lack of or slow pace of improvements and display this in the many public riots and demonstrations that have occurred over the years. Amidst these reactions from citizens, the South African government deserves credit for the progress made in the efforts to alleviate poverty which has achieved, amongst others, free primary healthcare; no-fee paying schools; old age, disability and child support grants; housing; and free basic services (water, electricity and sanitation) to poor households (Hurlbut, 2018). To understand this delay or progress made by the democratically elected government to fulfil the promises made, one has to understand the past in order to come to grips with the present. Although the scope or range of this study does not allow for extensive elaboration, it will provide literature from this past history of SA from studies that focused on how these political factors impacted the formation and its effects on single motherhood.

In his study on criminal gangs on the Cape Flats and the state concerning the power dynamics at play between them, Lambrechts (2012) focused on one such an area in the Western Cape that was created by the forced removal of coloured communities under the Group Areas Act by the apartheid regime during the 1960s and 1970s. This forced relocation tore many families apart, created large-scale unemployment and poverty and the formation of criminal gangs; all of this still evident today. This removal to the outskirts, according to Rotich et al. (2015) led to migrant labour which created long periods of absence from home and this explains the prevalence of many marginalised and separated homes in apartheid and post-apartheid SA that ruptured the basic constitution of the family, as children and their parents lived at odds. Many of the fathers, who left their homes in search of employment opportunities, left the mother and children behind and at times started a new family elsewhere and never returned home leading to the prevalence of single mother households. These authors furthermore argue that the persistence of socio-economic inequalities, the lack of jobs, and the creation of further cramped spaces and informal settlements are a forerunner of loose and broken families (Rotich et al., 2015) and most often than not, single mothers have to face these challenges.

The progress made through government efforts over the past 25 years alleviated many of the ills left behind by apartheid, like the social grants paid to many recipients are their only source of income, thousands of houses were build and access to free schooling made possible (for a more detailed report on the progress made see Stats SA General Household Survey, 2020). These efforts were forced especially to the fore when SA and the rest of the world found itself in crises due the outbreak of a virus that brought the whole world to a standstill and economically to its knees. On March 5th, 2020, South Africa recorded its first case of Covid-19 (a novice corona virus which allegedly emanated in China). By the 11th of March, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a global pandemic and South Africa had her first Covid-19 related death on the 27th of March (Stats SA Mid-year population estimates 2020) expecting thousands more deaths to follow as was already happening around the world. The scope of this study does not allow for elaborations on Covid 19, but apart from the deaths which occurred, the world went into a 'lockdown' and banned all travelling between countries. South African President Cyril Ramamphosa announced numerous restriction measures to curb the spread of the virus, which included amongst others that most companies closed their doors for business and people were requested to stay at home; no travelling was allowed locally between provinces and globally; a ban on the sale of non-essential products, including tobacco products and alcohol; and the closure of all schools. It was interesting to note how circumstances can play a role in people's lives. Like millions of South Africans, I felt like a criminal, because to support my tobacco addiction, I had to buy cigarettes on the black market, costing thousands of rands and thus further damaging the economy and enriching criminals. Another way to curb the spread of the virus was the washing of hands, wearing of face masks and keeping physical distance from other people. To comply with these requirements the cramped living conditions, lack of running water and sanitation and poverty of the majority of South Africans were highlighted once again and government had to step up to the plate in an unprecedented manner. They did that in many ways, but with great economic cost and debt to the country in which corruption by government officials played a major role.

The question that this study struggles with is why it would take a pandemic to get the attention of government when people have been living in poverty for decades when such large- scale and immediate action could have changed their lives for the better with billions in funds saved from buying hand sanitizers, protective gear and loss to the economy. Such funds can make the difference in the lives of many single mothers and their children; assist fathers to be present when their provider role is the reason for their absence; and invest in disadvantaged and poor neighbourhoods to eradicate poverty.

Cultural factors

Cultural beliefs and traditional practices exert powerful influences on those who adhere to them and are ingrained in the very nature of their beings and thus very difficult to alter or eradicate. One such a cultural practice is the patriarchal system followed by many in

SA. The issue of culture and patriarchy is pivotal to the challenges faced by women (Kretzschmar et al., 2009). On this Kimani and Kombo's (2010) study participants contended that culture was to blame in that it empowered men to be domineering figures in their families and when this position was not tenable, he (the father) would leave to a place where he can reclaim his domineering status. Furthermore, respondents in this study felt that some men were not fully socialised to handle the intricacies of a wife or prepared to hold the responsibilities in marriage.

Patriarchal notions support another custom relating to household chores and childcare which used to be the sole domain of women as mothers and wives, but this has been challenged by the independence created by women entering the labour market and has been met with resistance from some men, resulting in friction in and dissolution of relationships. On this premise Mavungu et al. (2013) contended that fatherhood is socially constructed and predominant concepts of paternal involvement change over time, although most of their participants held the patriarchal and provider role and traditional concept of men and rejected care-giving activities as forming part of fatherhood as this, according to them, was preserve of females. It goes without saying that these gender notions are deep-rooted in culture and tradition and exert powerful effects that may make men as fathers either to take responsibility and be the best fathers they can be or may bring their masculinity into question and make them abandon their fatherly duties leaving lone mothers and children to care for themselves.

In line with the above is the value cultural beliefs carry and the capacity they have to be beneficial or not to those who follow them. For example, regarding support from the husband after the dissolution of a marriage, according to Myers (1999), under customary law, the husband is not required to pay maintenance for his ex-wife, the traditional justification being that lobolo, which had been already paid on marriage, should theoretically still be available as security for the wife, to be used in case of divorce. In such a situation, nevertheless, the single mother is not only left without support from the father, although the tradition role of the rest of her family must not be dismissed as sufficient support, the question of the children growing-up without a father can be detrimental and core to this study.

Another important issue in this study and linked to the offending behaviour of the youth and neighbourhoods is the culture of violence or criminal activities brought about through the activities carried out through gangsterism. Gangsterism, according to participants from Lambrechts' (2012) study, is a culture that many are born into; a culture that glamorises and tolerates it and will be part of the communities for a very long time. The author continue by stating that gangsterism is embedded in the community and part of the local culture and one of the main reasons why initiatives to eradicate it have been unsuccessful. This section reviewed the literature on the possible reasons and factors leading to single motherhood and numerous studies indicated that single motherhood can be a daunting task on its own, plagued by many impediments. In the next section I will explore offending youth behaviour, and how it may or may not be an addition to the obstacles some single mothers have to deal with.

Offending youth

The DCS defines offending youth as young offenders, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and under the category of people who, even after serving a lengthy sentence, still have the chance of making something of their lives. That being said, according to the White Paper on Corrections (2005) there is an alarming trend of young offenders with 42% under the age of 25 years in correctional centres. The DCS is mindful of the fact that it is not only those from dysfunctional families that engage in acts of criminality and it contends that categories of offenders coming from affluent families, and those committing criminal acts whilst in highly paid employment positions, attest to this. However, a sober analysis of the composition of South Africa's offender population, drives home the reality that the vast majority of offenders come from communities and families plagued by poverty, hunger, unemployment, absent figures of authority and care, a distorted value system, and general hardship- some of the very factors directly associated with (dysfunctional) families and communities. (Department of Correctional Services, 2005).

At this point it should be mentioned that studies (Londt et al., 2017; Murray & Farrington, 2008) conducted on correctional or detention systems, such as the DCS, concluded that children of incarcerated parents display many negative emotions and may be directly link to the limited access to their incarcerated parent, long-distance travel to correctional centres, unpleasant searching procedures, restrictive visiting environments, and sometimes prohibiting physical contact. Thus, the system that is responsible in correcting or altering offending or misbehaviour may be to some extent playing a part in creating the very same behaviour it attempts to rectify. Although no contact was made with offending youth in the present study, these sentiments were shared by almost all the participants.

These risk factors are not unique to the South African context as attested by Glaser et al. (2005) US study which confirmed that the US justice system confronts negative influences on youths, for example the media, violence, gangs, poverty and drugs, which produces a growing number of more serious and violent youth offenders. A study conducted by Young et al. (2014) in the United Kingdom (UK) on the role of the family in the formation of gangs, gang-related criminality and desistance, found that the connection between the troubled/dysfunctional family, serious youth violence and the gang is made more explicit by commentators who argue that youngsters are attracted to gangs because they seek a surrogate family to fulfil their emotional need, with the gang leader as the "father". This search for a surrogate father or model figure I feel spread from the absence of the youth's own father and I will subsequently discuss the impact this absence may have and whether the presence of a father is as beneficial as expected.

Father's impact

I anticipate that the absence of the youths' fathers (for example due to incarceration, death or desertion) and/or the fathers' characteristics (for example violent and harsh parenting style or alcohol/drug abuse) and their consequent departure leading to single motherhood, could have influenced their youths' offending behaviour.

On this premise, Simmons et al.'s (2018) US study on the differential effects of absent and harsh fathers on youth offending behaviour added to the growing literature that document that fathers (or their absence), have a unique influence on youth behaviour that is separate from mothers. A South African study cited in Kimani and Kombo (2010) put frightening percentages to the effects of father absence on boys and established that 63% of youth suicides; 90% of all homeless and run-away children; 85% of all children that exhibit behavioural disorders; 80% of rapist motivated with displaced anger; 71% of all high school dropouts; 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centres; 70% of youth offenders in state operated institutions and 85% of all youths sitting in correctional centres are from fatherless homes.

The reasons for a father’s absence can at times be more influential than the absence itself. For example, forced separations, such a father’s incarceration, can disrupt parent-child bonds, harming children’s social and emotional wellbeing and may even be more detrimental than divorce (Londt et al., 2017). Children of incarcerated fathers are at higher risk of internalising problems and to display anti-social behaviour throughout their lives, coupled with other stressful experiences that often follows from the incarceration, such as economic loss, school performance, stigma, neighbourhood mobility and strained parenting by the remaining parent, to name a few (Murray & Farrington, 2008).

It is on the basis of such findings that politicians, religious organisations and communities are making efforts through father-focused initiatives, such as the "Fatherhood Project", launched in 2003 in South Africa, as a form of action research to assemble available information and generate new knowledge about men as fathers, with the intention of trying to increase men's care and protection of children (Richter & Morrel, 2006). Franklin et al. (2014) found that most fathers want to be part of their children's lives, view having a loving relationship with their children as desirous and important and to be in partnership with the mother and co-reside with the family. Mavungu et al. (2013) found that fatherhood can assume metaphysical meaning, particularly in African cultures, for which the presence of a father is regarded as key to a child’s identity and prosperity and a connecting force to sources of success, good fortune and access to the ancestors. In both the above studies economic obligations or the inability to fill the provider role led to fathers being absent from their children. It is on this issue that Muvango et al. (2013) reasons that for efforts to be successful it is essential that social policy and community interventions promote and assist multidimensional fatherhood so as to offer fathers with alternative roles which can be carried out even in situations of unemployment and poverty if society is going to succeed to keep them involved in their children's lives.

Nevertheless, on attempts like these, Simmons et al. (2018) argued that it would be irresponsible to encourage fathers to be involved without acknowledging the importance of the quality of the father-child relationship. Based on their findings, present fathers who are hostile, harsh and cold pose a greater risk for their youth (e.g. leading to more offending behaviour and substance use) than youth with absent fathers (Simmons et al., 2018). Simply put, fathers should not have access to their children if this will be detrimental to their children (Mavungu et al., 2013).

Franklin et al. (2014) are in agreement and argue that racial diversity need to be considered as results showed that some fathers viewed children as interfering with their freedom, are a financial burden and restrict employment and career choices with different degrees across racial groups. It may be on such views that Patterson, DeBaryshe and Ramsay's (1989, as cited in Glaser et al., 2005) found that the antecedents of antisocial behaviour exist in the homes of youths who reoffend and that their parents continue to maintain inappropriate discipline, diminished positive parent-child interaction, and poor parental monitoring. Furthermore, a New Zealand study found that it was not in the interest of the child to be in touch with a biological father if he was a drug user, engaged in crime or was himself living out the consequences of a troubled childhood (Mackay, 2003). Likewise, Maderthaner (2005) argued that parents teach their children values, morals and social skills and that criminal parents will teach their offspring *their* morals and values according to their criminal frame of reference; children in turn will identify with their parents and emulate their behaviour and these may become accepted values and forms of behaviour.

In agreement with Simmons et al. (2018) that fathers have a unique impact on their children, Goldberg (2014) found that the relationship between family instability and young people's life paths were gendered and thus the absence of a father may be more salient for the life paths of young men. Evidence of negative consequences of father absence on virtually every aspect of children lives (particularly boys) exist in abundance in the literature, such as the absence of same-sex role model teaching appropriate behaviours, negative self-image and poor self-esteem, at-risk behaviours and antisocial tendencies (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2014; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Sylvester, 2010). To highlight this gendered path, Samara's (2005) study of offending youth showed that the majority of her male youth participants intentionally disregarded their single mother's discipline and reprimand efforts, and they (the youth) substantiated their argument for doing so to the fact that she (the mother) is a woman and emotionally soft. This gendered attitude may be troublesome in the sense that most lone parent households are headed by females. Some of Sylvester's (2010) participants felt that their mothers blame them for their fathers' absence and this led to different negative emotions, such as anger, blame, sadness, frustration and guilt, not only towards her, but their fathers as well.

The influence of present or absent fathers on their children is immense as evident in the numerous studies conducted and mentioned throughout this study and have an impact on most, if not all, spheres of the youth's existence. In an effort to get a glimpse of the complex issues offending youth have to face within their ecological systems I will present some mediating factors, also referred to as risk factors, in the next five subsections.

Mediating factors leading to youth offending behaviour

On this last issue on offending youth, I anticipated that poverty, impoverished neighbourhoods, educational level and unemployment, drug/alcohol abuse and gansterism are contributing factors leading to youth offending behaviour. In the following sections I will indicate how the above high-risk factors are interrelated and interdependent on each other and how it may directly influence and contribute to the youth's offending behaviour. This discussion is on par with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and will substantiate how one system's successes or failures affect and interact with other systems that the youth partakes in.

Poverty:

Poverty experienced within a household is not a burden carried by parents alone when other family members are present, as the effects are felt by all family members. This statement is expanded on by the DCS on the relationship between poverty and trouble with the law. The DCS states that the desperate socio-economic circumstances of the majority in South Africa in contrast to the wealth and opulence of the minority generates intense feelings of unfairness and resentment that could lead to crime. And at the same time, socio-economic hardship can itself drive citizens to crime in order to care for their families (Department of Correctional Services, 2005).

Youth offenders, as part of the family unit, may likewise commit crime to assist their families to overcome financial burdens and difficulties. For example, Anderson (1999, as cited in Young et al., 2014) found that the economic fragility of some families meant that the parent/s were often in a double bind, whilst disapproving of their children's gang affiliation or criminal activities, accepting much-needed money and goods without asking too many questions about its origins; or as one of Mdakane's (2016, p. 133) participants voiced it: "An empty stomach takes no order", implying that poverty can be a powerful motivator to commit crime. In the present study when one of the participants were asked whether she would accept any type of aid that spread from her son’s criminal activities, she immediately felt insulted by such a suggestion, expressing it with one word: *Ekskuus! (Excuse me!).*

This acceptance of goods or money, however, may give the youth offender the idea that his/her behaviour may be viewed as wrong by his/her parent/s, but needed and thus allowed, due to the lack of necessities to survive or other means to attain it, and he/she may feel that the offending/criminal behaviour is acceptable because he/she is contributing to the family. Rotich et al. (2013) maintained that linked to the poor economic standards among the marginalised South African youth, some have used crime, to express both their willful belief or attitude that they are poor because others have excluded them, and by means of gangsterism and theft achieve economic ends.

The poverty experienced by the family unit of which the offending youth may be apart, is in many instances not unique to his/her family and that brings me to the next risk factor, which is impoverished neighbourhoods.

Impoverished neighbourhoods

Considering impoverished neighbourhoods and similar to the areas identified for the current study, Brown-Luthango's et al. (2016) study showed that the increase in crime and violence is strongly linked to the proliferation in the number of shebeens (informal alcohol outlets) and drug dens. These social organisations, which include organised criminal groups fill the void left by the state according to Lambrechts (2012) and provides a separate set of survival strategies to communities as a result of social control lost by the state, because it fails to provide answers to the concerns and demands of citizens.

Such conditions are not confined to the SA context. For instance, supporting US findings, British studies have found gang membership to be prevalent amongst young people living in deprived neighbourhoods and that the social structural conditions (such as demographic change, deindustrialization, lack of employment opportunities, poverty and racism) are as influential, if not more so, than family structure (Young et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it is in many instances the family structure, which is single parents, and more specifically single mothers, which cannot afford to live in more affluent neighbourhoods and have to deal with the unsafe conditions on a daily basis. On this premise, Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2014) state that poor financial resources are responsible for single-mother households being located in small residences, backyard dwellings, and substandard housing and in areas of towns with increased violence, lower quality schools and loss of familiar and developed community support. These authors further argued that higher levels of physical disorder (e.g., litter, graffiti, and poorly maintained houses) are indications that no one cares what goes on in the neighbourhood and this might give the impression that criminal or delinquent acts can be committed without the perpertrators being caught. This is supported by Janssen, Weerman and Eichelsheim's (2016) study on parenting as a protective factor against criminogenic settings and unstructured socializing in disordered areas who contended that physical disorder may act as a "cue" that rule breaking and deviance may be regarded as acceptable in a particular area. Furthermore, Laher et al. (2019) argue that socio-ecological conditions, such as low economic status, racial or ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility, are argued to disrupt a community's formal and informal social control processes and, therefore, facilitate crime and violence.

When one considers the communities that make up these neighbourhoods and their constant struggles with poor infrastructure, unemployment, racism and lack of basic services, one may come to realise that it leaves little time for these people to form cohesive relationships with one another as a community. On such issues, Jackson's (2016) US study on fear of crime amongst African Americans in high crime neighbourhoods established that neighbourhoods characterized by concentrated poverty, residential mobility, and heterogeneous populations tend to feature weaker neighbourhood communities which in turn increased crime and fear. To overcome these criminogenic elements, her participants in their respective neighbourhoods created ritualized patterns (i.e., their activities became repetitious and routinized) to prevent victimisation by, for example, avoiding dangerous areas or being outdoors at night (Jackson, 2016). This avoidance of dangerous areas and fear of being victimised, however, may be what Moyer (2001, as cited in Maderthaner, 2005) proposed, that due to the prevalent instability in the neighbourhood, communities developed criminal and conflict/violent subcultures, where the occurrence of gangs and criminal activity become commonplace and where criminal conduct is an excepted means to achieve success.

Although these efforts to avoid victimisation of members of the community should not be viewed as if these communities are condoning such activities, but they may feel helpless and may have lost hope that things will change for the better, it nevertheless, creates conducive environments for criminals, including the offending behaviour by the youth, to flourish. This may successively lead to the youth accepting the norm that success or necessities can be attained much easier through criminal or unlawful means; and thus the next risk factor I will discuss may seem a waste of time or not worth their effort to accomplish or acquire, which is an academic education and conventional employment.

Educational level and unemployment.

Maderthaner (2005) contends that the school that a child attends serves as the secondary socialisation agent for the child, because it is at this institution that the child learns to get along with others, accept authority and adhere to certain rules and regulations, outside the home. She emphasises the interrelated and interdependent relationship amongst the family as the primary socialising agent, the school as secondary and that the community and neighbourhood serve as a social network, and how the interplay amongst these affect the youth's attitudes towards schooling. On this interplay, Berk (2013) points out that families living in low-income, high-risk neighbourhoods often feel disconnected to their children's school, and they face daily stresses that reduce their energy for school involvement. In the present study, and in contrast to Berk (2013), most of the mothers viewed the school as a support structure and made all the effort to obtain help from it, even at extra cost to themselves, such as absence from work or travel fees.

Siegel, Welsh and Senna (2003, as cited in Maderthaner, 2005) ascertained that schools experiencing crime and drug abuse are often found in neighbourhoods that are socially disorganised and that poverty in the surrounding areas of the school influences the social characteristics of the students and thus their willingness and readiness to learn. Furthermore, when gang activities in the neighbourhood spill into the school environment, in some instances, according to Young et al. (2014), it affects teachers' attitudes and they (teachers) consider gang members as "unteachable" and subsequently show little commitment to teaching them beyond simply getting through the day, and this may in turn affect the students' attitudes that the teachers do not care.

According to Nieman (1998) youth's failure to achieve in school can be attributed to low social status, learning disabilities, and a high dropout rate which may lead to affiliations with like-minded peers who tend to encourage and reinforce deviant behaviour and tend to be relatively unrestrained by the opinions of parents, teachers or conventional peers. The youth participants in her study indicated the school as an outside cause that contributed to the problem of their offending behaviour and parents indicated school and friends of the youth as outside causes (Nieman, 1998). The school as an outside cause may be ascribed to what Young et al. (2014) positioned to as the level of violence in schools (e.g. bullying, intimidation, getting robbed or beaten up) and the relationship that pupils have with teachers and argued that one of the primary motives for gang involvement is the protection from victimization. One school in Lambrechts (2012) study showed a decrease of 78% enrolment for matriculates and respondents reasoned that this was directly linked to the increase in youth gangs and that the youth view gangsters as role models; and the youth argued that they (the gangster bosses) are uneducated, yet wealthy, so why should they waste their time with attending school.

One issue typically argued to feature prominently in the youths' inability to find employment is their lack of an academic education. Unemployment has been severe among women, especially those in rural areas, as well as among young people under the age of 24 and has increased the vulnerability of many households. The SA economy has not been able to supply sufficient employment opportunities for all who want to work (White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997). Although the number of working-age youth grew by more than a million between 2000 and 2011, rising to 10.3 million, total employment for the youth declined, from 1.6 million in 2000 to 1.3 million in 2011, fewer than 1 out of 10 young people were employed, highlighting South Africa's youth employment crisis (Mahajan, 2014). According to a quarterly labour force survey conducted by Statistics South Africa the unemployment rate increased by 1,0 percentage point between quarter 4 of 2019 and quarter 1 of 2020 to 39,1%, amounting to 10,8 million unemployed people between the ages of 15-64 years in South Africa. The percentage of young persons aged 15-34 years who were not employed, involved in education or any training were approximately 8,5 million (41,7%) out of 20,4 million young people (Stats SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2020). These approximations are set to increase due to the restrictions put in place, especially those on the labour market, due to the Covid 19 pandemic and unknown at the present time.

These numbers are further increased yearly by thousands of matriculates and many youth that drop out of school and the latter may argue that it does not make sense to them to complete schooling when they will be unemployed either way. These sentiments were also shared by Grade 8 to 10 participants in Sylvester's (2010) study when they were asked where they see themselves in the future and most of their responses indicated that completing their school career was not part of their plans, because they know where it is going to end. Directly linked to dropping out of school is the time the youth spend through unstructured socializing, the inability to find or refusal to seek employment and the consequential idleness that may lead to drug and substance abuse which I will discuss next.

Substance and drug abuse.

Janssen et al. (2016) argue that daily activities, like going to school or shopping, and structured activities, like sports and games, are found to be less conducive to crime than unstructured activities in the company of peers within criminogenic settings. As mentioned by Brown-Luthango et al. (2016) informal alcohol outlets and drug dens are in abundance and popular hang-out areas in impoverished neighbourhoods.

The process of abuse and addiction in many instances starts inside the home. For example, when parents abuse alcohol or drugs, such as the father, and as much as the children may hate to see him in an alcohol or -induced state, accompanied by the undesired behaviour it brings about, the availability of alcohol and drugs in the home make accessibility to and use of it by the youth more frequent. Or as Routledge (2005) put it that exposure to substances is a prerequisite to their use and possible abuse and that drinking and substance use in general is in fact learned behaviour and that it is learned from those who have the most social influence, such as family and friends.

The link between alcohol and drug use and violence and crime is well established and at times the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs can become an everyday experience for youth offenders. Sylvester’s (2010) participants agree with the above and add recreational use and normal activity for their abuse of alcohol and drugs, because it is present in their everyday environment and lives. These social factors, according to Kweswa and Tikimana (2015) fuel criminal behaviour and is accompanied by drug abuse originate from poverty, unemployment, patriarchal notions of masculinity, a weak culture of enforcement and failure to uphold safety as a fundamental right.

To gain some idea of the seriousness of the effects of drug addiction, the two following examples are quite emotionally disturbing. In 2018 a South African film titled "Ellen" which was based on true events which occurred in 1990 in the Western Cape, South Africa was released. This film portrays how and why a mother (Ellen Pakkies) killed her son (Abie Pakkies) due to the effects his drug addiction had on him and the family as a whole over a period of more than 6 years. It furthermore depicts the level of detachment from family and friends a drug addict will reach and the extent they will go to obtain his/her next fix even if that is at the expense of loved ones, the use of violence and the commission of a crime (Areal, Burger, & Joshua, 2018). In a separate and similar incident, also in the Western Cape in 2018, an elderly father (Sedick Abrahams, 62 years old) stabbed his drug addicted son (Clinton Abrahams, 28 years old) to death after almost 13 years of experiencing despair with his son’s addiction and the abuse the family had to endure as a consequence of his addiction. In both these instances the emotional and physical turmoil a parent can feel in connection to their offending child’s behaviour as described by Glaser et al. (2005) and Nieman (1998) is vividly portrayed to the extent that a father or mother's exasperation, feelings of hopelessness and lack of support, can make them feel that "the only way out" is through killing their own sons.

In conclusion, when unemployed youth of single mothers have a desire for luxury items, such as cellular phones and designer clothes and/or have an alcohol or drug addiction that need to be supported, gangsterism may become a viable option to get involved with to obtain these products, which I expand on next.

Gangsterism

For the purpose of this study a gang will be defined according to Young et al. (2014) as a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs. Research studies cited in Maderthaner (2005) offered numerous reasons why youth join gangs ranging from opportunities to obtain quick and easy money and drugs; attaining a certain status within the community; for protection from other gangs as a result of violence in the neighbourhood and schools; being labelled as a gang member and lastly for a sense of belonging and acceptance. This study further argued that parents living in poor areas and experiencing financial hardships may value the independence and financial assets their children generate from gang membership. Furthermore, gang involvement can lead to independence of the child from the family and provide an opportunity for an individual to stand on their own two feet (Young et al., 2014).

To some extent, these reasons to join a gang are consistent with the findings of Sylvester (2010) and Kheswa and Tikimana (2015) that poverty gives impoverished youth an inducement to resort to violence, gangs and to drop out of school. All of the above, according to Lambrechts (2012), from the formation of criminal gangs to the power they yield in neighbourhoods or over territories and communities, can be attributed to the state's low level of legitimacy, ineffective rules, limited to no economic and social provision and lack of social control through an ineffective criminal justice system, to mention a few.

The above arguments provide compelling reasons for the youth to belong to a gang, and even more so if they (the youth) are drug/alcohol dependent, did not complete their schooling and are unemployed. Furthermore, ingredients such as living with a single mother who is struggling to make ends meet, and consequently almost never home to supervise and nurture her youth due to her employment obligations, combined with living in a disadvantaged, criminogenic neighbourhood provide a recipe for youth to get involved with gangsterism (Sylvester, 2010). The above sections advocate the ecological interconnectedness and fluidity of events of how youth living in poverty may become trapped in criminogenic neighbourhoods, where schooling may become second priority to them which may subsequently lead to dropping out of school and unemployment; which in turn may lead to unstructured socialisation and drug and alcohol abuse, which may lead to gangsterism to support their addiction and may serve as their way of survival. In most cases, gangsterism eventually ends with the death of the youth gang member or imprisoned. This is intensely displayed in a film which was shot in the Western Cape, South Africa titled "City of violence", which is quite appropriate in its meaning for those living on the outskirts of Cape Town, based on the novel “Zulu” written by Caryl Ferey. In this film the brutality and disrespect for law enforcement, drug trafficking and turf wars through gangsterism is vividly exposed (Salle & Grandpierre, 2013).

This, however, begs the question: Why do some youth under more-or-less similar circumstances choose not to join a gang? Studies are minute on this issue as researchers have devoted more attention to determining the causes and adverse effects of single parenthood (Murray et al. 2001) or gangsterism (Lambrechts, 2012) and thus an identified a gap in the literature. Understanding the interrelated and complex factors embedded in the life path of single mothers of youth offenders led me to explore what support structures and services there are available to parents and their offending youth which I discuss next

Support structures and services

The ability to mother one’s children according to social expectations and personal desires depends ultimately on one’s access to the resources of time, money, health, and social support. A significant proportion of mothers negotiate their child rearing through obstacles that undermine their efforts to be “good mothers” (Ferraro & Moe, 2003).

Arthur (2005) contends that if young people are committing offences because their childhood history includes abuse and neglect, poor parental supervision or a failure to equip them with appropriate decisions skills, then it would be more appropriate to assist the family in guiding and nurturing the child through the provision of various resources and support services which reduces their isolation and promotes the welfare of the family. On par are Glaser et al. (2005) who maintain that the goal of prevention or treatment efforts is to decrease risk factors while increasing protective factors keeping in mind that these factors vary across cultural and socioeconomic groups, as well as geographic location of the offender. The authors suggest that intervention and preventive measures should be employed from a collective body of programs and institutions (e.g., juvenile courts, social services, corrections, law enforcement, education, and community) dedicated to assisting parents of identified need.

The Department of Social Welfare is in agreement and argues that poverty cannot be measured by income alone, nor can an anti-poverty programme only address enhancing measures to alleviate it, but it necessitates a multi-sectoral and an integrated approach. After all, social welfare refers to an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people (White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997).

In her study on the relevance and effectiveness of support structures available to youth with substance abuse problems, Dreyer (2012) highlighted the South African National Council on Alcoholism (SANCA) and the National Youth Development Outreach (NYDO) programme. SANCA's main objective is the prevention and the treatment of alcohol and substance abuse with the aim to restore the self-respect and dignity of people affected by alcoholism and substance abuse. NYDO was borne out of a desire to alleviate poverty and to bring an end to the problems of gangsterism and family violence, and is also equipped to handle cases that have been diverted from the formal justice system (Dreyer, 2012). Crime, substance abuse, violence, and child abuse and neglect all place substantial burdens on families and are expensive for the state to deal with. The alternative is to invest in family support as a preventive strategy to reduce social problems and should be clearly made that expenditure on the implementation of policies to support families is an investment in human capital and not a cost to society (Amoateng et al., 2004). Such an investment will not only alleviate the burdens families carry, but may redirect the trajectories of the many ecological patterns that each of these disorders follow and may ultimately restore confidence in the state.

Nieman's (1998) study on one of the diversion programmes called “Journey” offered by NICRO was an attempt to assist families with the aim to solve problems regarding family interaction and is relevant to the problems experienced by youth offenders and their parents. The Fatherhood Project is part of a larger campaign called Men Care and the Western Cape initiative is a joint venture between the Sonke Gender Trust and Families South Africa Western Cape (FAMSA).The project argues that there is no such thing as a fatherless child and its aim is to increase men’s care and protection of children (Richter & Morrel, 2006). Nieman (1998) warns, however, that when dealing with parents of youth offenders one should take into account the feelings and insecurities of parents, as it could cause embarrassment with relatives and friends, it could jeopardize their standing in the community, and it might also lead them questioning their competence as parents.

In the film "Ellen" Ellen Pakkies claimed that she sought help, for example from the school, the police and the justice system, but nobody helped her and as such bring into question the effectiveness and accessibility of institutions and organisations, such as NICRO, NYDO, SANCA and government departments. On this basis, in the next section I look at what protective factors single mothers may have at their disposal and how they make use of it to overcome or minimise risk factors.

Family resilience

Why and how do certain families overcome and, at times, even grow in adversity, while others seem not to? Explored differently, why do some families display resiliency despite adversities, while others seem to not recover from adverse events? The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) defines resilience as: the act of rebounding or springing back; to rebound, recoil from something; and elasticity: the power of resuming the original shape or position after compression or bending. When applying this definition of resilience to the context of a family in distress it would imply that if the family react to the stressor and overcome the risk factors causing the distress, the family would “rebound” back to the original state as before the distressing event. This would further imply that the distressing event did not alter the family's life-course trajectory, although in most occasions this would be highly unlikely. Although resilience, according to Cheeseman et al. (2011) is a multidimensional construct where the presence of some sort of adversity and positive adaptation need to occur, Walsh (1998, as cited in Bhana & Bachoo, 2011) argued that any person (or family) that functions competently should be considered resilient. In this perspective, life in general is challenging enough to create exposure to risk and it must be noted that risk is a subjective matter, this means if a family perceives something as a major stressor; it should be seen as a risk factor for that family (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011).

McCubbin and McCubbin (cited in Oh & Chang, 2014) view family resiliency as characteristics, dimensions, and properties of families which help families to be resistant to disruption in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situations. Greeff and Fillis (2009) stated that family resilience refers to a family's ability to mobilize strengths that put them in a position to handle challenges. It does not just depend on the characteristics of individuals, but on a combination of family processes and resources. Oh and Chang (2014) expanded on this and contended that resilient families respond positively to stress in unique ways, depending on the context, the length of the adversity, the family's developmental level or life stage, and the interactive combination of risk and protective factors. According to Cheeseman et al. (2011) resilience is not a matter of taking away adversity, but managing the challenges by taking advantage of, and increasing the number and value of, external protective factors. Furthermore, resilience is associated with more than survival, rather, survival together with a level of growth.

Protective factors are specific behaviours and circumstances that decrease the likelihood of negative outcomes; they include individual and family resources, skills and abilities. When these protective factors are put into action, they lead to protective processes which are defined as individual or environmental characteristics that enhance one's ability to resist stressful events, promoting adaptation and competence (Murry et al., 2001). For example, both Cheeseman et al. (2011) and Brown-Luthango et al. (2016) identified social networks and community cohesion, where community members assist each other, as a protective factor and that social control perform a vital function in family resilience.

On the other hand, Greeff and Fillis (2009) defined risk factors as conditions that increase a person's or family's susceptibility to negative or undesired outcomes. As an example of a risk factor is parental exasperation, coined by Glaser et al. (2005), as the level of parental resignation and hopelessness a parent feels with regard to the child's future and the parent's ability to influence the child. Likewise, Meldrum et al. (2016) study on parental self-control and official involvement in juvenile delinquency found that the more extensive involvement with the Criminal Juvenile System (CJS) evokes the impulsive, short-sighted, and self-centered tendencies of parents who are low in self-control, making them more likely to report that they want to "throw in the towel" with regard to their child. In both studies mentioned above the involvement with the CJS affects not only the parents feelings towards the justice system, but also how they respond to their youth's offending behaviour and may serve as a risk factor that increase the possibility of negative outcomes.

Furthermore, according to Akujobi (2011), depictions of self-sacrificing mothers, mothers as creators who must bear pain with patience and nurture selflessly leave no space for mothers as women who feel pain, anger, frustration, or women drained by the responsibilities that accompany their roles as mothers. These risk factors may increase the probability of negative aftermaths; however, protective factors may interact with the risk to change the predictive relationship between risk factors and negative outcomes, subsequently reducing the probability of negative results. Resilient families are furthermore characterised by active persistence, perseverance, maintenance of hope and optimism, and confidence that they can overcome the odds (Mackay, 2003). This persistence and perseverance was quite evident from the narratives shared by half of the participants in the present study and their unwillingness to give up on their offending youth even to injury to themselves.

Walsh (2003) identified the family, peer group, community resources, school and work settings, and other social systems as nested contexts for nurturing and reinforcing resilience. When considering the variety of possible contexts, as a case in point, Mdakane's (2016) study on what motivated ex-offenders to desist from a life of crime, found that participants viewed their disadvantaged circumstances (i.e. their imprisonment) created the context for change, a "blessing in disguise" and the “turning point" in their lives whilst incarcerated, and continued being resilient desisting from crime, despite obstacles, long after their release. On par with Mdakane's (2016) participants' positive attitudes, Walsh (1998, as cited in Greeff & Fillis, 2009) argued that resilient families (or individuals) define their misfortune as experiences that they can learn from, rather than a battle that has been lost. Walsh (2003) furthermore contended that family resilience is fostered by shared, facilitative beliefs that increase options for problem resolution, healing and growth. These families help members make meaning of crises situations; facilitate a hopeful, positive outlook; and offer transcendent or spiritual moorings. Murry et al. (2001) is in agreement and stated that if individuals have social skills (i.e. support-seeking behaviours to secure assistance) and emotional support (i.e. supportive behaviours which communicate that others love and care for them) than they are in a better position to obtain instrumental support (i.e. actions that are task directed) to tackle adversities that cause the family distress.

When families are investigated, whatever the reason may be, Murry et al. (2001) warned that the perpetuation of problem-focused approaches to study mother-headed families impedes the understanding of their successes and more attention should be given to identifying correlates and predictors of resilience and competence despite adversity. Moreover, rather than viewing all single-parent families as stereotypically "at risk", the specific risks, their origins, and means to alleviating them must be identified. Correcting these limitations can facilitate the development of supportive family policies and prevention efforts (Murry et al., 2001). Greeff and Ellis (2009) corroborated and contended that in examining the factors that promote family resilience, the focus should be on family strengths as opposed to their weaknesses. Identifying factors in the family that foster adaptation after a traumatic event such as death or divorce enables the development of intervention strategies that are more goal-directed (Greeff & Ellis, 2009). A systemic orientation should be adopted that fundamentally alters the deficit-based lens from viewing troubled parents and families as damaged and beyond repair, to seeing them as challenged by life’s adversities, with the potential for fostering healing and growth in all members to create a functional family unit (Walsh, 2003). To overcome obstacles many families and individuals find strength in their religious belief systems that, in most instances, instill hope for a better tomorrow and therefore in the following section I will look at spiritual beliefs and its possible impact as a protective factor against adversities.

Transcendent/spiritual beliefs

Many people have always found solace in their spiritual beliefs, whether stemming from religious or cultural foundations, that there is a greater power out there concerned for their wellbeing, and this appears to be more evident when people find themselves in adversity or stressful circumstances or situations and for many may serve as protective factor and coping mechanism. This was for example the case in Cheeseman et al. (2011) study of a group of American urban single mothers residing in risky neighbourhoods who identified protective factors to be mainly of personal influence, such as personal characteristics and spirituality. Burchardt's (2010) HIV-positive participants' biographical narratives revealed that when dealing with the uncertainties of a life, their religious beliefs led to a highly positive evaluation of a focus on the present; an idea of having grown spiritually by a renewed appreciation of the value of life in its daily unfolding and a sense of liberation from the pressures to permanently focus on achieving individual success in the future. In the present study all participants felt that their faith carried and gave them hope that everything will eventually turn out for the best and that it was this believe that kept them to persevere and to stay optimistic.

Looking over my own live and attempting to understand single mothers' plight to cope with their offending youth, such as portrayed in Ellen (Areal et al., 2018) and the participants of this study, made me realise how much my religious beliefs and values played in my life. Remembering vividly how many times we had nothing to eat and my children stared at me to provide, my faith in a higher power proved to be priceless and I believe that it was this trust that provided the provisions (e.g. fellow worshipers supplying food parcels) that was much needed, too many times to count. It was also through these difficult times when I could not provide for my family, that I felt hopeless and fearful, that my faith carried me through the hardships of being a father and to find meaning in life's difficulties.

It may be on this premise that Werner and Smith (1992, as cited in Walsh, 2003) contended that spiritual resources, in deep faith, practices such as prayer and meditation, and religious/congregational affiliation have been found to be wellsprings for resilience. The functional aspect of religion, which is the content of religious beliefs, carries a freight of positive messages of prosocial values that, according to Mackay (2003), may offer a framework for coping with difficult situations and enable families to make meaning out of adversity. Furthermore, religious participation affects family functioning and may augment a family's social capital. Members of a church congregation provides links to other people with similar values, which may provide increased access to social support, child care and instrumental or financial assistance in dealing with problems (Mackay, 2003; also see Burchardt, 2010).

Families often have shared belief systems that serve to foster an optimistic attitude or help them find meaning in time of crises or change. Such belief systems represent a collective set of attitudes, ways of thinking and values that serve to elicit positive family outcomes (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011). Oh and Chang (2014) corroborated and found that there is suggestive evidence that spirituality is a fundamental source of family resilience. The nine studies reviewed in their study documented that family's shared beliefs or religious beliefs provided purpose and direction to the individual member's lives, which assisted in finding reason or meaning in and acceptance of adversities. This acceptance may provide the family's "turning point" from experiencing negative psychological responses to stressful life events to being assertive in maintaining family life; and increased sensitivity to find and be grateful for small things occurring in life and an overall life satisfaction (Oh & Chang, 2014). Research supports the connection that religion has a positive impact on parent-child relationships and on children's outcomes, as this facilitates positive family interactions, lowers the risk of child maladjustment and adolescent drug and alcohol use (Mackay, 2003). One of the parents in the present study confirmed this as she happily claimed that she must have done something right because her son was now attending church and prayer meetings and was trying to change his life around. A major issue in a capitalist society like South Africa is its resources, its availability, access to, and its distribution to the people. In the next section I will review the literature on economic and political factors and how this may impact single mothers and their families.

Socio-economic factors

It is generally agreed that "Mother Africa" may have been declared free, but mothers of Africa remained manifestly oppressed (Akujobi, 2011). This is not more manifested than in the economic hardships mothers face and the subsequent poverty that has become synonymous to single mothers, not only on the African continent, but globally. It is on this premise that Moghadam (2005) argued that if poverty is to be seen as a denial of human rights, it should be recognised that the women among the poor suffer doubly from the denial of their human rights: first on account of gender inequality, second on account of poverty. She queried whether poverty was taking on a female face or what has become known as "the feminization of poverty" signifying that an increasing proportion of the world's poor are female.

It is not surprising then that several studies (including the present study) found that financial strain is the most common risk factor in single-parent families in general and single-mother families in particular, where parents are overwhelmed and children fare poorly (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2005; Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009; Walsh, 2003). The stress of constrained economic circumstances diminishes parental mental health, which reduces parents' ability to nurture, monitor and discipline their children effectively. This is directly linked to the constant efforts to make ends meet with limited income (Mackay, 2003). Roman (2011) corroborated and pointed out that the quality of child care or parenting is frequently compromised due to the length of time spent working in order to support children in single mother families. Thus, single mothers may often suffer from strain and chronic fatigue which could result in ineffective parenting compared to parenting by married mothers with assistance from a partner (Roman, 2011). This consistent to what Bronfenbrenner (1997) referred to as the "deficit" model indicating that the economy creates the most destructive force to a child's development through the conditions of parental employment; that families need to be in trouble to receive public assistance, and the more distress or failure they encounter, the more assistance is provided. To indicate that it may not be the parenting skills or techniques of single mothers per se leading to youth offending behaviour, Barbarin's (1999) and Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) respective studies highlighted that when poverty status was controlled and economic attributes were held constant, single motherhood was unrelated to children's behavioural and emotional adjustment and that single mothers fare just as well as their married counterparts.

A major contributor to family problems and breakdown in family functioning, according to the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), is the increasing economic stress facing households. Those living below the poverty line as well as poor single parent families, which are predominantly female-headed households, are the worst affected. About a third (35,2%) of all South African households, amounting to 18 million people, is living in poverty. Furthermore, poverty is often accompanied by additional social problems, such as family disintegration, adults and children in trouble with the law, and substance abuse (Department of Welfare, 1997). According to a World Bank study, female single-headed households exist everywhere but are more concentrated in rural areas, where single women who take care of a disproportionate number of children had been adversely affected by employment losses (Mahajan, 2014). This situation is further exacerbated because as heads of households, single women have sharply lower labour participation rates, employment rates, and incomes than their male counterparts (Mahajan, 2014).

Socio-political factors

South Africa is a society torn by intergroup conflict at all levels. The Rainbow Nation, though making attempts to live up to the promise of economic and racial equality, has found it difficult to resolve many economic and political challenges inherited from apartheid. Needless to say, the majority of South Africans have not had their lives and living standards significantly changed for the better (Rotich et al., 2015). The problem with the Rainbow Nation dialogue is that it forecloses on critical questions of contestation which need to be recognised and explored. This foreclosure manifests itself in the notion that despite history and its consequences, suddenly ‘we are all one nation’ and equal in our positions in this nation. Any matter that may divide or create conflict among us needs to be avoided to ensure that the beauty of the presentation of the Rainbow Nation remains intact. Doing so, however, ignores the fact that such co-existence is premised on highly unequal power relations systematically shaped over centuries (Palmberg, 1999). Although the above argument is based on the broader issues of race in SA; it is not much different from what Ntshongwana (2010) argue on a smaller scale in that the social policy in the South African government context overlooks the broader social relations within which low income lone mothers are embedded and the childcare responsibilities that they shoulder for the country's future social capital.

Bereft of hope women in isolated rural areas, in particular, seemed to be "just surviving" (Ntshongwana, 2010). Even when one move away from the rural areas and argue that basic services have improved in many urban areas of SA, according to Goebel et al. (2010) case study on female-headed households in South Africa, poverty and ill-health persist and are unequally distributed by race, class and place.

The above paragraph place the DCS on point when it argues that while circumstances that lead individuals turning to crime in the first place are unchanged, and social development and moral regeneration of the community have not taken place, the tendency towards recidivism will remain high, despite correction and human development efforts by the DCS (Department of Correctional Services, 2005). Arthur (2005) elaborated on this and argued that the state as well as the offender has some responsibility for crime, and that the state can justifiably punish young offenders for their crimes only to the extent it has fulfilled its obligations to those young people as members of society. On this responsibility, Samara's (2005) study on urban renewal in the Western Cape sound sceptical and pointed out that warning signs are visible in the growing numbers of youth and children being held in detention and argued that many observers see it as a steady abandonment of young people by the government. People will do whatever is necessary to survive from the exosystem when government fails them; to the macrosystem of their living areas and neighbourhoods, such as participants of the present study, by supporting criminal gangs to receive some relief in their microsystem, such as food, money to buy electricity, clothes and even just a sense of safety in their own homes (Lambrechts, 2012).

Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on single mothers of offending youth from a local and global perspective. The abundance of documented empirical and theoretical research from different disciplines indicated the diversity, multidimensionality and importance engendered by the phenomenon. Much of the existing literature reviewed painted a bleak picture filled with adversities and challenges single mothers have to face to bring up their children, or may be on par with Ngobeni’s (2006) position that despite the changing nature of family structures and lives, scholars still readily draw an analogy between single-parent households headed by women and the notion of the "dysfunctional family".

This chapter further highlighted protective factors (such as religious beliefs and the independence of women as mothers) that illuminated resilience and perseverance that some single mothers display in spite of adversities. Murray et al. (2001) and Greeff and Ellis (2009) are consistent with Ngobeni (2006) above and argued that single-mother families should not be viewed as stereotypically dysfunctional, but that their resilience, competence and strengths be highlighted to gain a better understanding of their successes.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed identified a gap in the available knowledge on single mothers, as explained previously; no study was found that combined the three main factors identified, which is single mothers, absent fathers and offending youth and the ecological interaction it brings about and how it is experienced by single mothers. A few studies were found on coloured single mothers and, it too, also just identified the single status as troublesome, and to some extent the coloured race classification as a disadvantage, but none added the adversities brought about by an offending youth. Lastly, as Hart (2000) advised, the purpose of research is to contribute in some way to our understanding of the world and this cannot be done if research findings are not shared and therefore this research undertaking will firstly, add value to available knowledge, and secondly, propose or even challenge future research on the topic researched in this study, to either better it or expand on it.

Chapter 3

Research design and method

Introduction

In this chapter I elucidate the rationale behind adopting a qualitative research design and why a constructivist phenomenological paradigm was the most suitable for this type of research inquiry. The inclusion criteria required to participate is clarified and how participants were recruited is explained. In subsequent sections, I justify the data collection method, how the data was transcribed, translated and analysed; by what means ethical protocols were adhered to and how the trustworthiness and credibility of the study was enhanced. Firstly, I elaborate on the research design followed and why it was deemed the most suitable for the current study.

Research design

In social sciences research, the research design explains how the study is going to unfold, such as which methodology will be followed (e.g. qualitative or quantitative); the method of data collection employed (e.g. interviews, questionnaires or experiments); and which techniques will be utilised to analyse the data (e.g. thematic or statistical analysis) (Wagner et al., 2012). By explaining in detail the appropriateness of the techniques used to gather and analyse the data; the justification for the methodological approaches that was followed and the implications it had specific to the study at hand, exhibits the authority and legitimacy of the research (Hart, 2000). Or as Kalof et al. (2009) shared that if you want fellow scientists to believe and respect your work you have to share with them, not just your conclusions, but also enough information about how you came to those conclusions that they can follow your steps and see if they agree. This study sought out to explore the lived experience of single mothers of offending youth and a qualitative method based on phenomenological beliefs was deemed most appropriate. To discover the meanings these mothers attached to their lived experiences through their own narratives, a constructivist paradigm was followed which can be most effectively be achieved if these mothers are given the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words and a semi-structured interview was most appropriate to reach this objective. All of the above will subsequently be explained.

A qualitative approach provided the means to explore deep and rich data that were buried in the nature of views, experiences and behaviours of participants. It is furthermore concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts which shape various behavioural patterns. To attain this richness and depth of exploration and description of data, Wagner et al. (2012) encourage researchers to immerse themselves into the life-worlds of participants, because they become the instruments through which the data are collected, analysed and interpreted. Affirmatively Smith (1998) argues that this kind of research strategy generates an informed and well-illustrated account of the lived experiences of a defined group of people and the relevant contexts in which they produce meanings. These types of inquiries cannot be answered through yes/no replies nor provide numerical (statistical) data typical of quantitative research, but they allow for discussion and elaboration between researcher and participants and thus justify the use of a qualitative research design to accomplish the objective of the present study (Laher et al., 2019). This approach allowed the single mothers to speak freely and without any restriction to what they deemed important to them. The lack of structure permitted for a conversional mode of enquiry that left the participants relaxed and gave them a sense of control. I remember at one interview we had breakfast while the interview was conducted.

Ensuing from a constructivist paradigm, as explained by Wagner et al. (2012), inform the research process from a certain set of assumptions, such as its ontology (that is what we believe about the nature of reality), epistemology (that is how we know what we know) and axiology (that is what we believe to be true) and how all these assumptions are combined in the methodology and thus the methods employed for collecting, analysing, interpreting and eventually the reporting of findings. As such, constructivists believe that *knowledge* is subjective, socially created, context dependent and the truth lies within the human experience (Laher et al., 2019). When embracing elements of a constructionist epistemology, Kalof et al. (2008) encourages that if we believe that there is a reality ‘out there’, but realise that our observations and interpretations are shaped by psychological biases and quirks, cultural lenses, power relations and a variety of other forces that comprise the social construction of reality; we have to be very cautious, reflective and self-critical about how we do research. In this study, for example, although the situations of the participants were very similar, their narratives and interpretations differed and this was not only dependent on the different contexts they found themselves in, but also the subjective values they attached to the events which had an impact on their lives. Needless to say, a researcher trying to understand and exploring the lives of others, does not live in vacuum, free from everyday experiences and thus his/her own subjective 'truths' on the phenomena under study should be taken under account. Embedded within this paradigm allows these subjective realities, knowledge and values of both researcher and participant to coincide, and through the research process the creation or construction of yet another conjoint reality, new knowledge and added value, as opposed to a single, tangible reality, objective knowledge, and value-free research commonly associated with quantitative research, and therefore a constructivist paradigm was followed and deemed ideal for the current study. This was evident in the way the stories of participants unfolded and in the way it was narrated with hand gestures and sounds. The values these mothers held was expressed through visible dislike, for example when asked whether they will accept any benefits knowing that it came from their sons' criminal activities and at times tears when they shared the loss of the father and husband through death.

As mentioned above, these constructions of realities are subjective and context bound. To get a clearer picture of these multiple realities, Maturana (1980, cited in Meyer et al., 2008) gave an example and explains that five members of a family do not have five different views of the same family, but that five different families are actually created, based on the five members' completely different sets of meanings. What makes it interesting is that none of these views or meanings of the family is more correct or true than the other. On this premise, Laher et al., (2019) contended that the stories told by individuals are stories constructed through their day-to-day experience, and thus the narratives of their own lives. Meyer et al. (2008) urge researchers not to let their own intentions get the better of them, but that a researcher should do no more than relate his/her story of a story and, in turn, leave it to those who read it to construct their own stories from it.

Apart from constructed realities, as explained in the above paragraphs, phenomenology highlights the meaning that these realities of the lived experiences hold for participants. German philosopher Edmund Husserl who first used it, proposed that we, as social actors, are always engaged in making sense of the world around us and that we must suspend the taken-for-granted understandings of lived experience and examine how people who share a particular phenomenon make sense of the world (Wagner et al., 2012). Phenomenology, according to Smith (1998), asks us to dig deeper in order to explore (see the difference here from Husserl) the taken-for-granted or common-sense assumptions and he argues that there are no facts, only interpretations- and that facts are inter-subjectively constructed. Both Husserl and Smith (1998) are basically saying the same thing, and that is if we want to understand the lived experiences of others, we need to suspend our taken-for-granted understandings and explore those taken-for-granted assumptions participants hold to fully understand what they are experiencing. Kolof et al. (2008) are in agreement that phenomenology suggests that it is not meaningful to speak of a ‘real’ world and that our interpretations of it are all that matter and the best approach to our understanding of the world is to examine how people see and define it. This was accomplished in the present study by attentively listening to the mothers with the least interruption possible to allow them to provide their phenomenological world from their experiences. It was interesting to note this under the assumption of the power relationship between participant and researcher which I assumed would have had an impact on participants’ responses, even more so because I was a correctional officer and thus favourable reports concerning the DCS were expected. This appeared not to be the case when one participant angrily expressed how rude and ill-disciplined correctional officers were with her at the exact Centre I was stationed and the ineffective impact the DCS had in general in correcting criminal behaviour or to serve as a deterrent to the commission of crime.

The assumptions or subjective versions of what is true and real encompass value to those who hold it. For example, taking Obama’s expressions and his interpretations of what “research have proven” concerning the effects of absent fathers on their children, and whether he believed it to be true or not, may or may not have made him a better father to his children. Another example will be participants’ visits to correctional centres which may be an emotionally hurtful experience for parents, especially mothers, seeing their children in such circumstances, yet these parents may be viewed by their community members as supporting their youth’s offending behaviour, as was evident and supported by one single mother in the present study and given as a reason why she did not visited her son at the correctional centre where he was detained. Philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology thus allow all these separate meanings and interpretations held by all these different individuals or groups of individuals and their connection to these events to be true and real to them and can only be understood if we, as researchers or outsiders, are willing to see it from their viewpoint.

The above discussion brings to veracity to the inter-subjectivity of “facts” and “truth” embedded in the views of individuals as they live their lives. It may also be on this point that Smith (1998) contended that we should work and study the ambiguities, fluidity and openness of social life rather than try to repress these in a fruitless chase for experimental control and scientific respectability. These ambiguities, fluidity and openness can be explored through a constructivist, qualitative phenomenological research design which allows participants the freedom to describe and express their experiences through their own narratives and worldviews and researchers should simply become the gateway to be used to make participants’ experiences known to the rest of the world, coupled with the desire to bring about positive change. This can be accomplished by selecting those who have the experience, knowledge and willingness to share their stories and so in the next section the sample inclusion criteria and sampling techniques which were followed by the study will be discussed.

Research methods

Sampling

Sampling inclusion criteria

To be included in the study, the following inclusion criteria were used. The four Coloured mothers had to be single parents between the ages of 30-50 years old, irrespective of the reasons or causes that lead to their single motherhood status. Considering a small sample size in qualitative studies, Wagner et al. (2012) argue that this should be done deliberately to ensure deep and meaningful data analysis. Another reason for opting for a small sample size is offered by Englander (2012) when he contended that if a researcher has a qualitative purpose and a qualitative question, he/she seeks knowledge of the content of experience, often in depth, to seek the meaning of the phenomenon, not “how many" people who have experienced such phenomenon. This was demonstrated through Burchardt (2010), Dreyer (2012), Mdakane (2016) and Monama’s (2007) respective qualitative studies where a small sample of participants adequately answered their research questions and illuminated the phenomenon under study.

In reference to the racial category, this was simply due to the racial group of the two informant single Coloured mothers and the majority status of the Coloured population present in the two target geographic areas, namely Elsies River and Delft in the Western Cape Province, South Africa and was not purposively selected for this study. A Stats SA 2011 survey recorded Elsies River and Delft had respectively 44,8% and 47% female-headed households and 91,4% and 90,2% of the total population in these townships were of Coloured decent respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Research on coloured single mothers with offending youth is non-existent and subsequently this study will add to the scientific knowledge. Concerning the geographical areas selected and apart from the high percentages of single mother households within these areas, Elsies River and Delft are also similar in their criminogenic characteristics, such as gangsterism, offending youth, unemployment and drugs and alcohol abuse.

Lastly, selected participants had to be mothering an offending youth between the ages of 15-30 years, male or female, who had been in trouble with the law (that is, had some involvement with the CJS, such as prior arrests, convictions and detentions). Although the gender of the offending youth was not purposively sought out and a possible limitation to the study, willing participants mothered offending sons only.

Selection and recruitment of participants

To select and recruit study participants two non-probability sampling techniques were utilised, namely convenience and snowball sampling. Firstly, convenience sampling was accomplished by identifying two single mothers, from my personal contacts, residing in the two targeted areas. Convenience sampling, according to Wagner et al. (2012) is the most expedient form of sampling that there is, because the researcher simply uses whoever is readily available. This is also known as volunteer sampling and most appropriately describes the two single mothers who were approached to assist with the current study. The convenience of the two informant single mothers was threefold. Firstly, they were longstanding personal contacts, volunteered and were willing and available to help and had sufficient knowledge of the study. Secondly, they have resided for many years in their particular areas and were familiar with their communities. Thirdly, due to living in the same neighbourhoods they were acquainted to some extent with study participants and therefore the introduction of the study to prospective participants; obtaining informal consent from willing participants; and setting up the date and time for my introduction to participants, was made possible. The two informant single mothers, however, did not partake as study participants and their single motherhood status was simply coincidental, yet instrumental in identifying other single mothers in their respective areas.

Snowball sampling is accomplished by identifying a few individuals within the relevant population and these individuals are then asked to approach other individuals who in turn are asked to approach more individuals (Wagner et al., 2012). Four study participants were supposed to be approached and recruited by the two informant single mothers mentioned above; that is two participants each in their respective geographic areas in Cape Town, South Africa, (see Brown-Luthango et al.'s, 2016, study on the upgrades of three informal settlements in Cape Town, South Africa, for a description of similar areas or Lambrechts, 2012). The failure of the two recruitment mothers to recruit all four participants for the study, led to one deviation from the initial recruitment proposed for the current study that demonstrated snowball sampling and this occurred when one of the study participant single mothers in Elsies River identified another single mother fulfilling the requirements to participate.

Data collection instrument

Interviews

An interview, according to Wagner et al. (2012) is a two-way conversation and a purposive interaction in which the interviewer asks the participant (the interviewee) questions in order to collect data about the ideas, experiences, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. The aim is to obtain rich descriptive data that will allow the reader to see the world through the eyes of the participant. A semi-structured interview (which contained a list of focused open-ended questions on the phenomenon under study, see Appendix D) was used as the research guide to gather the data needed for the purposes of answering the research questions and provided an opportunity for probing, corroboration and clarification of unclear or contradictory responses to avoid misunderstandings and attain clarity.

Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their subjective feelings, emotions and opinions more freely. Furthermore, since open-ended questions, according to Du Plooy (2009), do not have structured or specified answers, they can elicit underlying ideas, feelings, sentiments and suggestions that researchers may not even have considered. In addition, Nieman (1998) claims that the time, place and emotional state of participants can influence the success of a conversation and suggest that favourable conditions be created to be successful which include the atmosphere in which the conversation takes place, where it takes place and how comfortable participants feel in the conversation. Another favourable condition that was required for the present study was to communicate or have a conversation or interview in the language in which participants were most fluent in, and as such, the interviews were conducted predominantly in Afrikaans. On this issue Laher et al., (2019) caution researchers to take care not to lose the authenticity of what is being shared through the translation process, and this meant that responses from participants had to be translated (from vernacular to English), which required, at times, translation and back-translation, so that the meaning of what was communicated through the cultural lingo of participants was not lost. For example, in one incident, a participant responded…*Die laaities van vandag het geen orde meer nie…*when translated meant…*These young people have no respect anymore*.

Although the interview schedule was not pilot tested or pre-trialled (i.e. tested on participants similar to the target participants to evaluate its effectiveness), the informant single mothers were instrumental in refining the questions it contained from their own disadvantaged environments, experiences and Coloured cultural single mother' perspectives. For example the lingo used in the interview questions, they suggested changing it from that of an academic type to normal 'Coloured' lingo. To further ensure the applicability and credibility of the questions contained in the interview schedule the information that was gathered on the issues most salient relating to single mothers and offending youth identified through the literature reviewed, was used, such as work/economic obligations (Amoateng et al., 2004; Mbanefo, 2013), absent fathers (Londt et al., 2017; Murray & Farrington, 2008), offending youth (Sylvester, 2010), criminogenic neighbourhoods (Kweswa & Tikimana, 2015; Lambrechts, 2012) and support structures (Dreyer, 2012; Nieman, 1998).

Interviews were conducted between July and November 2019 and lasted between 40-60 minutes and in the comfort of participants' homes at times most convenient to them in an attempt to adhere to Nieman's (1998) suggestion of establishing a favourable environment for successful interviewing. Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans which was the home language of all the participants, to ensure that they expressed themselves more easily. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and field notes were made of any observations relevant to the phenomenon under study (e.g. emotions displayed when participants spoke about their sons or fathers/husbands).The information gathered from these interviews was transcribed and observation cues were inserted where applicable and analysed to answer the research question and will be explained in detail in chapter 4.

Transcription and translation

The lengthy process of transcribing the data from the audio recordings was completed by me and the benefit of doing this was threefold. Firstly, the repetitive listening and re-listening of the audio recordings while creating a verbatim duplicate in written text format for the purpose of analysis of what was communicated during the interviews, made me quite familiar with its content. Secondly, the written text allowed me to insert, where applicable, the nonverbal cues from the field notes I made during my visits, such as the emotional expressions or neighbourhood disturbances (e.g. firearm shots or low flying aeroplanes) that had an impact on the stories told by participants. And thirdly, the personal transcription of the data ensured that the confidentiality and privacy which was guaranteed to participants was upheld.

Interviews were conducted one at a time and transcribed, translated and analysed over a period of three weeks each. My personal experience with the cultural lingo spoken by the participants and Afrikaans being my mother tongue, made the tiresome and complex job of translation of the interviews into English possible. Furthermore, this process was not only interesting and at times entertaining, but the vast amount of time spent to complete it also embedded the narratives of participants into my memory. I further ensured that I pay special attention to Laher et al. (2019) warning to ensure that the authenticity of what was shared by the participants does not get lost during the translation process by ensuring that words or phrases used have the most correct meaning. This process was further authenticated when it was returned to participants to verify whether I had translated their stories correctly.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis follows from the purpose and theoretical framework of the study. For the purpose of the current study thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, as was done by Mdakane (2016). This is a general approach to analysing qualitative data that involves identifying recurrent themes or patterns in the data in an attempt to understand how various participants experience the same phenomenon (Wagner et al., 2012). Thematic analysis focuses on the content and meaning generated through the interviews, with the researcher grouping and reducing content and meaning in ways that will shed light on the research question (Wagner et al., 2012). The ultimate goal of analysis is to answer the research questions guiding the study with the key to analysis to give the reader the complete picture or a thorough step-by-step description of how the findings were reached.

The purpose of the present study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth. This familiarisation and immersion into the data through the repetitive listening of the audio recordings, and the subsequent re-reading from the written transcripts, before identifying codes and themes which would eventually answer the research question, was the first step in analysing the data. It was at this stage, away from the immediate interview setting, however, that I realised how difficult the analysis was going to be. For example, understanding the issues of reflexivity and "bracketing” would prove to be even more difficult in practice than I initially thought when I was reading up on it in the research literature. "Really listening" to the interviews, especially referring to the daunting task of the transcription process, afforded me the opportunity to "get to know" the data intimately and gave me a picture of what the participants experienced and wanted to share with me. Here for example, I found how the profound opposite emotions of love and hate expressed by parents for their youths’ offending behaviour was demonstrated. As one mother emotionally expressed: *As much as I love him, if one day I’m told he’s dead, I’ll be relieved*. This picture, however, would only become clearer later, as explained in chapter 4, because re-reading and re-listening to it, was also the time when I felt, being a single parent myself, I would not have allowed this and that or felt this or that way about my offending child. To overcome this subjectivity, and at times judgmental view, or what I think Wagner et al. (2012) referred to when they warned that qualitative studies can never be absolutely value-free, but that researchers need to be alert and take precautions, I kept a separate log dictating my own feelings on the issues discussed with participants. This log proved to be invaluable in separating my own views from those of the participants, and to ensure that I have succeeded in this endeavour, the transcripts and preliminary analysis was returned to participants for validation which provided them the opportunity to correct me where I may have misunderstood or misinterpreted their views. To get to the latter though, the second step was necessary and to accomplish this, I made an extra paper copy of the written transcripts to start the analysis of the data. This turned out to be quite messy with different colourful markings representing similar and dissimilar units of analysis across the interview scripts; and pencil marked lines moving across the printed text to margin identifiers and remarks.

To lay out the analysis, separate sheets were used to group similar units of analysis, which at times was a word, a sentence or a few sentences including the identification of the topic/subject of the unit under discussion. These units of analyses (e.g. factors of employment as a unit of analysis played a prominent role to all participants affecting their involvement with their offending youth) were then labelled with a code asking what is being discussed and what the underlying meaning in this instance is. According to Boyatzis (cited in Wagner et al., 2012) a good code has five elements: a label or name; a definition of what the code concerns; a description of how to know when the coded theme occurs; a description of qualifications/exclusions to the identification of that code; and a listing of examples, both positive and negative, to avoid confusion of codes. Adhering to most of these elements, the next step was to put similar codes together to form categories of meaning or themes and where applicable sub-themes. In Chapter 4 I will discuss the themes that emerged during the analysis.

Ethical considerations

We are continuously reminded that one of our most important ethical responsibilities towards the people whom we evaluate, question or observe is that they be protected from harm (Du Plooy, 2009). It is on this principle that when research is conducted under the banner of an institution, for example universities such as UNISA or departments such as the DCS, it is a requirement to obtain approval and ethical clearance from the institution involved prior to conducting the research. The ethics committee of the University of South Africa (UNISA) approved the current research and issued an ethical clearance certificate for its commencement. Ethical considerations include, amongst others, the right to be fully informed of the purpose and duration of participation of the research, to voluntarily consent to partake or refuse, freedom to withdraw from the study at any given time or stage of the research process and to have participants' identities protected and assurance that information shared will be held in confidence (Wagner et al., 2012).

Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained on two separate occasions from participants. Firstly, it was received informally through the introduction of the study to prospective participants by the two informant single mothers at which time informal consent to participate was obtained. Secondly, formally through my introduction to willing participants at which time I explained the purpose, duration and methods of the study (see Appendix A) and requested willing participants to sign the informed consent form (see Appendix B). Privacy and confidentiality was guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. Due to the use of a third party (i.e. the two informant mothers) anonymity and privacy of study participants was maintained through a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix C) and signed by the informant single mothers who stipulated that no information will be disclosed to anybody concerning the study and participants. Lastly, as a precautionary measure and an ethical obligation not to cause any harm to participants, such as embarrassment and/or emotional stress due to their participation, arrangements were made with the counselling services at their respective local day hospitals (namely Delft and Elsies River) should debriefing be needed.

Although the initial proposal was to include the DCS in the study, for example by providing a list of offenders from their data base living with single mothers from which to recruit participants as this would have made the recruitment process much more convenient, quicker and would have provided a pool of prospective participants to choose from. This involvement with the DCS, however, may have required ethical clearance from the DCS and the possible further delay to the completion of the study, as was experienced by Londt et al. (2017) at one correctional facility in the West Coast Region of the Western Cape. Although one must acknowledge the unique and sensitive nature of DCS facilities, offenders and even correctional officers (who may be doing the research themselves; become mediators to researchers or may be participants in a study) and how and when they may participate; the process to gain ethical clearance or permission from the DCS may be time consuming and more often than not something a novice researcher do not have the luxury of. On the latter and in agreement, Mdakane (2020) suggests that researchers should make a few modifications or take a few considerations into account to their approach when they attempt to do research in and with the DCS, which should not include diverting away from doing research with the DCS. For the present study permission or ethical clearance was not required from the DCS, because the DCS had no involvement with the study; no offending youth were interviewed; participants had no connection with the DCS and I did not act in my capacity as a correctional officer throughout the study.

Trustworthiness and credibility

The value of any social research is controlled by the methods used. If the method is poor, then the value of the research diminishes greatly no matter how sophisticated the theory on which it is based or how relevant the results appear to be. It is vital to be able to evaluate the methods used (Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991). Thus, when conducting a qualitative study, trustworthiness and credibility are the equivalent of reliability and validity expected from a quantitative study. When someone reading a research study, he/she needs to be assured of the trustworthiness and credibility of the results and the thorough, detailed description of the research process should enable the reader to determine whether the methods used in the study were appropriate and the results are viable interpretations (Laher et al., 2019). Credibility is thus how accurately the data reflect the reality or perceptions shared by participants (Kalof et al., 2009). In the present study I accomplished this through the detailed description of every step taken from sampling to final analysis and results.

Another way to increase the trustworthiness of a study, according to Wagner et al. (2012), is the crystallisation of data. This crystallised reality is directly linked to the authenticity of data provided by participants and is credible in so far as those that reading the data and analysis will be able to see the same emerging pattern. This was accomplished most effectively by creating a proper audit trail and the safekeeping of original authorised audio recordings, interview scripts, scripted nonverbal behaviour and cues (e.g. emotional expressions and gestures) and interferences (e.g. household or neighbourhood distractions such as firearm shots and low-flying aircrafts) from the contextual observations written in field notes during the interview visits and the detailed written procedures followed during the analysis of the data.

Another important factor to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research is the extent to which findings can be generalised or transferred to other cases or settings (Wagner et al., 2012). However, the subjectivity and individuality of participants in qualitative studies makes it difficult, if not impossible to generalise/transfer data from one case to another, even where similarities are overwhelming. Kalof et al. (2009) suggest that qualitative researchers should provide rich ('thick') descriptions of the research site and characteristics of the sample to help others understand the sample and setting. They furthermore argue that generalizability is limited due to the use of non-probability sampling and small sample sizes typical of qualitative studies. On this premise, Cheeseman et al. (2011) contended that the goal of phenomenological research has not been to produce a set of data another may replicate to enable generalizability, rather, to seek rich data that describe and explain a phenomenon in the context to the lived experience of the participants. It is also this possible drawback that gives qualitative studies its unique strength, the rich in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

Reflexivity

Wagner et al. (2012) argue that qualitative research can never be completely value-free, but it is critical to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the research by recognising the researcher's subjectivity and biases, how these may influence the findings, and to use strategies to overcome them as much as possible. Laher et al. (2019) argue that a reflexive researcher is one who is aware of all potential influences and is able to step back and take a critical look at his or her own role in the research process. Jootun and McGee's (2009) study illustrated that reflexivity is an invaluable tool to promote understanding of the phenomenon under study and the researcher's role. These authors argue that by bringing to consciousness the researcher's beliefs, he/she is in a better position to approach the topic honestly, openly and without judgement.

Berger (2013) stated that one goal of reflexivity is to enhance the accuracy of the research and the credibility of the findings through the conscious and deliberate effort of the researcher accounting for and monitoring his/her values, beliefs, knowledge and biases and its effects on the research process and findings. This means that the researcher should be alert at all times not to impose, interpret or analyse his/her own beliefs or worldviews as if it is that of the participants. For example, being a single parent shaped my own preconceived belief that single fathers fare better in rearing competent children than single mothers. On this belief all the participants stated that their neighbourhoods and poverty, and not their childrearing endeavours per se, played the leading role in their youth's offending behaviour.

"Bracketing" (that is setting aside one's own preconceived beliefs, personal biases and experiences of the phenomenon under study) to gain a clear, unaltered, non-judgemental account of participants' views and experiences, sound easier in theory than to do it in practice. To overcome such preconceived beliefs and biases in the current study, I kept a separate log capturing my opinions and views on each topic under discussion, especially at times when I felt that my views differed strongly from that of participants, (for example, when I held the impression that most single mothers find themselves in their predicament because of their own doing; half of the participants mentioned that the loss of their husbands through death were devastating and thus not of their own doing) which later proved to be invaluable during the analysis of the data and this effort added to the crystallisation of data.

To embrace our different views I found myself in accord with Smith (1998) who contended that acknowledging complexity mean that we should always be open to the unexpected, that there are always different interpretations, that the things we take for granted are not universal, and that the way we see the world is just one way of producing meaning.

Chapter summary

Chapter 3 discussed the qualitative research design adopted and justified the rationale behind the constructivist paradigm followed by the study. I explained the inclusion criteria to participate and how study participants were recruited. The interview as data collection technique was explained and an explanation of the data analysis procedure was given. In conclusion to this chapter I highlighted how ethical principals were observed and discussed the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Chapter 4 that follows presents and discusses the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Presentation and discussion of results

Introduction

This chapter present and discuss the results obtained from the analysis of the interviews conducted with single mothers of offending youth in the Western Cape, South Africa. I commence by introducing each participant to the reader and then take a quick walk through the two geographical areas identified for the purpose of this study. In subsequent sections the findings which contain excerpts from the shared narratives of participants to demonstrate the authenticity of their lived experiences are discussed. This is presented in themes which surfaced from the analysis of the data, compared to the literature reviewed and incorporated into the theoretical framework which was chosen to provide a holistic picture. To commence and get a better understanding of the participants' stories, one has to have some idea who is telling it and subsequently I provide a brief description of the participants in the next section.

Participant' profiles

In the interest of confidentiality and privacy guaranteed to participants pseudonyms were used to identify participants, and although the rest of the information is accurate, it will be difficult, if not impossible to identify any participant through this short summary; the excerpts taken from their stories or the analysis or themes that follow.

Participant 1 – Theresa

Theresa is a single mother of three children, one daughter and two sons. Her eldest son's (24 years old) offending behaviour was identified for the purpose of this study, although it became evident during the interview that her youngest son was also displaying the same behaviour. She is 43 years old and lives in Elsies River. She lived in the area all her life and had been a single mother for more than 18 years, but claimed that: *The area is very dangerous and you are not even safe in your own home.* She is presently romantically involved with a man and hope to get married in the near future.

She works as a caretaker of an elderly woman and is the sole provider for her family, but her employment robs her of much time away from her children as it requires her to sleep-in at her place of employment most days of the week.

Participant 2 – Donnay

Donnay is the single mother of four children, three daughters and a son of 19 and the offending youth under discussion. She is 43-years- old and lives in Elsies River. She has been a resident at her current address all her life and is not romantically involved with anybody, because in her words: *Mans is abusive en ek het genoeg gehad!* (Men are abusive and I had enough!) She is unemployed and the maintenance she receives for her two youngest daughters from their father is her only constant income, but she supplements this through babysitting some of the neighbours’ children when opportunity presents itself.

Participant 3 – Clarice

Clarice is the single mother of two children, a daughter and her eldest is a son of 24 years of age and the identified offending youth. She is 44 years old and lives in Delft. She is presently single and as she put it: *Ek was nog nooit nie getroud nie, but by choice. Op die oomblik wil ek net focus op my en my kinders.* (I never got married, but by my own choice and at the moment I just want to focus on myself and my children). She is presently unemployed and survives on the maintenance of her daughter’s father’s contributions and monthly dividends from an investment she made with a payment she received when she terminated her last employment.

Participant 4 – Josephine

Josephine is a single mother of three sons. Her middle 28 year old child’s offending behaviour was identified as the focus for her involvement with this study, but also shared that her eldest son had the same offending behaviour, but has since turned his life around. She is 50 years old and lives in Delft. She is unemployed and her only income is a government disability grant, because of injuries to her knees, but said that she supplements this by baking cakes occasionally. She has been single since her husband died 15 years ago and as she phrased it: *Nee, dankie, ek wil nie weer 'n man he nie, want sal nooit weer daai man kry nie.* (No thank you, I am not interested in men, because no other man will be able to replace the husband I had).

Geographical characteristics

Both areas identified for the purpose of this study have similar characteristics that appear to be shared throughout the townships or suburbs in the Western Cape, South Africa. Blocks of flats are visible everywhere and these are commonly overcrowded areas that make-up these neighbourhoods. These congested spaces are well-known for their criminogenic elements, such as gangsterism, drugs and alcohol outlets, unemployment, loitering and turf wars.

The heterogeneity of the people that make up these communities are an example of the Rainbow Nation South Africans are so proud of, but this is not as beautiful as it may sound, because it is also this diversity of races and cultures that in many instances lead to friction and feelings of detachment amongst community members. This is especially evident during the allocation of housing units and the provision of employment prospects which is most often based on racial classifications, political affiliations and discrimination. Such actions leave these communities divided and consequently lead to community rivalry and uprisings, not only against the government for service delivery issues amongst others, but more often against each other.

Driving through the areas to meet up with participants at their respective homes, and although I was familiar to some extent with these areas, was an uneasy journey. This was also the reason for the delay in the completion of the interviews as on numerous occasions gangster related shootings claimed lives and retaliation attacks were expected in the very areas where the interviews were conducted. On this concern Lambrechts (2012, p. 4) concurs and recounted: *There was a moment of calm, no shootings, and we used that opportunity to collect the data.* This occurred in a similar area to the areas identified for the present study called Manenburg in the Western Cape. In two such shootings, and shared by the participant mothers, it was alleged that two of the participants' sons, one in Elsies River and the other in Delft, were involved and on the run and in one instance the participant' mother, and even her daughter, was threatened and they became the targets for retribution attacks. Whether such allegations were true or not, local daily newspapers' confirmations and pictures (see appendix E, Warning: Not for sensitive readers) of slain bodies of youngsters lying and dying on pavements and in the streets, almost on a daily basis, and communities under siege has become all too real in these neighbourhoods (see for example local reports in the daily Sun newspapers: Duval, 2019; Francke, 2019; Serra, 2019).

Creating a favourable environment with this knowledge to conduct the interviews as mentioned by Nieman (1998) thus became a challenge by itself. Nevertheless, I felt it necessary that if I wanted to get the full picture and experience of these single mothers, I had to experience their home environment, neighbourhoods and living conditions, even if it was only for the period needed to conduct the interviews. In the next section I will present and discuss the themes that surfaced from the analysis of these interviews.

Presentation and discussion of results

Table: Themes derived from the study

THEME 1	A lonely journey
THEME 2	Dead or alive
THEME 3	I have to get out
THEME 4	His tjap, his family
THEME 5	Nobody met me halfway
THEME 6	Thy grace is enough

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data painted the same bleak picture drawn by the literature reviewed and identified more similarities than differences. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory appropriately displayed how each system of these single mothers through their activities to cope and overcome obstacles interlinked and interacted on each other to become the whole of their existence. The themes identified do not necessarily follow chronologically and the dynamics in any given system are continually changing, for example at one time some of these mothers were romantically involved or employed and the next moment they were not. This inter-activity of events at times showed resilience and provided hope at one time and at another brought feelings of despair and hopelessness that only these single mothers could narrate.

Another interesting point which brought to the fore the authenticity of the stories of these mothers were their responses to the questions from the interview schedule drawn up prior to the interviews. It was hoped that the schedule would direct and guide participants' responses so that at the end their responses would either substantiate or contradict available knowledge gathered through the literature reviewed, because it was based and drawn up from the literature reviewed focusing on the most pressing issues identified. Although their responses did exactly that, I got the feeling that either I was a very incompetent interviewer (I would blame that on it being my first time as an interviewer) or these mothers did not need a schedule to guide their stories to what it was like to be a single mother of an offending youth. Furthermore, the sameness narrated through their stories and the way in which they responded, I felt, was directly linked to the saturation of data, a prerequisite required for an academic study, meaning that when saturation of data was reached, no new data will emerge even if many more participants are added. For example, when asked what it was like being a single mother, the interview schedule appeared to serve no purpose, because the participants were answering most of questions posted in the schedule without me asking it, such as, how did they become single mothers; what happened to the fathers; and how did the offending behaviour of their youth started. Reading through the transcripts I realised that this talkativeness and freedom of speech was also one of the motivations why I wanted to do this type of exploration in the first place as I remember how mothers would phone during the course of my duties as a correctional officer for a simple enquiry and continue talking long after the enquiry had been adequately responded to and answered.

It is on such evidence that the literature reviewed, and substantiated by the present study, revealed more similarities in the experiences of single mothers across the globe than differences, whether studies were conducted in neighbouring countries, such as Botswana (Makhumalo, 2015), Zimbabwe (Mbanefo, 2013) or more further afield, , such as the United States (Bernardi & Mortelmans, 2018) or United Kingdom (Young et al., 2014), whether rural (Greeff & Fillis, 2009) or urban (Makhumalo, 2015). The adversities and what appears as never-ending distresses; the plea for help and assistance and the resilience and perseverance were strikingly similar. It became apparent that to the majority of single mothers the only major issue, and with specific focus on the present study, was not so much the offending behaviour of their youth or the absence of the fathers, but consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) argument, that the economy (much to blame on the government at the order of the day) creates situations that make lone mother families 'dysfunctional'. To make for an easy read and understanding, I present the most pressing points through excerpts from the interviews to validate its authenticity; incorporate Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory to show its applicability and identify the connections or similarities/differences, if any, between the participants' experiences and the literature reviewed.

Theme 1:A lonely journey

Most studies cited on single motherhood emphasised that family is the cornerstone of any society and that there is a trend away from the nuclear family, towards single parenthood, with single mothers predominantly in control (Greeff & Fillis, 2009; Ntshongwana, 2010; Youngleson, 2006) including government departments such as the Department of Correctional Services (2005) and the Department of Social Welfare (1997). Stats SA General Household Survey, 2018 projected 6,1 million, or 37,9% of households in SA were headed by women. The literature reviewed identified numerous factors that lead to single motherhood and many of these were substantiated through the responses of the mothers involved in this study. It was interesting to note how many of these studies, when focused on one aspect or occurrence due to the single status and the consequent evolution of events to follow from that single experience, provided a striking display of how it affected these single mothers on a daily basis. For instance, studies were found that explain the absence of fathers or economic change and the forced role of single mothers to adopt the breadwinner responsibility (Parry, 2014); the perception of ideal motherhood and the impossibility of achieving it when structural circumstances are considered (Youngleson, 2006); and the social needs and childcare challenges faced by single mothers (Makhumalo, 2015; Ntshongawa, 2010). It makes it appropriate to start with the events that identify how and even why these mothers became lone parents, because it is also this single event which determined how they coped and handled the events that followed. In this study, two of the mothers were never married and two were widowed and although the absence of the fathers was brought about by different reasons, all of these mothers expressed directly how lonely and troublesome the journey of a single mother is. Theresa said after the loss of her husband who was killed during a vehicle accident:

> *It was a very sad and dark time for me to raise my two children as a single mother and ever since his death I went through a very difficult time.*

Josephine shared with tears in her eyes when she talked about her husband who was killed during a cash-and-transit robbery:

> *Nadat hulle hom weggesit het in die grond…Vader! Ek kan dit nie verduidelik nie. Dit was die swaarste oomblik in my lewe (swallowing down her emotions in an attempt to stop tears from rolling down her cheeks) en ek het net gevoel om saam met hom in die graf te spring! En soos die eensaamheid ingetree het, het ek my toevlug na drank geneem. Ek was later ‘n alkolis.*
>
> (When they buried my husband... Lord! I cannot explain it. (Swallowing down her emotions in her attempt to stop tears from rolling down her cheeks) It was the most difficult moment in my life and I just felt like jumping into the grave with him. And as the feelings of loneliness took hold of me, I took comfort in the use of alcohol. At the end, I became an alcoholic (Self-acclaimed).

The loss of their husbands was sudden and profoundly emotionally felt and coping not only with the absence of their husbands, but also the absence of the fathers of their children and the unexpected sole responsibilities for their children, was clearly very difficult. This disturbance of the equilibrium in the microsystem of these families produced a trajectory that was not planned for or foreseen and the adaptation to it would become the deciding factor that determined what effects were to follow in the rest of their ecological systems and the narratives of their lives. This change in the microsystem is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory which argued that every ecological transition (that is whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role or setting, or both) is both a consequence and an instigator of developmental processes. In my attempt to understand what Bronfenbrenner (1979) meant by 'consequence' I found myself stuck on the meaning 'result' or 'outcome' and it made sense. For example, if the father deserts the mother, his absence becomes the consequence, thus the result or outcome leading to the single status of the mother and the mother is forced to instigate some sort of intervention, such as taking on the breadwinner role or finding some outside assistance if possible. After closer examination, I think Bronfenbrenner (1979) used the word 'consequence' to mean 'moment' or 'significance' and it made more sense. Taking the same sentence above: If the father deserts the mother, his absence alters the ecological environment, thus changing the family structure and functioning, which results in the mother having to instigate alternatives to maintain the rest of her family intact and functional. Although both of the above sound the same, the connotation attached to the latter implies a broader impact for those involved as was evident through the narratives of participants.

On the following narratives Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory became even more substantial and applicable as the absence of these fathers had different consequences and the mothers instigated dissimilar interventions. Clarice expressed how she became a single mother:

> *Hy het vir my gese dat hy by sy familie gaan kuier en nog nooit return nie en ek het ook nie gebother om hom op te gaan soek nie. Vir my om 'n single ouer te wees, is part of life.*
>
> (He told me that he was going to visit his family and he never returned and I did not bother to go and search for him. For me being a single parent is part of life).

Donnay emotionlessly explained:

> *Hy het my gereeld fisies aangerand. Verderaan het hy ook met drugs gesmokkel en het eendag involved geraak met een van sy guards en hy het hom doodgesteek gedurende n bakleiery oor geld of iets. Hy is toe gearresteer en het 25 jaar tronkstraf gekry. Ek was vry die oomblik toe hulle hom opgesluit het!*
>
> (He was constantly physically abusive towards me. Furthermore, he smuggled with drugs and on one occasion he was involved in a fight with one of his guards over money or something and he fatally stabbed the guard. He was arrested and was sentenced to 25 years' incarceration. I was free the moment he was locked-up).

It was thought-provoking to how these dissimilar separations affected these mothers differently, because it also affected how they were able to manage and cope with their lives and children. One factor, according to Cheeseman et al. (2011), in adapting to changes in the family structure is time. The authors found that some benefited from the experience, which seemed to be the case in Clarice and Donnay's separations where the absence of their partners gave the impression that a burden was lifted and no sense of loss was experienced; others experienced temporary psychological distress and returned to similar functioning shortly thereafter; yet some experienced on-going distress without recovery, as appeared to be the case with Josephine and Theresa as they continued to mourn the loss of their husbands. It is difficult to ascertain whether the sudden departure of their husbands or their marital status, or both, played a role in intensifying their loss and subsequent recovery. What made matters worse for these two mothers was that both also had more than one son displaying offending behaviour which included serious offences, such as allegations of murder, arson and rape. Both mothers were also warned that their own lives might be at risk and thus macrosystem effects as illustrated by the next two excerpts started to pervade their lives and homes.

Josephine said:

> *Die jongmense sal altyd vir my sê… wees maar net versigtig, want as hulle nie u seun kry nie, dan vat hulle sommer die ouer.*

> (The young people will always warn me to be careful, because if they can't find my son, they will shoot me.)

Theresa articulated it as follows:

> *They threatened my daughter from inside prison (correctional centre) and said that if they can't find my son, they will kill her. I was in a state (very anxious)!*

These types of micro and macro concerns or fears can have a paralysing effect that can psychologically make these mothers feel exasperated and emotionally drained (Glaser et al., 2005). This can further lead to the isolation from others, such as family members or neighbours that may otherwise have provided support and will be discussed later. Apart from these events, all the mothers were in solidarity and in accord with the literature that being a single parent is a difficult task and that their financial obligations, apart from their neighbourhoods, were their major concern. Clarice said:

> *Om die waarheid te sê dit gaan sleg! Dit is survival om elke dag iets op die tafel te sit en te sorg dat die lig brand*.
>
> (To tell you the truth it is difficult! It is a matter of survival to place food on the table and to ensure that the lights keep burning.)

Donnay worded it like this:

> *Dit voel wanneer jy so sukkel of jy alleen is en niemand gee om nie, maar daar is baie wat swaarkry.*
>
> (When you struggle this much it feels like you are alone and that nobody cares, but there are many who are living in poverty.)

At the time of the interviews three of the mothers were unemployed and during the course of the study Theresa, the only one who was employed by caring for an elderly lady, but who was hospitalised at the time, passed away, consequently leading to all the participants finding themselves unemployed. It was interesting to note that Donnay found some comfort in the knowledge that she was not alone in her struggles and that poverty was all around her.

In conclusion to this theme, these microsystem effects appear to be experienced differently by these single mothers, yet the similarities of the lonely and difficult journey seems universal to all of them. It is also in these microsystems that the plight of single mothers echoed in the numerous studies reviewed came to the fore and the difficulties that made their lonely journey unbearable at times. In the themes that follow these microsystem effects interact and overlap onto the other systems of their lives and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory's empirical value becomes explicit in understanding these mothers' experiences. In the next theme that emerged from the data, it would appear that even though the absence of the fathers left these mothers single; the type of men and fathers they were played the crucial role in how these mothers experienced their departure.

Theme 2: Dead or alive

Fathers have a unique role to play that is different from mothers (Simmons et al., 2018). It is on such views that the notions or conceptions of fatherhood are constructed and how the roles of men as fathers become socially imbedded and is furthermore dependent on socio-cultural and economic contexts (Mavungu et al., 2013). Numerous studies highlighted the important effects a father's presence or absence has on basically all aspects of the family's life course trajectories (Mabusela, 2014; Sylvester, 2010). The above theme explored the effects this absence had on the mothers involved and the different life course forced upon their families. What was of particular interest to the present study was the role and impact the fathers played in their sons' development and behaviour which was consistent with Goldberg (2014) and Berk's (2013) arguments that the relationship between family instability and young people's life paths were gendered and thus the absence of a father maybe more salient for the life paths of young men. Not surprising then that Samara's (2010) male youth offender participants blamed the absence of their fathers for their offending behaviour. Theresa agreed with the above and expressed herself like this:

> *I think because of his father's passing when he was six years old, my eldest son lacked some guidance or something. I tried my best, but apparently it was not good enough.*

Josephine shared these sentiments:

> *Hy was 'n goeie pa. Hulle was op die bol! Alles het verkeerd gegaan nadat hulle pa dood is.*
>
> (He was a good father. They were good children. Everything went wrong after their father died.)

This direct link articulated by these mothers supported the literature concerning the impact fathers can have on their children. The permanent state of the fathers' absence caused by their deaths, and the sudden disruption of the family structure, left these mothers disheartened and alone. Finding themselves not only having to cope with the loss of their partners, but also having to deal with the sole responsibility to keep their families intact and to deal with and support their children became overwhelming. The offending behaviour of their son, did not only create another obstacle to overcome, but made them feel that they were failing as parents and furthermore laid emphasis on the significance of the absence of the fathers and their loss.

Contrary to the above exploration, the narratives shared by mothers concerning the fathers who were alive painted a totally different picture. Eight years after coming to terms with her husband's death and the turmoil his absence left, combined with the adversities their son's offending brought about, Theresa decided to give herself another chance at happiness and got involved with her youngest son's father. She disappointedly expressed her experience as follows:

> *I have the same problem with my youngest son now that I had with my eldest son. His father was very violent and abusive and I had to get out of the relationship. I thought it was the best thing I could do, but did not think about the effects this would have on my son.*

Donnay who experienced a similar fate involving partner violence, was in favour of her son's father's absence due to his incarceration, but acknowledged the impact he had on their son. She articulated this as follows:

> *Om dit alleen te doen, is beter as om dit met 'n 'weakass' te doen, maar die pa weet nie eers dat sy afwesigheid die grootste, indien nie die sole rede is vir my kind se gedrag nie*.
>
> (Doing it alone is better than doing it with a weakling. His father does not even realise that his absence may be the primary, if not the sole reason for my son acting out.)

Apart from the physical abuse, the additional lack of emotional and financial support due to the absence of these fathers, and as Theresa explained that he lived a few houses down the road, yet showed no interest in being involved in his son's life while Donnay lost the maintenance he used to pay prior to his incarceration, contributed to the adversities these mothers had to face. The results of these microsystem events are consistent with Kretzschmar et al. (2009) when they contended that indifferent, absent and cruel parents can blight and ruin a child's life. Jekeliek (1998, as cited in Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011) supports both these mothers' decisions and argued that when the negative consequences through continuous conflict outweigh the benefits of an intact family structure, everyone fares better should a divorce or separation occur. Berk (2013) contested that marriage or contact with the child's biological father benefits children only when the father is a reliable source of economic and emotional support compared to a mother who decides to pair up with an antisocial father, her child is at greater risk of conduct problems than if she had reared the child alone. On this premise Simmons et al. (2018) contended that it will be irresponsible to encourage fathers to be involved without acknowledging the importance of the father-child relationship. The authors found that the presence of fathers that are hostile, harsh or cold poses a greater risk for their youth that may lead to more offending behaviour and substance use than youth with absent fathers.

It may be on such findings and her own experience that Donnay resiliently expressed that she can do better on her own and was consistent with Edin's (2000) low-income single mother participants who argued that they can do 'bad' by themselves spreading from their painful experiences of the dangers of depending on men for economic and emotional commitments and therefore did not need or want men in their lives to make matters worse. In contrast it would appear that Theresa blamed herself for her youngest son's father's departure and the consequent misbehaviour of her son. This self-blame was also noticeable concerning her eldest son where she felt that her efforts were not good enough to bring about positive change to her son's behaviour. These kinds of emotions can lead to negative psychological effects; a breakdown in the parent-child relationship that can exacerbate an already tense and troubled situation and the possibility of parental exasperation which is positively associated with future youth offending behaviour (Glaser et al., 2005; Muldrum et al., 2016). Whether these fathers were dead or alive, their influence is undeniable - fathers have a unique role to play in their youth's lives that is separate from mothers (Simmons et al. 2018). On the above statement, Clarice responded:

> *Ja, die pa speel 'n rol. Die pa kan miskien 'n beter rol gespeel het, maar as 'n mens kyk… obviously was hy nie prepared om responsibility te vat vir sy kind nie.*
>
> (Yes, the father plays a role. He could have played a better role though, but it was obvious that he was not prepared to take the responsibility of raising his child).

Donnay made the choice sound simple and easy and positioned the father's absence or presence like this:

> *Hy het 'n keuse… bly of gaan… ek het nie.*
>
> (He has a choice to stay and to be part of his child's life or not. I don't have that choice.)

These kinds of responses and whatever the reasons for the absence of the fathers may be, left these mothers to shield off all attacks on their families alone, even with some of these fathers still alive. The literature provided an abundance of suggestions on why they were absent and the mothers in the present study supported it by providing their own, such as desertion, death and incarceration. It furthermore seemed that the reasons for the fathers' absence prevailed over the reasons for them to be present. Even studies cited to get fathers' perspectives on why they are absent, such as Konami and Kombi’s (2010) participant single fathers in Kenya who alluded to nagging and assertive wives who were never taught to respect their husbands; made them feel inadequate in performing their duties as head of their families, alcohol and drug use and unemployment for their absence. Reasons provided from within a South African context were, among others, the inability to pay ‘lobola’ and extended family interferences, the high levels of unemployment for men or to find an occupation that could provide a sustainable income to support their families and incarceration (Myers, 1999).

In conclusion to this theme, the search for the light at the end of the tunnel in terms of the absence of fathers is provided by Franklin et al’s. (2014) research which found that some fathers want to be part of their children’s lives, view having a loving relationship with their children as desirous and important and want to be in partnership with their mother and co-reside with the family. To accomplish this, Mavungo et al. (2013) suggested that fatherhood conceptions are socially constructed and can thus be re-constructed to made provisions for alternative roles apart from the provider-role as the only role a father can play, such as emotional and care-giving roles to allow fathers to be part of their children’s lives. Initiatives such as the ‘Fatherhood Project’ to get fathers more involved with their children can thus become fruitful. The absence of the fathers irrefutably had major effects on the microsystems of these mothers, whether they are alive or deceased, and the ripple effect moved throughout the whole home, and unsurprisingly played a role in the next theme to surface.

Theme 3: I have to get out

One consistent factor most studies on single mothers have in common is the socio-economic disadvantage single mother families face. Appropriate for the present study, Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2014) stated that poor financial resources are responsible for single-mother households being located in small residences, backyard dwellings, and substandard housing and in areas of towns with increased violence, lower quality schools and loss of familiar and developed community support. Although most of the participants were living in their own houses, except for Donnay, who was staying in the overcrowded block of flats mentioned earlier in the study, all participants expressed an unwavering desire to leave their respective areas as an attempt to escape their neighbourhood circumstances and to create a better future for their children elsewhere. Theresa felt confident when she said:

> *I hope to move end of this year or early next year. Ek moet net hier uitkom!*
>
> (I hope to move out of this area by the end of this year or early next year. I just have to get out of this area!).

Clarice responded as such when she was asked that if she could move, will she move:

> *Sonder n oogblink! As iemand nou vir my se pak jou sakkies, daar is n beter plek vir jou. Al moet ek net my klere vat, ek trek!*
>
> (At the blink of an eye! If someone has to tell to me now to pack my stuff; there is a better place for me. Even if I only have to take my clothes, I will move.)

Donnay jokingly said:

> *As ek die lotto wen, koop ek n groot huis ver van hier af.*
>
> (If I win the national lottery; I am going to buy me a big house far from here.)

These responses highlighted these mothers' discomfort, intense desire and hope to get out of their respective areas as a way to solve not only their immediate personal circumstances, but also in a sense to eliminate the motivating factor their neighbourhoods provide for their sons' behaviour and preventing the same fate befalling the other siblings. Unfortunately, all the mothers were unemployed at the conclusion of the study, and as such Donnay's option of winning the national lottery or Clarice's imaginary proposal from someone offering her the opportunity to get out of her area, appear to be the most likely chances of these mothers ever getting out of their respective neighbourhoods, but even this slight possibility may provide some hope.

Consistently all participants felt that the criminogenic factors within their neighbourhoods, such as gangsterism, drugs and alcohol abuse and loitering to name a few, played a major role in their sons' offending behaviour. The literature, especially Lambreths' (2012) study on gangsterism in such areas painted a picture of just how severe the situation can get regarding these concerns and provided an understanding why these mothers' yearn to 'get out' of their respective areas. For example, I was made aware during my brief visit by participants of the many informal alcohol outlets (*yards or shebeens*) and places where drugs such as methamphetamine (*tik*), marijuana (*dagga*) and mandrax (*buttons*) can be purchased and this supported Brown-Luthango et al. (2016) arguments that these elements play a major role why crime and violence increases in such areas. Furthermore, the immediate environments of these single mothers reinforced what Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2014) argued that physical disorder such as litter, graffiti on walls and buildings and poorly maintained houses may give the idea that nobody cares what goes on in the neighbourhood and the impression that delinquent or criminal acts can be committed without getting caught. The hopelessness and exasperation these mothers expressed was consistent with Janssen et al. (2016) indication that parenting as a protective factor may be futile in criminogenic settings where these elements can outweigh any decisions they make. These authors furthermore are consistent with Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2014) above and argued that unstructured socialising in disordered areas and the visible physical disorder may act as a "cue" that rule breaking and deviance may be regarded as acceptable in a particular area. Participants in the present study agreed with the above arguments and on this basis Clarice told me that I would run away after my first weekend in her neighbourhood and Theresa more than once said:

> *I don't know what to do anymore…*

These mesosystem transactions spreading from the criminogenic factors in these neighbourhoods clearly aggravated the already overburdened microsystems of these mothers in their attempt to handle the offending behaviour of their sons. Suggestions such as that of Murray et al. (2001) that when families live in dangerous neighbourhoods, single mothers may adopt a more authoritarian parenting style through more rule setting and stricter boundaries to protect their children seemed to be ineffective to these mothers. This ineffectiveness was not due to the lack of the efforts from these mothers to protect their youth, but because either their sons were on the run fearing for their own lives and/or not residing at home most of the time. Their neighbourhoods had become a war zone and as Theresa and Josephine, after the son of the latter allegedly shot two men, respectively exclaimed:

> *Oh! A lot of shootings and killings! My son is safer away from this area.*
>
> *Dit het ons lewe omvergegooi, want nou kan hy nie meer in Delft loop nie, want hulle wil hom doodskiet.*
>
> (It disturbed our way of living and now he has to avoid Delft, because they want to kill him).

The above narratives described the characteristics of these neighbourhoods and the major effects that derailed these mothers' lives. The absence of and lack of support from the fathers, their unemployed status and the inability to escape their neighbourhoods in a sense may not have been that devastating if the criminogenic effects stayed away from or out of their homes. Gangsterism and the criminal elements that goes with it was always present in these neighbourhoods and part of these communities since the apartheid era and will always be present (Lambrechts, 2012). That being said made the next theme that surfaced the crux of the matter to these mothers as they had to come to terms with their sons' involvement in gangsterism and thus brought the very elements they despise of their neighbourhoods within their homes.

Theme 4: His tjap, his family

The previous themes illuminated participants' experiences of how their troublesome journeys started as single mothers; the influence of the fathers' absence not only on the disruption of the family as a unit, but also the specific gendered impact on their sons' development. This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory that the individual and his or her patterns of behaviour are formed by and a part of larger systems of influence which begin with one's family and then extend to include, to name a few, peer groups, school systems, and neighbourhoods. As evident in the previous theme, gangsterism is a major issue in these neighbourhoods, but for most residents it is an outside factor, away from home, and for these single mothers realising or discovering that their children are part of a criminal gang caused enormous emotional distress.

To shed some light on what a criminal gang is, Young et al. (2014) provided the most appropriate definition for the purpose of this study. They defined a gang as a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify and lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs (Young at el., 2014). The discernibility of a gang is in most instances displayed by the power or authority a group has and on this Lambrechts (2012) provided an idea of the power dynamics criminal gangs yield in these areas that goes beyond a group of young people, with a much more sophisticated hierarchical structure and covert activities that makes them much more effective in achieving their criminal objectives. The identifying structural feature or what participants referred to with much anger and with a feeling of hopelessness as a 'tjap' or 'stamp' referred to a gangster tattoo which represent the many gang affiliations operating in correctional centres and in these neighbourhoods. Participants gave the impression that the tattoo was the final nail in the coffin and an indication to them that marked the end to them from ever saving their youth from the path of destruction they have chosen. Theresa shared her disappointment when she saw for the first time her son had a gangster tattoo and explained how she attempted to scratch the tattoo off her son's back while tears were rolling down her face:

> *I never thought in a million years he would get involved with such things, because I gave him my best!*

Clarice contended with a deep sigh:

> *Die eerste keer toe ek die stamp sien; dit het my hart gebreek, want dit het dit net official gemaak. Ek het my kind verloor. Hy behoort nou aan die gangsters. Hulle is nou sy familie.*
>
> (It broke my heart when I saw the 'stamp' (gangster tattoo) and I knew that I have lost my child. He belonged to the gangsters now. They are his family now).

Josephine said:

> *Die dag toe ek van die werk afkom en sien my kind is 'uitgestamp' was n groot skok. Ek het net gese: Here! Here! My kind wat doen jy? Jy stel jou lewe in gevaar. Jy stel my lewe in gevaar, want jy kan nie wegdraai of wegloop nie.*
>
> (The day I came home from work and saw that my child had a gangster tattoo I was shocked and just cried… Lord! Lord! My child what are you doing? You are placing your life and my life in danger, because you cannot turn back or walk away from it.)

Donnay whose son was the youngest of all the offending youth in this study saw the tattoo on her son's shoulder after he was released from a youth detention centre and said:

> *Ek was diep teleurgesteld, maar hy het verduidelik dat hy nie 'n keuse gehad het nie en nou dat hy buite die tronk is, stel hy nie regtig belang in gangsterism nie en ek glo hom.*
>
> (I was very disappointed, but he explained to me that he did not had much of choice, but now that he is not in the detention centre anymore, he is not interested in gangsterism any longer, and I believed him.)

The above excerpts made these mothers' disappointments and fears explicit. On the question why their sons or the youth in general would join gangs, the responses were somewhat diverse, but all felt that the absence of their fathers played a role. On this premise Young et al. (2014) argued that youngsters are attracted to gangs because they seek a surrogate family to fulfil an emotional need, with the gang leader as the "father". Clarice felt that the youth are forced into gangsterism by larger gangs as explained by Lambrechts (2012) and Theresa and Donnay argued that in correctional centres they do not have a choice but to join a gang to survive because of the pervasiveness of the gang culture within correctional centres (Albertse, 2007). Maderthaner (2005) offered opportunities that are attractive to the youth, such as to obtain quick and easy money and drugs, attaining a certain status within the community, for the protection from other gangs as a result of violence in the community and schools; being labeled as a gang member and lastly for a sense of belonging as reasons for the youth joining a gang.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that if the relationship in the immediate microsystem breaks down, that is the parent/child relationship, such as ineffective supervision and child support due to attempts to overcome economic hardships or the absence of an authority figure like a father, for example, the child will look to others for affirmation. Most mothers stated that their employment obligations robbed them of much of the time to adequately supervise their children, but argued that this was necessary and had to be done to provide for them and to give them a better life. On this premise Bronfenbrenner (1979) reasoned that the economy creates the most destructive force to a child's development through the conditions of parental employment. Roman (2011) supports the participants arguments and on par with Bronfenbrenner (1979) and pointed out that the quality of childcare or parenting is frequently compromised due to the length of time spent working in order to support their children in single-mother families and these mothers may often suffer from strain and chronic fatigue which could result in ineffective parenting compared to married mothers with the assistance of a partner. Clarice and Josephine confirmed this and contended:

> *Gewerk… vroeg oggende uit… kom in die aande huistoe, te moeg om my kind te vra hoe was sy dag, tyd te spandeer, te luister of hy 'n goeie of slegte dag gehad het.*
>
> (I worked from early morning till late at night and came home too exhausted to ask my child how his day went, to spend time with him and to listen whether he had a good or bad day.)

This lack of supervision and consistent absence may have further led to all the youth in the present study not completing their schooling and thus created ample time for them to idle unconstructively. As evident in Josephine's story, at times some of these mothers did not even know that their youth are not attending school until the school informed them. Berk (2013) pointed out that families living in low-income, high-risk neighbourhoods often feel disconnected to their children's school as they face daily stresses that reduce their energy for school involvement. Although Berk (2013) described the neighbourhoods and daily stresses of the participants correctly, these single mothers were very much involved with their children's schools in an attempt to prevent their youth from dropping out and in their attempts to find help. Theresa persistently attempted and shared the following on her last attempt:

> *He left school and even when he left, I went to the school principal… Help me? Isn't there someone that can help me to get my son back in school?*

Josephine said that she visited the school even during her working hours when the school contacted her concerning her son, but these efforts were fruitless and they eventually suspended him. It goes without saying that school attendance provided structured activities and adult supervision and without it the youth found themselves loitering around in their dangerous neighbourhoods. The above arguments advocate the ecological interconnectedness and fluidity of events (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of how youth that live in poverty may become trapped in criminogenic neighbourhoods, where schooling may become second priority to them which may subsequently lead to dropping out of school and the inability or lack of interest to find employment (Lambrechts, 2012). This may further lead to unstructured activities and socialisations with like-minded peers and drug and alcohol abuse, which may lead to the forming or joining of criminal gangs to support their addictions, give them a sense of independence and status in the communities and may serve as a means of survival (Young et al., 2014).

These sequences of events, from the microsystem (their homes) and the mesosystem (their neighbourhoods) subsequently led to the youths' arrests and detentions which resulted in the mothers' involvements with the Integrated Security Cluster (ISC), such as Social Services, the DCS, the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the National Prosecuting Authorities (NPA). These macrosystem activities further drained the available resources of these households and left these single mothers exhausted and frustrated. This was directly linked to their continuous involvement with ISC which was not only time-consuming, financially challenging, but also endangered their current employment for those who were employed, because employers do not always ‘understand’. These conditions are risk factors that increase a person’s or family’s susceptibility to negative or undesired outcomes (Greeff & Fillis, 2009). For example, parental exasperation coined by Glaser et al. (2005) as the level of parental resignation and hopelessness a parent feels with regard to their child’s future and the parent’s ability to influence the child was captured in Clarice’s response:

> *Om jou die waarheid te sê, ek mag dit miskien nie sê as ‘n ouer nie, maar as hy dag moet dood, sal dit ‘n groot burden van my skouers afvat. Om te weet dat hy onder die grond en in vrede is, sal my meer at peace laat voel as wat hy in die strate rondloop.*
>
> (To tell you the truth and maybe as a parent I shouldn’t say this, but if he should die, it will remove a huge burden from my shoulders. For me to know that he is buried and at peace, will make me feel more at peace, than him roaming the streets.) Theresa said:
>
> *There was a stage I just thought I was done with him… I’m really done, but as a mom… a mom can’t just throw her kids away.*

On this issue Donnay similarly agreed with the teachers mentioned by Young et al. (2014) when they considered gang members as ‘unteachable’ and had little commitment to teaching them beyond simply getting through the day. She said heatedly:

> *Julle outsiders het nie n clue wat dit is om deur elke dag te kom nie. Saans bid om deur die nag te kom en soggens wakker te skrik… hier begin ons weer!*
>
> (Outsiders like you have no idea what it is like getting through each day. You go sleep praying to get through the night, just to start it all over the next day).

From the above expressions it was clear that the offending behaviour was taking its toll on these mothers, with different effects and responses, but as this went on for years they have learned to adapt and persevered. Oh and Chang (2014) expanded on this basis and contended that resilient families respond positively to stress in unique ways, depending on the context, the length of the adversity, the family's developmental level or life stage, and the interactive combination of risk and protective factors.

Such intense emotions can only be understood if you live through the experiences that had become the realities of these mothers, as vividly portrayed through the story of Ellen Pakkies in the film *Ellen* (Areal; Burger & Joshua, 2018). As devastating as it may have been for Ellen to deal with her drug-addicted son, participants in the present study had to add gangsterism to their ordeal. The present study can hardly properly express what these mothers experience and the next question that came to mind was how do these mothers survive? The next theme that emerged was that the above mentioned behaviour of the youth, its consequences and the mothers' efforts to find support exaggerated their exasperation.

Theme 5: Nobody met me halfway

If there is one thing that deepens the adversities and the struggles to overcome obstacles it is the inability to find assistance or help. Murray (2001) stated that if individuals have social skills (i.e. support-seeking behaviours to secure assistance) and emotional support (i.e. supportive behaviours which communicate that others love and care for them) than they are in a better position to obtain instrumental support (i.e. actions that are task directed) to tackle adversities that cause the family distress. This may be all good and well, but many social issues appear to be time-constraint and the lack of assistance when needed can aggravate an already troubled situation. As the theme above illustrated when help was not received for example from the school and the youth consequently dropped out of school or was suspended, the ecological sequences of events made matters considerably worse. Theresa claimed:

> *I was looking for help and it went on like that for a few years. All the doors were shut in my face and nobody even met me halfway*.

These are the same sentiments Ellen Pakkies expressed after seeking help for years for her drug-addicted son, which eventually ended in his death (Areal, Burger & Joshua, 2018). These permanent states of events or outcomes could possibly have been prevented if assistance was provided when it was needed. Many organisations and government departments were identified by participants and some were voluntarily approached for assistance while others became involved as a consequence of the offending behaviour of the youth, such as those identified by the ISC. On this type of intervention or involvement Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that a family must be in trouble to receive assistance and the more troubled their situation became, the more assistance is made available. For the purpose of the present study specific focus was placed on the DCS as the last level of correction and how effective the intervention was. So when participants were asked whether the DCS was instrumental in helping them or their sons, most of the mothers were in concord that the DCS did not help, but worsen their sons' behaviour. Josephine was quite adamant in her response:

> *Die tronk kan nie werk nie, want hulle tik en rook buttons en die beamptes werk saam om die goed in te bring… die dwelms.*
>
> (Incarceration cannot be effective, because offenders are using drugs, such as methamphetamine and mandrax and the correctional officers are in cahoots with them by smuggling the drugs into the correctional centre).

Clarice never visited her son in prison, but said:

> *Wanneer hulle in die tronk is, skryf hulle die mooiste briewe met die mooiste woorde. Hulle het baie tyd om te dink in die tronk oor hulle behaviour en wat hulle gedoen het om daar te beland, maar wanneer hulle daar uitkom, is hulle maar net weer dieselfde.*
>
> (When they are in detention they write the loveliest letters with the nicest words. They have a lot of time available in correctional centres to ponder over what they have done and why they are in detention, but when they are released, they just continue in their old ways.)

On this premise the DCS is in agreement that if the circumstances that lead individuals to commit crime in the first place are unchanged, and the social development and moral regeneration of the community have not taken place, the tendency towards recidivism will remain high, despite the DCS rehabilitation efforts (Department of Correctional Services, 2005). This may come across as if the DCS is trying to defend its mandate to correct offending behaviour within correctional centres and that the social circumstances to which offenders are eventually released to outside of the correctional centres are not their concern. It was for this reason that participants felt that detention in correctional centres served only two purposes: (1) the safe custody of their sons and thus away from their neighbourhoods and (2) they knew where their sons were, instead of being continuously on the run.

In contrast to the majority of the present study's participants' attitudes towards the DCS, Mdakane's (2016) study participants contended that despite the inevitable loss of time that accompanies incarceration they demonstrated having gained rather than lost from their incarceration and in such instances it would appear that the DCS had a positive impact on these ex-offenders. Donnay felt that the DCS altered both the father's attitude of her eldest child and her offending son's behaviour and expressed it like this:

> *Met hom in die tronk het die abuse gestop en toe hy uitkom, kon ons vir die eerste keer 'n decent conversation het. Die vreeslike kwaadgeid wat hy gehad het was weg.*
>
> (When he was in detention, the abuse stopped and when he was released, we could for the first time have a decent conversation. The terrifying anger he had, was gone).

Concerning her son, this appeared to be the case too after he was released, but she added that she did not trust his peaceful behaviour, because the events leading up to his incarceration were not too long ago:

> *Toe hy uit die tronk kom, was sy gewone vriendekring weg. Dit was nie lank terug nie, maar hy is nou meestal in die huis en heel rustig. Nie seker of sy stilte iets goeds is nie of is dit maar net weer n storm wat broei. Mens weet mos nie wat alles in die tronk gebeur het nie en hier in die ghettos kan jy nie relax nie.*

> (When he was released from detention, his usual circle of friends was gone. It was not long ago, but he spends most of his time indoors now and is quite calm. I am not sure whether his peaceful behaviour is something good or is there another 'storm' brewing inside him. A person can never be sure what happens in correctional centres and here in the ghettos you cannot let your guard down.)

The difference between these responses may be that the rehabilitation programmes provided by the DCS are more directed at sentenced offenders (as was the case with Donnay's partner), as opposed to remand detainees (as was the case with Theresa's son who was detained for approximately 17 months and was eventually acquitted of a rape charge against him). Nevertheless, rehabilitation, according to the DCS, is based on the conviction that every human being is capable of change and transformation if offered the opportunity and the necessary resources (Department of Correctional Services, 2005). Furthermore, the culture of correctional centres and the restrictions on the freedom of movement, amongst others, serve for many as a sufficient deterrent not to commit crime or at the least inhibit the desire to return to detention.

Participants mentioned a few institutions from which they sought help, but in most instances were unsuccessful. Theresa pointed out Chrysalis Academy, an initiative started by the Department of Social Development, Western Cape Government to provide a social crime prevention and upliftment program for the youth at risk. The academy focuses on the individual's physical, psychological and spiritual development, with the aim to achieve realistic and sustainable results. Successful candidates, however, have to comply with a selection criterion which entails that a candidate must be between the ages of 18-25 years, have passed Grade 9 and have a clean criminal record (info@chrysalisacademy.org.za).

Theresa continued:

> *He was a good candidate to go there. Chrysalis phoned me and did a short telephonic interview. Up to now, no-one has contacted me again. I called them back five or six times. They're processing it… whatever that means. After that he dropped out of school. He went to jail for a year and five months.*

Her son was 18 years old at the time, attending school and had no criminal record, and as Theresa observed, was a good candidate to receive help, but this attempt was unsuccessful and it made me wonder how many youths are falling through the cracks due to similar hurdles. It may be on such evidence that Samara (2005) pointed out that already the warning signs have appeared in the growing numbers of youth being held in detention centres and what may be seen as a steady abandonment of young people by the government. On this statement, Arthur (2005) contended that the state and the offender have some responsibility for crime, and that the state can justifiably punish young offenders for their crimes only to the extent that it has fulfilled its obligations to those young people as members of society. Furthermore, if young people commit offences because their childhood history includes abuse and neglect, poor parental supervision or failure to equip them with appropriate decision skills, then it would be more appropriate to assist the family through the provision of various resources and support services, which reduces their isolation and promotes the welfare of the family (Arthur, 2005).

The Ark City of Refuge is a non-profitable organisation which opened its doors in 1992 in response to the extremely high rate of homelessness and unemployment in the Western Cape. Among the people that receive help are street children, the destitute and abused, the terminally ill, drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes and unmarried single mothers. The list of services offered includes schooling, spiritual counselling and skills development to name a few. Referrals can be done by the SAPS, the DCS, Social Services, hospitals and even walk-ins from the street are welcomed. https://www.theark.org.za This appeared to be a good direction for Josephine to take to find the help she needed for her son, but she said:

> *Ek vra hom, kom ek vat jou na die rehabilitasie sentrum toe, dan sal hy sê… Ja, Mammie. Nou ry ek hier vandaan, ongeveer R50 wat ek nie elke tyd het nie, na die plek waar ons afgespreek het, dan is die kind nie daar nie. Nou sit ek maar daar soos 'n groot gek! Dan dink ek by myself… jy wil nie gehelp wees nie.*
>
> (I kept on asking him to accompany him to the rehabilitation centre, and he would agree… "Yes Mommy". Then I would travel to the place that we agreed upon,

> which cost me R50 travelling fees that I don't always have, and he would not pitch-up. I find myself sitting there and waiting like a fool! Those were the times that I thought to myself that he do not want to be helped.)

In this situation it appeared once again that there was help available, whether the organisation was going to assist her and her son, or whether the same fate would befall them, as was the case with Theresa's above mentioned attempt, will remain unanswered, because in this case the offending youth was not interested in being helped. This kind of behaviour once again indicated the complexity and dynamics of social conditions and why an approach of 'one size fits all' to assist these mothers and their youth may not succeed.

Established in 1958, Girls and Boys Town is a national non-profit organisation (NPO) that runs proven and successful programmes to strengthen vulnerable youth. Many of the youth come from broken or poverty-stricken homes, perform badly at school, have discipline issues, reject authority and lack social skills. Girls and Boys Town is accredited with major national, educational regulators that operate in fields of youth care, education, social development, training, non-governmental sector and governance. https://www.girlsandboystown.org.za Clarice never sought help for her offending youth, because according to her she did not know how and where to get in contact with such organisations, but mentioned that the courts can use 'Boystown' as an alternative sentence to direct incarceration. In a similar vein, Donnay did not feel the need to seek help for her son, because she felt convinced that her son's time spend in detention have brought change to his offending behaviour.

On the strength of their social capital, such as friends and family to provide support, the responses were diverse. Donnay said she felt that there might be a 'storm' brewing in her son, but mentioned that she has three elder brothers that will assist her should she needed assistance. Clarice felt that her neighbourhood have changed over the years and that nobody assist each other anymore like in the past, but that everyone now only serve their own interest. Theresa said that her brothers promised to assist her with her son at her husband's funeral, but contended:

> *They were never there! I could never count on them.* Concerning her friends, she said… *I have a small circle of friends and they are very supportive and care about me.*

In conclusion, the complexity and dynamics at play between the mothers and the support structures identified appeared to be fairly noticeable. This includes the ability/inability of institutions, organisations or government departments to cope with the demands of those seeking help; the mothers' efforts to seek and find help and the offending youth wanting to be helped. On this proposition Bronfenbrenner (1979) reasoned that every ecological transition, whether it occurs in the micro-, meso-, macro- or exosystems of individuals, developmental processes transpire, and as such are evident of the chronosystem's dynamic and ever-evolving force. In the next and last theme that surfaced it appeared that a different type of help was available that provided the much needed assistance these mothers yearned for.

Theme 6: Thy grace is enough

This study set out to explore how single mothers deal with their offending youth and the coping mechanisms and support structures they have in place and how they make use of\them. All of the above narrations by participants painted a picture of 'dysfunction' for an outsider looking in, yet under these conditions 'dysfunction' for these mothers were 'normal'. Murray et al. (2001) and Greeff and Ellis (2009) argued that single mother families should not be viewed as stereotypically dysfunctional, but that their resilience, competence and strengths be highlighted to gain a better understanding of their successes. Monama (2007) agrees and sthat single parent families are capable of being cohesive, warm, supportive and favourable to the development of children and children can grow into happy, responsible and emotionally healthy children. The present study was hoping to find this resilience, and the arguments such as those of Walsh (1998, as cited in Bhana & Bachoo, 2011) that any person or family that functions competently should be considered resilient and that life in general is challenging enough to create exposure to risk and therefore families that cope through everyday life should be seen as resilient. The authors above may not have taken the repercussions of an offending youth combined with the effects of a criminogenic neighbourhood in consideration that the participants of the present study found themselves in for many years.

What was interesting from the cited literature, whether it was on single mothers, offending youth or absent fathers, religious believes in these studies appeared not to hold much significance. For participants in the present study, their faith in a higher power not only acted as their stronghold and pillar to hold onto, but was seen as their only hope. Their submissions to their faith were similar to them denying their own needs for the sake of their children, as feminist convictions or dominant views on ideal motherhood expect from them (Moghadam, 2005; Youngleson, 2006). Evident to this Clarice professed parallel to Theresa after Theresa's son was shot several times and landed in the intensive care unit in hospital:

> *It is only by God's grace that my child survives every day.*
>
> *They came to kill him, but by the grace of God he is still here. He could have died, but the Lord gave him a second chance.*

These kinds of testimonies or revelations give hope to these mothers when they experienced difficult times and very much conveyed the emotion in them that there is some good in their circumstances. Taking in consideration what all these mothers are going through as the themes above portrayed, understandingly Donnay did not sound so optimistic:

> *Hoop God sal ons help, maar ek twyfel, maar ek bly maar op my knieë.*
>
> (I hope God will help us, but I doubt that He will, but prayer can make the difference.)

Yet, even Donnay, like all the other participants, gave the idea that their faith in God was the only possible solution to their problems. It may be on this premise that Werner and Smith (1992, as cited in Walsh, 2003) contended that spiritual resources, in deep faith, practices such as prayer and meditation, and religious or congregational affiliation have been found to be wellsprings for resilience. Theresa was in agreement and excitedly shared that her efforts in the past and her steadfast belief that all would turn out for the best was bearing fruit, as she proclaimed:

> *Whenever I used to talk to my son about church or the Lord, he would reject it. Today he is trying to change and is attending church and prayer meetings. Whatever seed I planted that time in him, I can see now. So I must have done something right!*

For the first time in the narratives of her experience Theresa felt that something was going well and her excitement was palpable.. It may be on such moments of faith that resilient families are characterised by active persistence, perseverance, maintenance of hope and optimism, and confidence that they can overcome the odds (Mackay, 2003). It was also this continuous effort that put their faith to action, for example, Josephine showed this persistence and perseverance and worded it through reciting the words of her other two sons:

> *Is deur hom wat Mammie se bene kla is, van tronk in, tronk uit… tronk in, tronk uit hardloop.*
>
> (It is because of him that Mommy's legs are painful, because of continuously running to and fro from correctional centres).

Clarice exasperation did not stop her from being a mother though and she said:

> *Ek kan nie my deure vir my kind toemaak nie, maak nie saak wat hy is of wat hy gedoen het nie. Hy's my kind.*
>
> (I cannot close my door to my child, does not matter who he is or what he has done. He is my child.)

The mothers in the present study appeared to be in agreement with Cheeseman et al. (2011) single mother participants who identified protective factors to be mainly of personal influence, such as personal characteristics and spirituality. Although after a year later when member checking was done for this study, their believes did not change their circumstances radically for the better, for example their youth did not changed their lives away from a life of crime and gangsterism; they did not moved out of their respective criminogenic neighbourhoods to more affluent ones or they did not find employment; they did, however, kept their faith that all is not lost and that tomorrow may be a brighter day. It is clear from the analysis of the data that the journey for these participants was not easy and to conclude this chapter of the study a discussion of these phenomenological narratives is provided next.

Discussion of findings

The themes identified above described some aspects of these single mothers' experiences with their offending youth, to say the least. From the moment these mothers became single parents, whether through the death of their husbands, desertion or imprisonment, the effects that followed affected their whole lives. As acknowledged by these mothers the offending behaviour of their youth placed even more strain on an already troublesome situation. Needless to say the themes identified and the times spend with these mothers for the purpose of this study barely scratched the surface of their experiences. Furthermore, to see the themes as separate events, or to deny the interplay it has on each other, such as the specific emphasis many studies cited placed on any one of the three factors identified in this study, cannot grasp the full extent of what single mothers with offending youth endure.

The financial obligations they had to bear appeared to be the most pressing issue which forced these single mothers to work long hours away from their children and without the help of a partner (See Parry, 2014). This had an impact on them, not only as individuals with their own aspirations, dreams and hopes, but also led to the inadequate supervision of their children that is expected of a 'good' mother (See Youngleson, 2006). Although participants defended that their employment was out of necessity and that the financial commitments, such as money needed for food, accommodations and security was not a choice, they acknowledged that it played a role in their son's offending behaviour, but nevertheless left feelings of guilt in some of them. To substantiate this, participants argued that the offending behaviour of their sons was not due to financial needs as they felt that they had provided sufficiently for all the needs and at times even for their youths' self-centred wishes, yet it was evident that the offending behaviour affected all other spheres of their lives.

Apart from the quest to obtain sufficient monetary funds to provide for the family's needs and dealing with the consequences of the offending youth's behaviour; participants believed that to overcome these obstacles was to get out of their respective neighbourhoods. The criminogenic features, such as gangsterism, drugs and alcohol outlets and social circumstances such as loitering, unemployment and poverty that can lead to criminal activities were felt to be the most motivating factor for the offending behaviour. Lambrechts (2012) provided a compelling description of the criminal element in these neighbourhoods, how it affects families and how the conditions encourage the formations and activities of criminal gangs.

The heterogeneity of the communities that makes up these neighbourhoods renders it further difficult to form cohesive relationships and community members were viewed as serving their own interests only. Government interventions exacerbated this situation through what was seen as unfair or discriminatory actions especially with the provisions of employment opportunities and housing allocations, more often than not, based on racial classifications. Young et al. (2014) reiterated that disorganised environments with unstable and culturally diverse populations increased the prospect of crime. The unemployed and single status of participants makes their desire to get out of their neighbourhoods to a more affluent and safer one appeared to be yet just another hope, dream or prayer.

Apart from trying to handle and cope with their offending youth at home, them dropping out of school, the criminogenic features of the neighbourhood and eventually getting arrested, forced these mothers to get involved with other institutions and organisations to help save their sons. What appeared to be most distressing for these mothers, however, were their sons' involvement with gangsterism and their fear that there was no way out or help available. Evident from the severity of the alleged crimes that some of their sons were connected with, not only put their own lives in serious danger, but also the lives of the rest of their family members. The prominent danger was exhibited and their fears became reality when some of these mothers had to go through the pain of seeing their sons on life-support instruments in hospital beds and for a moment in their hospital beds even these sons would say*… This isn't the life I want to live*.

A few organisations were identified by participants in their struggles to find help and although they were unsuccessful in finding the help they needed, the identified NGO's and NPO's do assist a lot of troubled families and individuals. Concerning the DCS as a deterrent against offending behaviour or crime, the responses were divided with the majority of the mothers arguing that the DCS worsened their sons' behaviour. Participants did however give credit to the DCS by acknowledging that the detention in correctional centres kept their sons safe and away from their dangerous neighbourhoods and in a sense temporarily saved their lives until they are released. Most participants felt that their involvement with the ISC, with special attention on the DCS, was very unpleasant. Apart from the ill treatment received from correctional officers at correctional centres, such as being cursed at and/or the feeling of being treated like criminals themselves, the continuous involvement frustrated and exhausted them. This reaction from participants was on par with the exasperation, hopelessness and mistrust found by Glaser et al. (2005) concerning parents' continuous involvement with the CJS. These macrosystem participations and failures to obtain help at the end made participants felt that nobody was meeting them halfway, but they refused to give up on their youth.

So what kept these single mothers to persevere? This study found that these mothers have an abundance of faith, hope and love. Faith that their God will step in and help them; hope that one day they will move out of their areas and live without fear; and love for their offending youth that will not let them give up, and most of all, that they (the youth) will change their ways. This hope is future-oriented and no matter how bleak the present, a better future can be envisioned (Walsh, 2003). Their faith was especially evident and tested when their sons got injured due to their offending behaviour and their subsequent recovery provided hope to participants that all was not lost.

In different degrees, friends and family members assisted and played a role, and although this was not financially, their words of encouragement and care to some extent lightened the burden of these mothers. It was their unconditional love, their faith and unwillingness to give up over the years that made the adaptation to their circumstances bearable. The resilience participants displayed was furthermore apparent in their efforts to seek help and supporting their youth even though this was unsuccessful in most instances and one can agree with Walsh (2003) who contended that the courage and determination shown in facing hardships in the everyday life of ordinary families often goes unnoticed. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory explained these mothers journey adequately from the microsystem to the chronosystem. This was evident from the moment they became single parents to the ever evolving state of interactions with their neighbourhoods, the ISC and other institutions to their strength and resilience displayed through their faith.

Chapter summary

In this chapter a brief biographical portrayal of the participants were given and the two geographical areas were described. The results in the form of themes that surfaced from the analysis of the interviews were presented and discussed. The chapter concluded with an overall discussion of the findings. In the next chapter the limitations which were identified are discussed, recommendations for future research are provided and I describe my own personal journey through the study.

Chapter 5

Research challenges, Recommendations, Conclusion, Personal reflection

Introduction

This chapter commence with the challenges that was identified during the study and followed by some recommendations for future research. A conclusion to the study is provided to illuminate whether the study answered the research question. Lastly, I conclude the chapter by reflecting on my personal 'journey' through the study.

Research challenges

A few challenges were identified in this study. Firstly, the small number of participants, racial constrictions and only single mothers limit the study, because it excluded other races, married parents and single fathers. The qualitative nature of the study focuses on the lived experiences of participants and how they give meaning to it and although there have been many similarities in their narratives; the uniqueness of each participant makes it impossible to generalise the results to a broader community.

A second challenge was the translation of the language the interviews were conducted in, but this was necessary to ensure that participants articulated themselves more fully and easily in their mother tongue which was Afrikaans. The lingo used by Coloured participants is in many ways unique to themselves and their culture and I am quite familiar with it. It was for this reason that the translation into English was done by myself and although I took all necessary measures to ensure that no meaning was lost during translation, such as confirming the preliminary analysis with participants during member checking, it however, cannot be guaranteed.

A third issue that proved challenging were my interviews with the participants and my first experience as an interviewer and as much as I practiced it away from the participants, it was not what I expected, to say the least. Although the interviews went reasonably well and in the comfort of participants' homes and at a convenient time for them, in an attempt to adhere to Nieman's (1998) suggestions of creating a favourable environment for successful interviewing, I felt that I could have done better. For example, participants understood the aim of the study and wanted to answer the research question with the first few questions I asked and I found myself interrupting them at times, doing so in an attempt to keep to the interview schedule I had drawn up and to ensure that all the questions were answered. This interference, however, I feel may have interrupted their line of thinking and unsettled the narratives of their lived experiences they wanted to share with me and wanted me to understand. By doing so, a lot of what is important to them, could have been missed. This limitation can be overcome by practicing as an interviewer; nevertheless I am confident that the participants narrated what they wanted to share with me.

Lastly, my familiarity with the geographical areas and the danger it posed to myself during my visits to conduct the interviews and which also led to the delay in the completion of the interviews because of the continuous gangster shootings, which was recounted to me by all the participants in their respective areas when they contended… *This is a dangerous area and neighbourhood,* made me feel uneasy. This fear of the danger may also have had an impact on the narratives shared and thus the results as I may have rushed through the interviews to limit my time spent in these neighbourhoods and for future research it should be taken into account. This can be overcome, for example, by finding an alternative venue to conduct the interviews. In the next section I propose some recommendations for future research.

Recommendations

With the above limitations in mind, the following recommendations are made for future research. More intensive research can be conducted under the auspices of government departments such as the Department of Correctional Services and the Department of Social Development. Both these departments are already very familiar with the issues identified through the current study. For example, to identify much more potential participants, the DCS can extract hundreds of names of offending youth with single mothers from their database. The anomalies affecting these families, however, are multifarious and culturally diverse and thus a stringent research criteria will be necessary to identify risk factors that are not only in the scope of the department, but also achievable in a short period of time to assist single mothers and in the process may prevent recidivism by their offending youth. Participants in the present study for example mentioned that their youth were detained in correctional centres more than once. According to the DCS, four out of every 1000 South Africans are incarcerated in correctional centres. Furthermore, there is an alarming trend of young offenders with 42% under the age of 25 years old in correctional centres and overcrowding in centres is one of the major concerns for the DCS (Department of Correctional services, 2005). The purpose of this recommendation is on par with Glaser et al. (2005) when they contended that research should intervene in the lives of youths before the patterns of crime are ingrained, and before these youths develop a lifestyle of criminality.

Similar to the above recommendation is research on the support structures like non-profit organisations (NPOs) or non-government institutions (NGOs). For example, Arthur (2005) suggests that intervention and preventive measures should be employed from a collective body of programmes and institutions (e.g. courts, social and correctional services, law enforcement, education and community, NPO'S and NGO's) dedicated to assisting parents of identified need. Three organisations were mentioned by participants in this study and viewing them via their websites appeared to be very constructive and beneficial, not only for those needing help, but for the country as a whole. As Clarice phrased it… *The problem is too big for the government to handle alone.* Future research should be done to look at and recommend alternative sentences to the courts for youth offenders, the same as would be done if the mental capacity of an accused is questioned to stand trial and such a person is then ordered to a mental institution for evaluation, observation and recommendation by a psychologist. The focus for this recommendation should be on the speedy accessibility, affordability and sustainability of the services provided by these NGO's and NPO's to prevent youth from falling through the cracks by becoming routine criminals.

Both recommendations may curb recidivism, overcrowding of correctional centres and prevent youths from becoming habitual offenders. As Murry et al. (2001) contended that when the specific risks, their origins, and the means to alleviate them are identified, correcting limitations can facilitate the development of supportive family policies and prevention efforts. In the next section I present the conclusion of the study.

Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth. The responses recorded through the interviews involving the single mothers' experiences were integrated with the reviewed available literature and Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to explain how youth's offending behaviour affected all other spheres of single mothers' lives. This conclusion explains how all three (i.e. the lived experiences of single mothers; related findings from the available literature and Bronfenbrenner's theory) come together to form the whole and how it answered the research question that was posed by the study.

To commence with, the most inner-circles of these mothers were explored. From the microsystem which includes the immediate surroundings of the individual (for example the home environment and marriage) these mothers had to come to terms with being a single parent, and as Cheeseman et al. (2011) study demonstrated that the reactions are different for each individual, as Josephine exclaimed… *It was the worst moment of my life,* Theresa's expression… *It was a very difficult time,* Donnay's enthusiasm*… I was free!...* and Clarice's wording… *It is normal.* The adaptation to their single parenthood status and circumstances was made more difficult when it was combined with the effects and consequences of their offending youth which, as evident from the participants' stories, created a very unpleasant micro environment to start with. For example, Clarice said… *Hy voel free. Hy kom en gaan soos hy wil, whether ek se het of nie. Op die oomblik is daar net nie respek tussen ons nie. (He feels free. He comes and goes as he pleases whether I reproof or not. There is just no respect between us at the moment).* Donnay felt… *Hy le net hier rond in die huis, atleast ek sien hom en hy is veilig, so is ok, beter as hom in die strate of tronk te het. (He is lying around here at home, but at least I can supervise him and he is safe indoors. It is better than him wandering the streets or being in detention).* This type of behaviour from the youth show some similarity with Samara's (2005) male youth participants' attitudes that revealed that her participants intentionally disregarded their mothers' discipline and reprimand and their justification for it was that she was a woman and emotionally soft. It became clear that participants' efforts to provide for the needs of their households and at the same time trying to keep the rest of their family members safe was an overwhelming task, as Donnay worded it… *Wanneer jy so sukkel, voel dit of jy alleen is. (When you struggle this much, you feel like you struggling alone).* Akujobi (2011) agrees with her and argued that the depictions of self-sacrificing mothers, mothers as creators who must bear pain with patience and nurture selflessly leave no space for mothers as women who feel pain, anger, frustration, or women drained by the responsibilities that accompany their roles as mothers. If these single mothers and their youth were staying in a vacuum that consists of only these microsystem effects, it may not have been so unbearable, but this was not the case.

Therefore, to get a broader picture and understanding, the mesosystem which refers to the connections among immediate settings and is thus a system of microsystems (for example dropping out of school and neighbourhood features) was explored. Within their mesosystems these mothers had to deal with the effects their offending child's behaviour brought about, not only in their homes, but also in their neighbourhoods and schools. Although all participants felt that a good education was important, all of the offending youth mentioned in this study dropped out of school and consequently affected their chances for a better future or conventional employment. For example, Clarice expressed her view of the importance of a good education and mentioned… *Ek wil my dogter 'n goeie education gee, miskien kan dit haar red uit die omstandighede wat sy in is. (I want to ensure my daughter receives a good education, perhaps it will save her from the circumstances we are in now).* Theresa said… *He left the school and even then I went to the school principal to ask for help to get him back in school* and concerning her youngest son she said excitedly… *We even talked about him going back to school next year.* Apart from the lack of education, Janssen et al. (2016) argued that daily activities, like going to school or shopping, and structured activities, like sports and games, are found to be less conducive to crime than unstructured activities in the company of peers in criminogenic settings and it became apparent that the latter was the activities the present study's youth was mostly involved with.

On the basis of these settings the quality of schools is closely linked to the neighbourhoods in which they are located. For this reason, Siegel et al. (2003, as cited in Maderthaner, 2005) ascertained that schools that are experiencing crime and drug abuse are often found in neighbourhoods that are socially disorganised and that poverty in the surrounding areas of the school influences the social characteristics of students and thus their willingness and readiness to learn. All participants stressed how dangerous and unsafe they felt in their respective areas and with their youth not attending school and with ample free time were in many instances linked to criminal activities in the neighbourhoods. On this involvement of the youth in crime, Donnay, who was a friend of Theresa claimed… *Ek gaan nie meer vir haar kuier nie, want ek gaan saam met haar doodgeskiet word. (I don't visit her anymore, because they will shoot and kill both of us).* Theresa substantiated it and said… *You are not even safe in your own home.* This fear and avoidance, may be what Moyer (2001, as cited in Maderthaner, 2005) proposed, that due to the prevalent instability in the neighbourhood, communities developed criminal and conflict/violent subcultures, where the occurrence of gangs and criminal activity become commonplace and where criminal conduct is an accepted means to achieve success. Again Theresa confirmed the above proposition… *I have to get out of this neighbourhood to prevent my children from seeing people getting killed in front of them* or Clarice declaring… *Skiet hulle nou iemand hier vlak voor my; ek het nie gesien nie; ek kan nie gesien het nie. (If they shoot somebody here in front of me; I did not see anything, even if I saw what happened).* When I asked Josephine whether she would look the other way and accept money from her son's criminal activities, as mentioned by Maderthaner (2005) that parents at times find themselves in a double bind, whilst disapproving of their children's gang affiliations or criminal activities, accepted much-needed money and goods from them without asking too many questions about its origins, she felt insulted and responded… *Herhaal! Ek het oorgenoeg geld verdien om hulle te gee wat hulle nodig het of wil he. (Excuse me! I earned enough money to provide for both their needs and wants).*

These reactions from participants - Donnay not visiting Theresa anymore out of fear, Clarice turning a blind eye out of terror of becoming the next victim and Josephine standing her ground in protecting her husband's legacy of how to be a good person - displayed the diversity and interactional effects in just two of the ecological systems of participants. These interactions in turn had an effect on their exosystem which refers to the social settings that affect, but do not contain the individual (for example employment obligations and religious affiliations). In the exosystem these mothers gave the impression that their only source of strength was in their religious beliefs and personal strengths, especially when they found it difficult to make ends meet or to influence their youth's offending behaviour. The offending youth in this study hardly ever became actively part of the religious activities, such as attending church meetings with their mothers, but this did not stop these mothers from keeping them in their prayers. Theresa professed that her prayers must have been answered, because her son is changing his life by attending church and prayer meetings himself now.

When the youth's offending behaviour started, all of the mothers were employed and agreed that their employment obligations stole much of their time away from their children and made adequate supervision impossible. When Theresa was questioned whether she was repeating the same pattern of spending too much time at work and that this may be why her youngest son started to display the same misbehaviour and dropped out of school as her eldest son did, she responded by saying … *I also thought of it, but I didn't have a choice, even now I have to work.* Josephine said…*Ek het meer gewerk as wat ek by die huis gewees het. Ek het al die jare gewerk om vir hulle 'n beter toekoms te gee. (I was more at work then I was at home. I worked all these years to give them a better future).* They further argued that this was inevitable as they were the sole providers for their families and that it was necessary and their responsibility to offer their children the best possible future, and felt that the financial requirements were not open for discussion or a choice, but essential. This monetary provision, however, did not prevent their sons from offending, as Clarice pointed out… *Ek was daar finansieel, maar nie daar vir hom emosioneel nie. (I provided for his financial needs, but was not supporting him emotionally).* Furthermore, as heads of households, single women have a sharply lower labour participation rate, employment rate, and incomes than their male counterparts (Mahajan, 2014) and this is directly linked to the effects on the macrosystem of participants.

The macrosystem consists of cultural values, laws, customs and resources. In the macrosystem of these mothers it appeared that the saying *"What will the people say"* subculture, that I have heard so many times, let these mothers rather struggle alone than ask for help from each other. Donnay articulated it as follows… *Dis my besigheid. Hulle hoef nie te weet wat in my huis aangaan nie. Hulle kan in elk geval nie help nie. (What is happening in my home is private. They don't have to know and will either way not be able to help me*). On such a statement, Akujobi (2011) argued that 'Mother Africa' may have been declared free, but the mothers of Africa remained manifestly oppressed. This may be on par with these mothers' feelings of hopelessness and their belief that it is not going to change for the better and getting through the day is the best that they can hope for. On the above arguments, Moghadam (2005) contended that if poverty is to be seen as a denial of human rights, it should be recognised that women among the poor suffer doubly from the denial of their human rights: first on account of gender inequality, second on account of poverty. These single mothers found themselves defending their families alone against all the many possibilities of things that can go wrong.

The chronosystem states that the environment is not a static force that affects individuals in a uniform way but is, rather, ever-changing. In the chronosystem these mothers adapt to the best of their abilities, even when available support systems may have failed them. It is in this system that participants may have felt overwhelmed, forced to manage all aspects of their lives at the same time, and as Donnay worded it… *Ek sal like om een ding op 'n slag te doen. Jy sien, kry dit uit die pad uit en focus op die next een, maar dit gebeur nie so nie! (I would like to focus on one thing or issue at a time, complete it and then move on to the next, you understand, but it doesn't happen like that).* Clarice seemed to have changed her focus away from her offending son and onto her daughter and argued… *Kan ek my seun save, ek weet nie. (Can I save my son, I don't know).* The dynamic nature of events and the resources available, forced these mothers to make the best of what they have at their disposal and adapt to protect and save their families in the best way they know.

The above discussion and chapter four clearly indicated how the research question which was posed for the purpose of this study was adequately answered and provided a good understanding of what these single mothers go through with their offending youth.

The experiences shared by these single mothers substantiated what was found by previous research studies and the utilization of Bronfenbrenner's (1997) theory effectively explained how the effects of each system interplayed with the next and displayed how these single mothers attempted to cope and persevered. The next section I describe my own personal experience and reflect on the issues I found most pressing throughout the study.

Personal Reflection

My research journey was quite profound, to say the least. I would have liked to just leave it at that, but the reader might not grasp its true meaning. It is on these grounds that I find myself in agreement with Wagner et al. (2012) that qualitative studies cannot be absolutely value free, which means that the emotions, experiences and views of the researcher do come into play and that it is furthermore concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts which shape various behavioural patterns, including those of the researcher. This particular section of the study contains my personal experience and emotions and may appear prejudiced, but I felt that it needed to be shared. This does not mean that the reflexivity, and bracketing as explained, were not put into practice in the rest of the study, but that when the researcher in a sense has lived and experienced what participants shared, he/she can understand and show compassion with what they are sharing, but can fundamentally differ in opinion. This was, for example, done by Mdakane's (2016) study on ex-offenders when he himself was an ex-offender and Youngleson's (2006) study on single mothers when she was a single mother herself. This does not mean that their 'insider' experience clouded their judgement or negatively affected the scientific value of their studies, but rather accomplished what Englander (2012) contended that qualitative studies are to seek the meaning of the lived experiences of participants. Furthermore, I found myself in harmony with Smith (1998) when he argued that researchers should work and study the ambiguities, fluidity and openness of social life, rather than try to repress this in a fruitless chase for experimental control and scientific respectability, or for an academic degree such as the purpose of this study. On the latter, I found it interesting that with the completion of my Bachelor Degree and passing it Cum Laude, I might add, and my subsequent Honours Degree; I kept on saying that I would attend the graduation ceremonies, but never did; this after colleagues and fellow students told me that the experience was incredible. I believed them, but I felt and told them that 'I don't get it' if my studies were not going to make a difference to those I study and this is how I feel about this Master's Degree.

That being said, I found that these mothers did not only find themselves in a predicament dealing with their offending youth, but that they did not see a way out. As Donnay put it… *Net God kan help, maar ek twyfel dat Hy gaan.* (*Only God can help, but I doubt that He will)* or the way Theresa put it... *I don't know what to do anymore.* This, however, is not only confined to and substantiated by these single mothers alone, as indicated throughout this study and the literature reviewed, but also vividly displayed in appendix E, the films Ellen and City of Violence and my own experience as a single parent. I found myself trying to see the 'light at the end of the tunnel' or something positive in the lived experiences of these participants, but found myself feeling all gloom and gloom. For example, even when Theresa indicated… *My son is now attending Tuesday prayer meetings and on Sundays he goes to church. He is trying to change his life;* this change of events gives hope that all is not lost, although even this positive change was not long-lived as the end of this section will indicate.

Credit, however, should be given to these mothers for their resilience and perseverance to get through each day and their faith in a higher power, which was not the government at the order of the day, appeared to be the only source that gave them the strength and hope that all will be OK. The mothers' unwillingness to give up on their offending youth was parallel to their belief and hope that tomorrow will be a better day. One sentence that was echoed by all these parents, even Clarice that was obviously very hurt and angry said… *Hy's my kind, maak nie saak wat hy doen nie, my dak is sy dak, al hou ek nie daarvan nie, maar ek sal nooit my kind wegverwys nie. (He is my child, does not matter what he do. My home is his home, even if I don't like it. I will never turn my back on my child.)* The undying love these mothers have for their offending children provide them with the perseverance and strength to continue seeking for help, even when Theresa said… *The doors kept being shut in my face. I will not give up.*

Concerning the support structures in place, I understood the overwhelming and difficult duty placed on government institutions, but like these mothers I also felt that more could and should be done. It is important to note that I use the word ‘duty’ and not ‘task’ or ‘choice’ to show my agreement with Lambretch (2012) that when government fails, strategies to survive are left to communities and this may in turn make them vulnerable to abuse, for example by criminal gangs. Taken the fact that the Integrated Security Cluster spends considerable amounts of money on pursuing, investigating, court proceedings and incarcerating these youths, one can just imagine how this money could be utilised to assist these mothers and youth to prevent the situation the current study describes. The literature reviewed is in accord with the DCS (Department of Correctional Services, 2005), Social Development (Department of Social Welfare, 1997), and Bronfrenbrenner (1997) who argued that the lack of monetary assistance is the major contributor to the struggles of single parents and offending youth. As argued in the recommendations for future research above, and if these mothers cannot be assisted through financial aid by the government, the money spent on incarcerating their youth can be allocated to NGOs or NPOs. This will not only lift the burden from already overloaded government institutions, but may strengthen these organisations in their capacity to assist those in need, speedy admissions and thus lightening the weight single parents have to carry. On the issue of money and the government’s capability to assist was evident during the Covid 19 pandemic and what appeared to be a ‘surprise’ to the government when it found the dire circumstances the majority of South Africans lived in. Although credit should be given to the SA government for their effort to combat the pandemic, the question why a pandemic was necessary to receive such needed attention and wide-scaled interventions when such circumstances were known all the time.

The fact of the matter is that if drastic changes do not occur, such as the Covid 19 interventions, the futures of these mothers and their youth will remain the same or even worsen. For example, during the last two years of the study Donnay’s son was shot and wounded and Theresa’s son was re-incarcerated, which destroyed her hopes, referred to earlier. Through the relationship I have established with participants they felt comfortable enough to approach me for help. Donnay wanted her son out of the neighbourhood and asked me whether he could stay with me until he recovered from his injury and I agreed. His stay lasted less than two weeks and he went back to his mother and neighbourhood without being fully recovered. Theresa gave her son my telephone number and he phoned me from within the correctional centre and because that in itself was an illegal act since they are not allowed to have cellular phones I was unable to assist him in any way whatsoever. After ignoring his phone calls; he stopped after a few attempts and in November 2020 he was sentenced to 15 years direct incarceration for murder. These interactions can have dire consequences for me and my job, but I felt that if we want to make a difference or bring about change, we sometimes will have to step up to the plate. It is also from this scenario that the motivation arose to continue this same study under the auspices of the DCS to obtain my Doctoral Degree in an attempt to bring about sustainable change or some sort of intervention that will change the status quo with specific focus on single mothers and their youth. In other words, I want to push the boundaries that go beyond the mere attaining of an academic degree.

Summary

This chapter acknowledged the identified limitations of the study and provided some suggestions on how to overcome them. A few recommendations for future research were suggested and a conclusion section rounded the study off. In the last section of this chapter I described my personal experience through the course of the study and reflected on the issues I found most significant.

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Appendix A
Invitation to participate

My name is Paisley Duister. I am a student at the University of South Africa (Unisa) currently in the process of completing a Master's Degree in the Department of Psychology. I am inviting you to participate in my study titled the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of single mothers of offending youth. In other words, I would like to find out from you what is it like being a single mother of an offending youth?

As an ethical requirement; should you decide to participate in the study, I will request from you to sign an informed consent form. This consent form will ensure your privacy and identity will be protected, such as the use of a pseudonym instead of your real name. This also means that your participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from participating in the study at any time, even after you have signed the consent form. Furthermore, confidentiality of what we will discuss is guaranteed, and all information shared, will only be used for the academic purpose of this study, stored safely and only be viewed by the study's supervisors.

To gain an understanding of your experience, I have drawn up an interview schedule (a set of questions) to direct our conversation. That being said, I would most of all just like to talk to you about your experience, such as what upsets you, what you would like to see changed and what you hope for and this should take approximately 90 minutes to complete. This, I hope, will create a relaxed atmosphere with mutual respect, openness and honesty. To ensure that I do not lose or miss anything of the contents of our discussion, I will also require your permission to audio record our conversation.

I do not anticipate that you will experience any discomfort due to your participation in the study, but I have made arrangements with the psychological services at the local day hospital for debriefing should you feel the need. Although this study will not provide any direct benefit to you, yet you can take comfort that your input will add value to the psychological knowledge on single mothers of offending youth.

Lastly, should you have any questions concerning the study, feel free to email me (duister81@gmail.com), my supervisor, Prof Eduard Fourie (fourime@unisa.ac.za), co-supervisor Mr Mbongiseni Mdakane (emdakam@unisa.ac.za) or you can contact the Unisa Department of Psychology at (012) 429-6833/8088.

Thank you for your consideration.

Paisley Gustav Duister

Appendix B

Informed consent form

I have read and understood the purpose of this study (Appendix A). My role was explained and all my questions were answered to my satisfaction and that all information shared will be handled with confidentiality by me and the study supervisors. I acknowledge that I am participating out of my own free will and can withdraw at any time if I choose to do so. I accept that I will not receive any reward or incentives for my participation. Furthermore, I give permission for the interview to be audio recorded. I will receive copies of both this consent form and the invitation sheet, which contain the details of the academic staff, should I have any other questions concerning the study.

Name of participant: ....

Signature: ....

Name of researcher: ....

Signature: ....

Appendix C

Confidentiality agreement

I acknowledge my involvement in the study and the participants and the danger this may pose to ethical issues of confidentiality, privacy and identity to both the study and participants. I hereby agree not to disclose any information pertaining to the study and participants to any person or entity and will receive a copy of this form to keep on record and as prove of agreement.

Name of informant: ....

Signature: ....

Name of researcher: ....

Signature: ....

Appendix D

Interview schedule

Opening question

- To get us started, I would like us to forget about your offending child for a moment if you can, and just briefly tell me about yourself? Where you come from? How old you are? Can you describe your daily routine?

Single mother / absent father

Following questions are just to probe, if she do not mention it in her response to the above question, to gain some depth and clarity:

- What was your husband/partner like when you met him or while you two were still together?
- Why and how did you become a single parent? Probe if necessary, for example through divorce, desertion, incompatibility, or separation by choice?
- When you first became a single mom, how did you experience it? In other words, the transition from dual parenting with your partner/husband and now you found yourself alone for the first time, what was that like?
- How long have you been a single mother?
- What was the relationship like between your child/ren and their father and does he still have a relationship with them?
- Are you presently in a romantic relationship with someone? If not, do you feel that you might share your life again with someone in the future?
- Can you tell me a little about your children? How many children do you have? How many boys and girls? Are they attending school? Can you describe your relationship with them?

- Do you feel that having children may limit your chances of finding a suitable companion in the future? If yes, why and how do you think children may be a barrier for a prospective partner?
- Apart from your offending child, are there any other conflicts in your life and how do you handle it or your usual responses to it? (e.g. employment, housing, money).

Main question

Now that we have talked about your experience as a single mother, we get to the main purpose of this research question which is to describe what it is like when single motherhood is combined with the activities that your youth's offending behaviour bring about. In as much detail as possible, can you describe to me what does being a single mother of an offending youth mean to you?

Offending youth

The following questions will help direct the conversation:

- When and how did your child's offending behaviour start?
- Has he/she ever been incarcerated before? If yes, how many times?
- When was the last time your child behaved offending or claims made against him/her and what was the offense?
- Can you tell me about the offenses he/she has committed or claims that he/she has committed and what feelings do you experience with regards to this offense/s?
- What do you think brought your youth's offending behaviour about? For example due to drug addiction and/or alcohol dependence.
- Do you think his/her father's absence or characteristics (i.e. how the father behaved) may have played a role in your youth's offending behaviour?
- Can you describe your relationship with your offending child?

- How have you been dealing with his/her offending behaviour?
- What would you as a parent want the relationship between you and your child to be like?
- Do or did you at any time felt that your youth may be capable of physically hurt you or the other children in your household?
- Do you feel that your child's offending behaviour can be altered if intervention is provided? What do you think can be done to help him/her and by whom?
- Did your offending youth completed his/her schooling or is he/she still attending school? Do you feel that the school may have influenced his/her offending behaviour? If yes, how?
- Were your offending youth previously or is he/she currently employed?
- What future do you see for your child should he/she continue with this behaviour?
- Sometimes the challenges life throw at us can become overwhelming. Do you sometimes feel like "throwing in the towel" concerning your offending child?
- Can you describe the emotions you feel when you think of his/her offending behaviour?
- Apart from your child's offending behaviour, is there any other issues that creates conflict between the two of you? (eg. communication or discipline).
- How does the youth's offending behaviour affect other spheres of your life, like your employment, leisure time and friendships?
- Do any of your other children display offending behaviour that requires interactions with the CJS and your subsequent further involvement with these institutions?

- Does your child know how you feel about his offending behaviour and how you feel about him/her apart from his/her offending behaviour?
- Do you feel that you still have an impact on his/her life and his/her behaviour?

Neighbourhood

- Youth is a developmental stage when children spend less time under the supervision of their parents and more time with peers outside of the home. The state of neighbourhoods can have a major effect on the development of those who reside in it. How long have you been living in Elsies River/Delft and what can you tell me about it?
- What recreational facilities are available in your neighbourhood for the youth to enjoy? (For example workable and equipped soccer fields and parks).
- From your observation, what issues have you identified as problematic in your neighbourhood? (For example cramp living areas, unemployment, alcohol/drug abuse and gangsterism).
- Do you feel that the characteristics you have described of your neighbourhood could have had an impact on your child's offending behaviour? If yes, how?
- Do you feel safe living in your neighbourhood with your children, or do you think that if given the option to move to another area, you will take it and why?
- If unable to move, do you have any ideas of what you would like to see changed to better the circumstances of your neighbourhood and who should do it?

Social capital

- We sometimes feel the need for help and family members are at times the closest. Can you tell me about your immediate extended family members, such as brothers, sisters and your parents and can you describe your relationship with them?

- Do you receive any support from family members? If yes, which family members and what type of support do they provide? If no, why do you feel they are not supportive to you?
- Do you belong to any support groups, such as a religious congregation (e.g. church) or any other community groups? If yes, what support do they offer?
- Are you religious? If yes, what impact, if any, does your religious conviction have on you?
- Do you know of any support structures available in your community and how to contact or make use of them, for example NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and Offender Reintegration, TADA (Teenagers against Drug Abuse), or SANCA (South African Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence)?
- Can you describe your community? Does your community, like your neighbours assist you in any way when you have a need?
- Do you have friends? If yes, can you describe your relationship with them? Are they providing any support, for example emotional or financial?
- Do you know of or have any contact with other single mothers in your community and do you perhaps know whether they are coping or not?
- Do you know any single father households? If yes, do you think single mothers have it more difficult to raise their children on their own than single fathers? If yes, why and how?

Employment

- One major concern single parents have is how to provide financially for their families. Are you presently employed? If yes, can you tell me little more about your employment?
- How much time do you spend working away from home? Do you feel that this limits your time to supervise your children?

- If unemployed, what is your source of income?
- Are you the only source of income for your family?
- Is your income sufficient to provide adequately for your family's economic needs, such as rent, food, school?
- Do you receive any type of financial support from the father of your children?
- Do you receive any financial support from government, such as social grants to lighten your economic responsibilities?
- Are there any special economic needs in your family that may further drain the families available finance, such as chronic illnesses for example diabetes, asthma, etcetera? If yes, how do you cope with that?
- Do you feel that your financial circumstances may have some impact on your youth's offending behaviour? If yes, how?

Integrated Security Cluster (SAPS, DCS, NPA & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)

- Were you ever involved with the SAPS, the Legal courts and the DCS due to your child's offending behaviour? What was your experience like with these institutions?
- Do you feel any of these institutions assisted you and your offending child? If yes, how were they of assistance? If not, what do you think they can improve on in assisting you and your child?
- With specific attention to the DCS, have you ever visited your child at a correctional centre? If yes, what was your experience like?
- Some offenders do turn their lives around during or after imprisonment. Do you think imprisonment is an effective deterrent for offending behaviour as may be evident from your child's behaviour? In other words, what impact did his/her incarceration had on his/her offending behaviour?

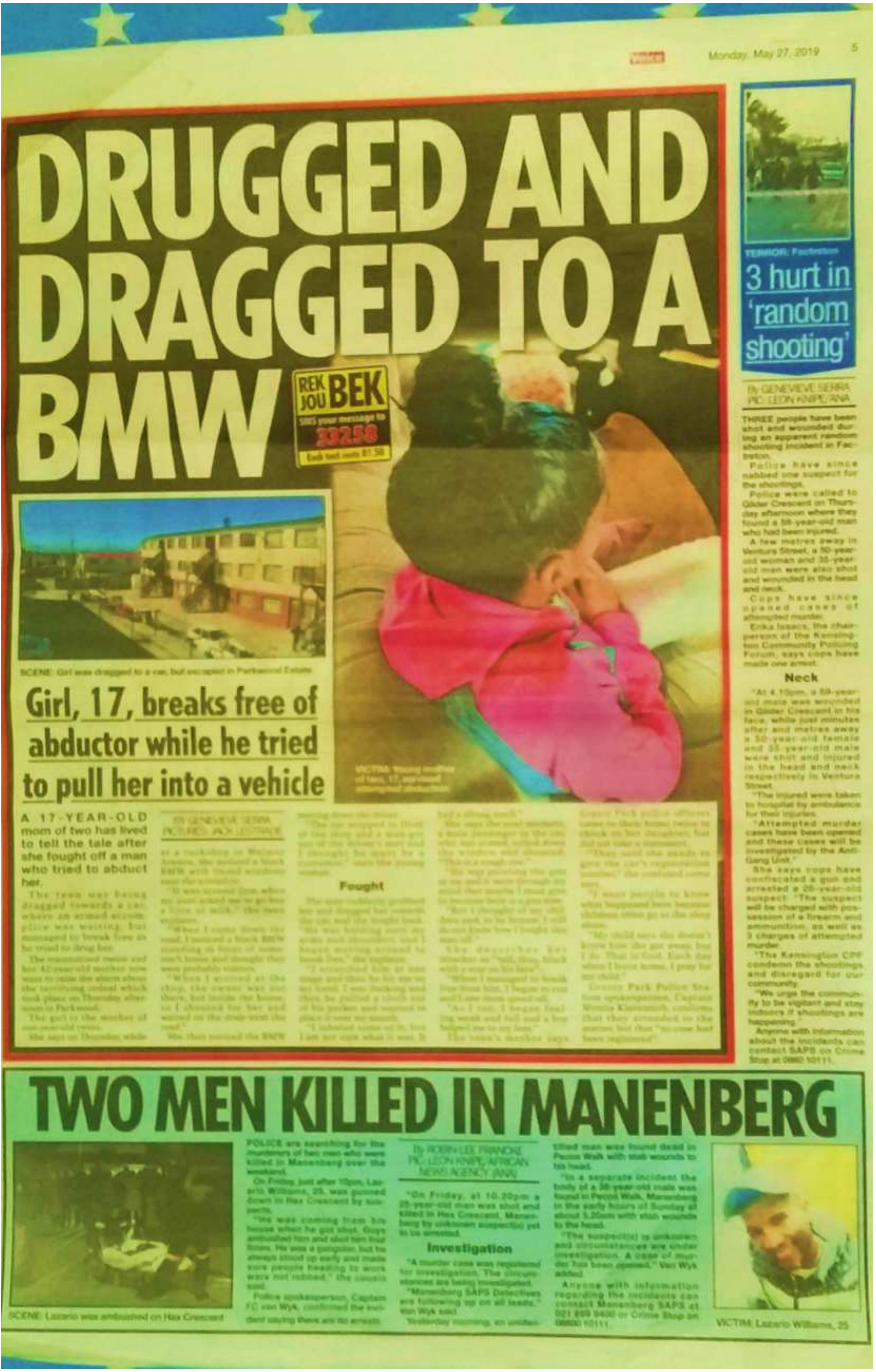
- Did you ever ask for assistance from any government institution concerning your child's offending behaviour?

Concluding question

- Some wishful thinking. If you could have one wish concerning your offending youth or your life circumstances, what would you wish for?

Appendix E

The following graphic images and reports were gathered from the daily local newspapers and display what is happening daily in these communities and neighbourhoods. It substantiate what was shared by the participants in this study and what spurt their desire to leave their respective areas and the anger they felt when they realised that their sons were part of this problem. These reports of shootings, turf wars and gangsterism vividly describe how it claimed many innocent lives and hold these communities hostage. The fact of the matter, as Lambrechts (2012) also found, is that this problem has been apart of these communities for many decades and this subsequently led to the hopelessness these single mothers expressed and the notion that nothing is going to change in the future.



Monday, May 27, 2019 5

DRUGGED AND DRAGGED TO A BMW

REK JOU BEK
SMS your message to 33258
Each text costs R1.50

SCENE: Girl was dragged to a car, but escaped in Parkwood Estate

Girl, 17, breaks free of abductor while he tried to pull her into a vehicle

VICTIM: Young mother of two, 17, survived attempted abduction

By GENEVIEVE SERRA
PICTURES: JACK LESTRADE

A 17-YEAR-OLD mom of two has lived to tell the tale after she fought off a man who tried to abduct her.

Fought

TERROR: Factreton

3 hurt in 'random shooting'

By GENEVIEVE SERRA
PIC: LEON KNIPE/ANA

THREE people have been shot and wounded during an apparent random shooting incident in Factreton.

Police have since nabbed one suspect for the shootings.

Police were called to Glider Crescent on Thursday afternoon where they found a 59-year-old man who had been injured.

A few metres away in Ventura Street, a 50-year-old woman and 35-year-old man were also shot and wounded in the head and neck.

Cops have since opened cases of attempted murder.

Erika Isaacs, the chairperson of the Kensington Community Policing Forum, says cops have made one arrest.

Neck

"At 4.10pm, a 59-year-old male was wounded in Glider Crescent in his face, while just minutes after and metres away a 50-year-old female and 35-year-old male were shot and injured in the head and neck respectively in Ventura Street.

"The injured were taken to hospital by ambulance for their injuries.

"Attempted murder cases have been opened and these cases will be investigated by the Anti-Gang Unit."

She says cops have confiscated a gun and arrested a 26-year-old suspect. "The suspect will be charged with possession of a firearm and ammunition, as well as 3 charges of attempted murder.

"The Kensington CPF condemn the shootings and disregard for our community.

"We urge the community to be vigilant and stay indoors if shootings are happening."

Anyone with information about the incidents can contact SAPS on Crime Stop at 08600 10111.

TWO MEN KILLED IN MANENBERG

SCENE: Lazario was ambushed on Hex Crescent

By ROBIN-LEE FRANCKE
PIC: LEON KNIPE/AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA)

POLICE are searching for the murderers of two men who were killed in Manenberg over the weekend.

On Friday, just after 10pm, Lazario Williams, 25, was gunned down in Hex Crescent by suspects.

"He was coming from his house when he got shot. Guys ambushed him and shot him four times. He was a gangster but he always stood up early and made sure people heading to work were not robbed," the cousin said.

Police spokesperson, Captain FC van Wyk, confirmed the incident saying there are no arrests.

"On Friday, at 10.20pm a 25-year-old man was shot and killed in Hex Crescent, Manenberg by unknown suspect(s) yet to be arrested.

Investigation

"A murder case was registered for investigation. The circumstances are being investigated.

"Manenberg SAPS Detectives are following up on all leads," Van Wyk said.

Yesterday morning, an unidentified man was found dead in Pecos Walk with stab wounds to his head.

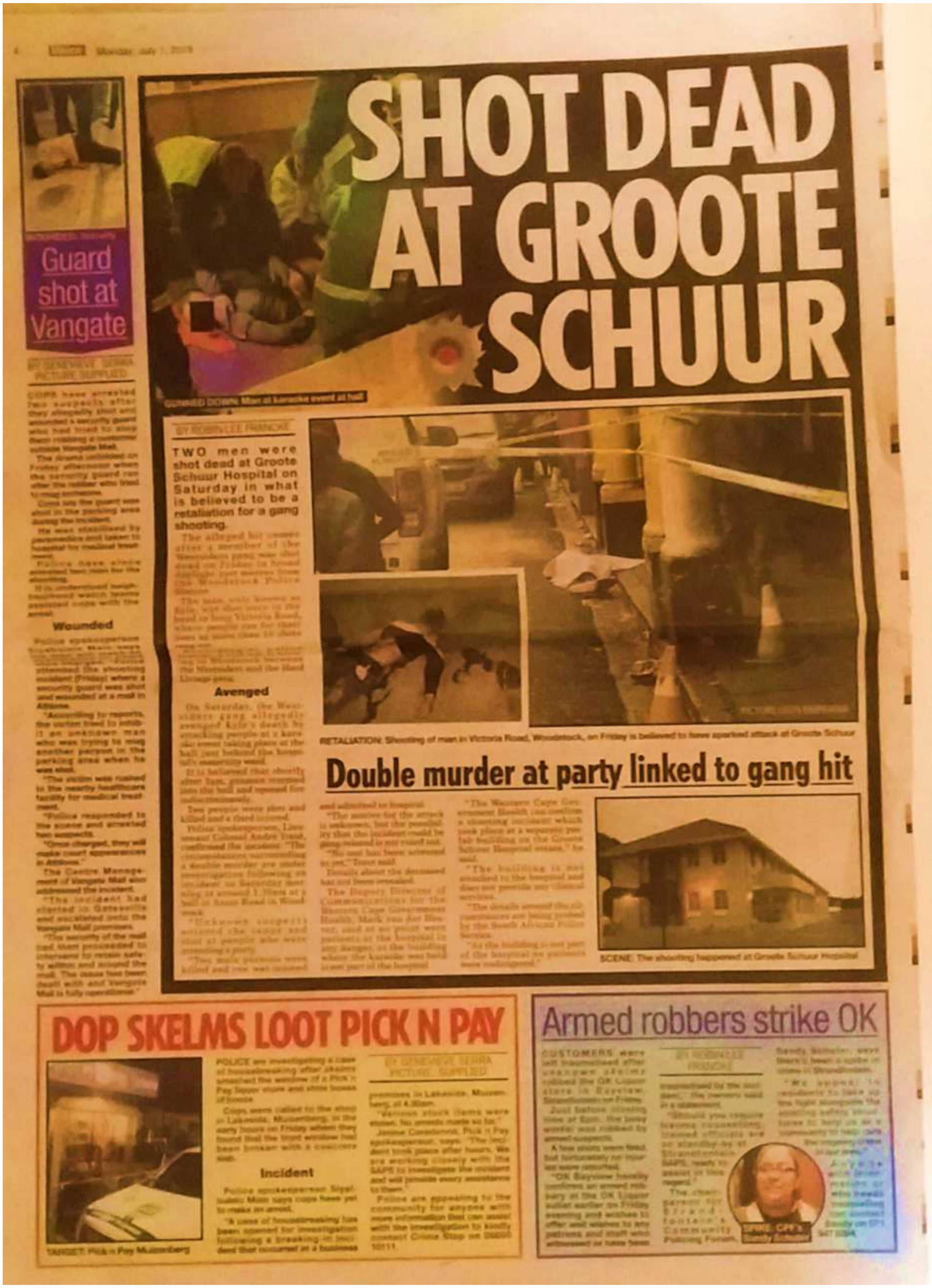
"In a separate incident the body of a 38-year-old male was found in Pecos Walk, Manenberg in the early hours of Sunday at about 5.20am with stab wounds to the head.

"The suspect(s) is unknown and circumstances are under investigation. A case of murder has been opened," Van Wyk added.

Anyone with information regarding the incidents can contact Manenberg SAPS at 021 699 9400 or Crime Stop on 08600 10111.

VICTIM: Lazario Williams, 25

p



Monday, July 1, 2019

SHOT DEAD AT GROOTE SCHUUR

GUNNED DOWN: Man at karaoke event at hall

BY ROBIN-LEE FRANCKE

TWO men were shot dead at Groote Schuur Hospital on Saturday in what is believed to be a retaliation for a gang shooting.

Avenged

RETALIATION: Shooting of man in Victoria Road, Woodstock, on Friday is believed to have sparked attack at Groote Schuur

Double murder at party linked to gang hit

SCENE: The shooting happened at Groote Schuur Hospital

WOUNDED: Security

Guard shot at Vangate

BY GENEVIEVE SERRA
PICTURE: SUPPLIED

Wounded

DOP SKELMS LOOT PICK N PAY

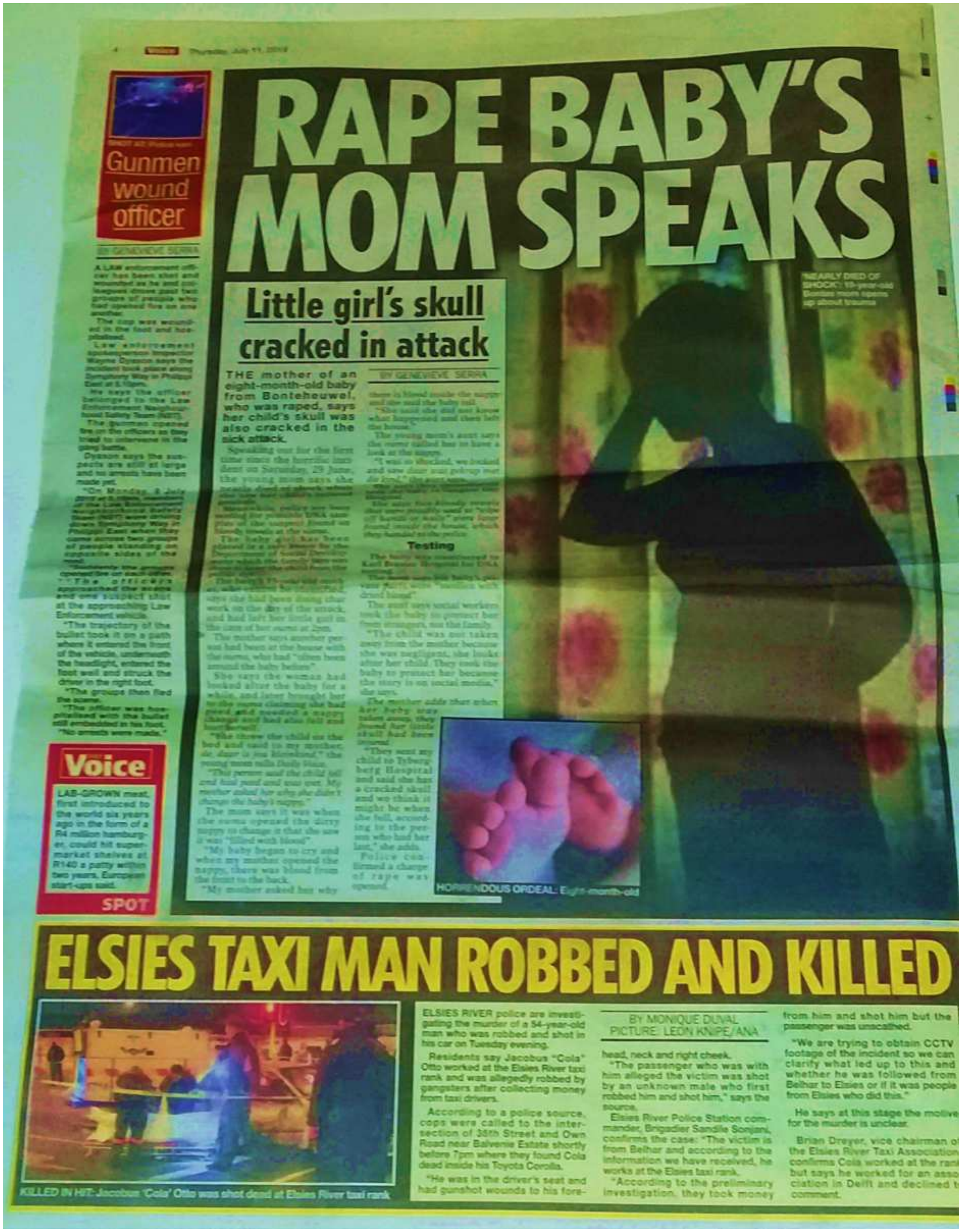
BY GENEVIEVE SERRA
PICTURE: SUPPLIED

Incident

TARGET: Pick n Pay Muizenberg

Armed robbers strike OK

BY ROBIN-LEE FRANCKE



Gunmen wound officer

BY GENEVIEVE SERRA

A LAW enforcement officer has been shot and wounded as he and colleagues drove past two groups of people who had opened fire on one another.

The cop was wounded in the foot and hospitalised.

Law enforcement spokesperson Inspector Wayne Dyason says the incident took place along Symphony Way in Philippi East at 5.10pm.

He says the officer belonged to the Law Enforcement Neighbourhood Safety Team (NEST).

The gunmen opened fire on the officers as they tried to intervene in the gang battle.

Dyason says the suspects are still at large and no arrests have been made yet.

"On Monday, 8 July [illegible] members of the Law Enforcement Neighbourhood Safety Team (NEST) were driving down Symphony Way in Philippi East when they came across two groups of people standing on opposite sides of the road.

"Suddenly the groups opened fire on each other.

"The officers approached the scene and one suspect shot at the approaching Law Enforcement vehicle.

"The trajectory of the bullet took it on a path where it entered the front of the vehicle, underneath the headlight, entered the foot well and struck the driver in the right foot.

"The groups then fled the scene.

"The officer was hospitalised with the bullet still embedded in his foot.

"No arrests were made."

Voice SPOT

LAB-GROWN meat, first introduced to the world six years ago in the form of a R4 million hamburger, could hit supermarket shelves at R140 a patty within two years, European start-ups said.

RAPE BABY'S MOM SPEAKS

Little girl's skull cracked in attack

BY GENEVIEVE SERRA

THE mother of an eight-month-old baby from Bonteheuwel, who was raped, says her child's skull was also cracked in the sick attack.

Speaking out for the first time since the horrific incident on Saturday, 29 June, the young mom says she [illegible]

[illegible]

The baby girl has been placed in a [illegible]

[illegible] says she [illegible] work on the day of the attack, and had left her little girl in the care of her ouma at 2pm.

The mother says another person had been at the house with the ouma, who had "often been around the baby before."

She says the woman had looked after the baby for a while, and later brought her to the ouma claiming she had [illegible]

"She threw the child on the bed and said to my mother, [illegible]," the young mom tells Daily Voice.

"This person said the child fell and had peed and was wet. My mother asked her why she didn't change the baby's nappy."

The mom says it was when the ouma opened the dirty nappy to change it that she saw it was "filled with blood".

"My baby began to cry and when my mother opened the nappy, there was blood from the front to the back.

"My mother asked her why there is blood inside the nappy and she said the baby fell.

"She said she did not know what happened and then left the house."

The young mom's aunt says the ouma called her to have a look at the nappy.

"I was so shocked, we looked and saw [illegible]," the aunt says.

[illegible]

She says two bloody towels that were possibly used to "wipe off hands or walls" were later found inside the house, which they handed to the police.

Testing

The baby was transferred to Karl Bremer Hospital for DNA testing.

The aunt says the baby's private parts were "swollen with dried blood".

The aunt says social workers took the baby to protect her from strangers, not the family.

"The child was not taken away from the mother because she was negligent, she looks after her child. They took the baby to protect her because the story is on social media," she says.

The mother adds that when her baby was taken away, they found her little skull had been injured.

"They sent my child to Tygerberg Hospital and said she has a cracked skull and we think it might be when she fell, according to the person who had her last," she adds.

Police confirmed a charge of rape was opened.

'NEARLY DIED OF SHOCK': 15-year-old Bonnies mom opens up about trauma

HORRENDOUS ORDEAL: Eight-month-old

ELSIES TAXI MAN ROBBED AND KILLED

KILLED IN HIT: Jacobus 'Cola' Otto was shot dead at Elsies River taxi rank

BY MONIQUE DUVAL
PICTURE: LEON KNIPE/ANA

ELSIES RIVER police are investigating the murder of a 54-year-old man who was robbed and shot in his car on Tuesday evening.

Residents say Jacobus "Cola" Otto worked at the Elsies River taxi rank and was allegedly robbed by gangsters after collecting money from taxi drivers.

According to a police source, cops were called to the intersection of 35th Street and Own Road near Balvenie Estate shortly before 7pm where they found Cola dead inside his Toyota Corolla.

"He was in the driver's seat and had gunshot wounds to his forehead, neck and right cheek.

"The passenger who was with him alleged the victim was shot by an unknown male who first robbed him and shot him," says the source.

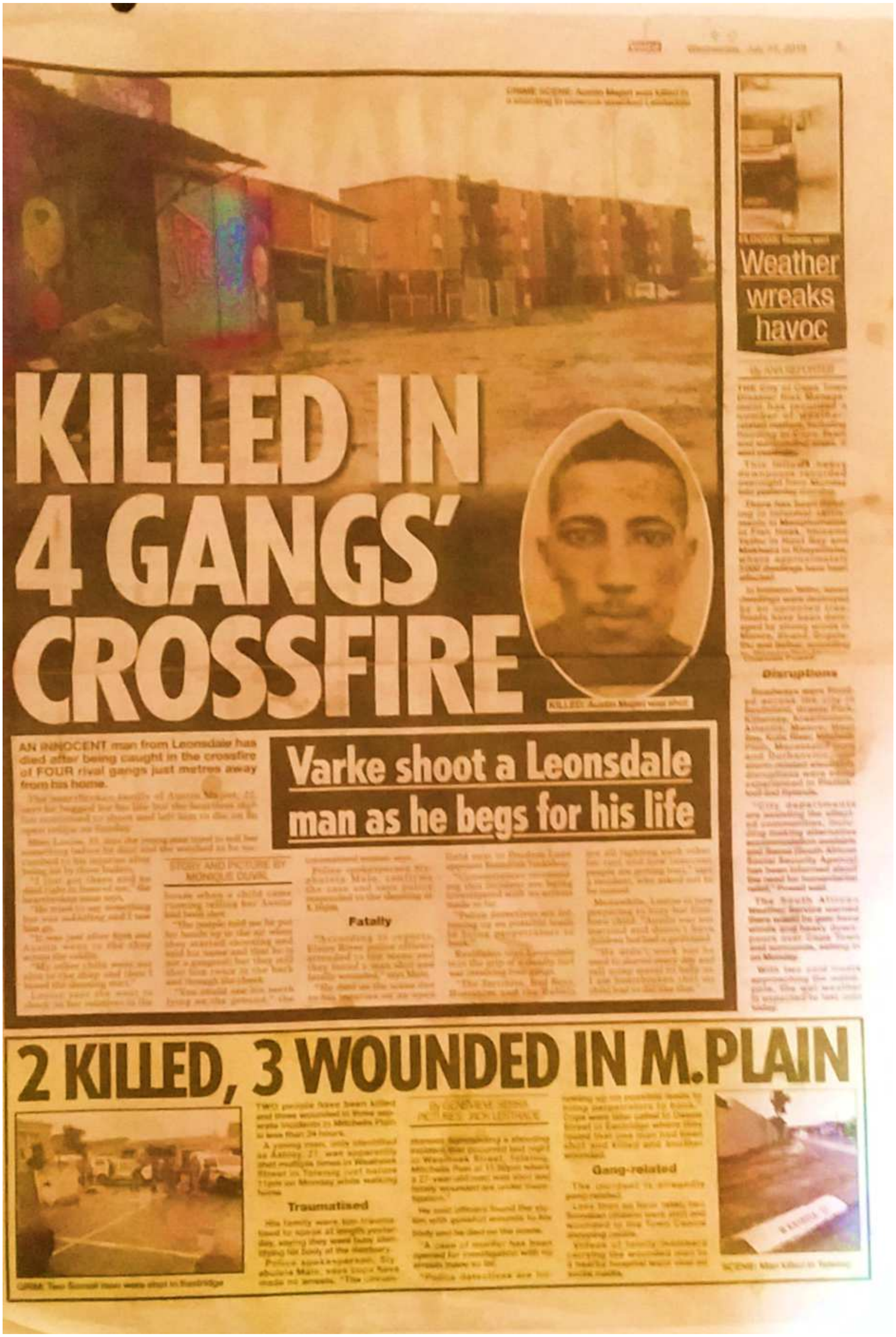
Elsies River Police Station commander, Brigadier Sandile Sonjani, confirms the case: "The victim is from Belhar and according to the information we have received, he works at the Elsies taxi rank.

"According to the preliminary investigation, they took money from him and shot him but the passenger was unscathed.

"We are trying to obtain CCTV footage of the incident so we can clarify what led up to this and whether he was followed from Belhar to Elsies or if it was people from Elsies who did this."

He says at this stage the motive for the murder is unclear.

Brian Dreyer, vice chairman of the Elsies River Taxi Association confirms Cola worked at the rank but says he worked for an association in Delft and declined to comment.



KILLED IN 4 GANGS' CROSSFIRE

Varke shoot a Leonsdale man as he begs for his life

AN INNOCENT man from Leonsdale has died after being caught in the crossfire of FOUR rival gangs just metres away from his home.

Fatally

Weather wreaks havoc

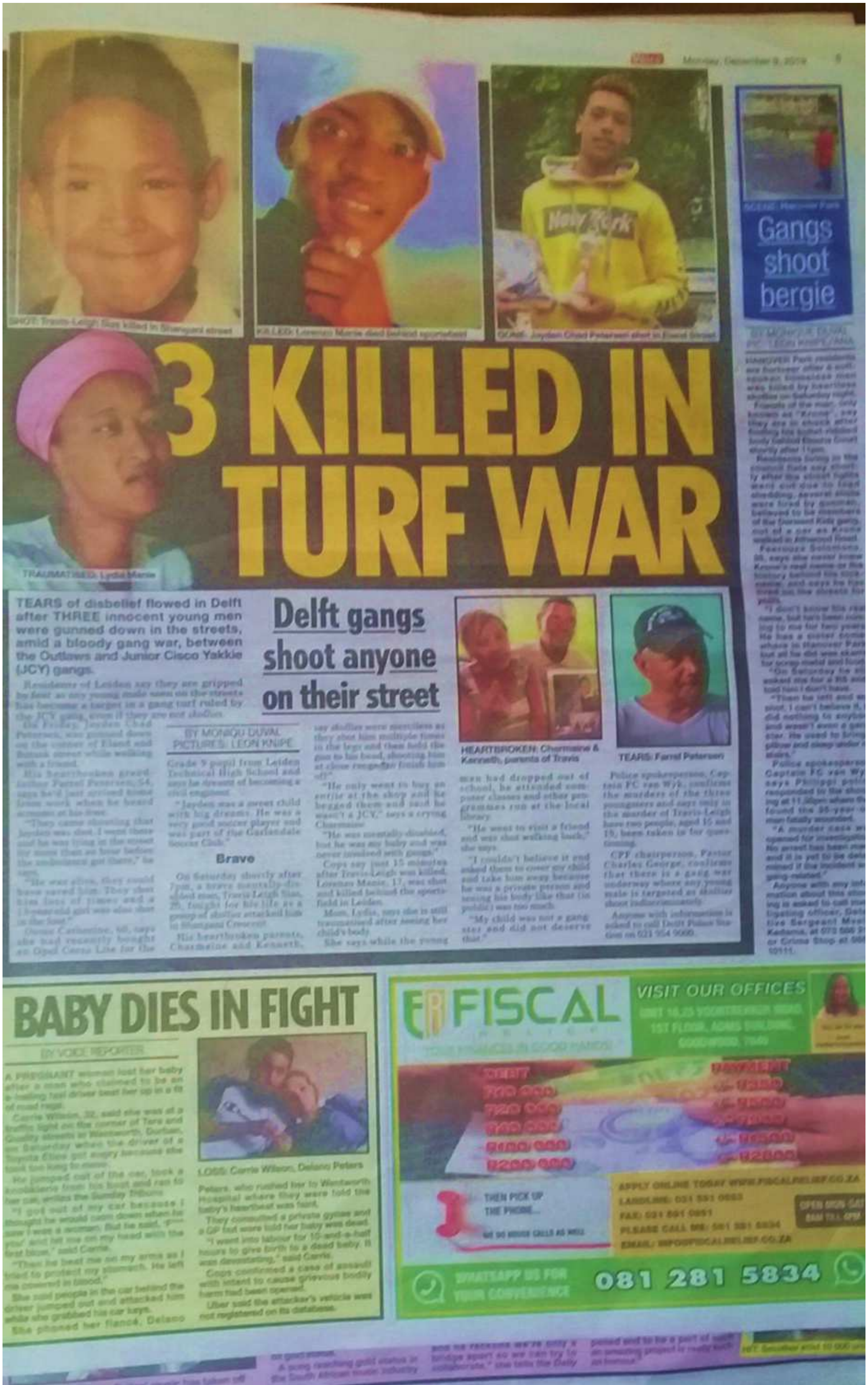
Disruptions

2 KILLED, 3 WOUNDED IN M.PLAIN

TWO people have been killed and three wounded in three separate incidents in Mitchells Plain in less than 24 hours.

Traumatised

Gang-related



SHOT: Travis-Leigh Sias killed in Shangani street

KILLED: Lorenzo Manie died behind sportsfield

GONE: Jayden Chad Petersen shot in Eland Street

3 KILLED IN TURF WAR

TRAUMATISED: Lydia Manie

TEARS of disbelief flowed in Delft after THREE innocent young men were gunned down in the streets, amid a bloody gang war, between the Outlaws and Junior Cisco Yakkie (JCY) gangs.

Residents of Leiden say they are gripped by fear as any young male seen on the streets has become a target in a gang turf ruled by the JCY gang, even if they are not skollies.

On Friday, Jayden Chad Petersen, was gunned down on the corner of Eland and Bottank street while walking with a friend.

His heartbroken grandfather Farrel Petersen, 54, says he'd just arrived home from work when he heard screams at his door.

"They came shouting that Jayden was shot. I went there and he was lying in the street for more than an hour before the ambulance got there," he says.

"He was alive, they could have saved him. They shot him lots of times and a 13-year-old girl was also shot in the foot."

Ouma Catherine, 60, says she had recently bought an Opel Corsa Lite for the Grade 9 pupil from Leiden Technical High School and says he dreamt of becoming a civil engineer.

"Jayden was a sweet child with big dreams. He was a very good soccer player and was part of the Garlandale Soccer Club."

Delft gangs shoot anyone on their street

BY MONIQU DUVAL
PICTURES: LEON KNIPE

Brave

On Saturday shortly after 7pm, a brave mentally-disabled man, Travis Leigh Sias, 25, fought for his life as a group of skollies attacked him in Shangani Crescent.

His heartbroken parents, Charmaine and Kenneth, say skollies were merciless as they shot him multiple times in the legs and then held the gun to his head, shooting him at close range to finish him off.

"He only went to buy an entjie at the shop and he begged them and said he wasn't a JCY," says a crying Charmaine.

"He was mentally disabled, but he was my baby and was never involved with gangs."

Cops say just 15 minutes after Travis-Leigh was killed, Lorenzo Manie, 17, was shot and killed behind the sports-field in Leiden.

Mom, Lydia, says she is still traumatised after seeing her child's body.

She says while the young man had dropped out of school, he attended computer classes and other programmes run at the local library.

"He went to visit a friend and was shot walking back," she says.

"I couldn't believe it and asked them to cover my child and take him away because he was a private person and seeing his body like that (in public) was too much.

"My child was not a gangster and did not deserve that."

HEARTBROKEN: Charmaine & Kenneth, parents of Travis

TEARS: Farrel Petersen

Police spokesperson, Captain FC van Wyk, confirms the murders of the three youngsters and says only in the murder of Travis-Leigh have two people, aged 16 and 19, been taken in for questioning.

CPF chairperson, Pastor Charles George, confirms that there is a gang war underway where any young male is targeted as skollies shoot indiscriminately.

Anyone with information is asked to call Delft Police Station on 021 954 9000.

SCENE: Hanover Park

Gangs shoot bergie

BABY DIES IN FIGHT

BY VOICE REPORTER

A PREGNANT woman lost her baby after a man who claimed to be an e-hailing taxi driver beat her up in a fit of road rage.

Carrie Wilson, 32, said she was at a traffic light on the corner of Tara and Quality streets in Wentworth, Durban, on Saturday when the driver of a Toyota Etios got angry because she took too long to move.

He jumped out of the car, took a knobkierie from his boot and ran to her car, writes the Sunday Tribune.

"I got out of my car because I thought he would calm down when he saw I was a woman. But he said, 'F--- you' and hit me on my head with the first blow," said Carrie.

"Then he beat me on my arms as I tried to protect my stomach. He left me covered in blood."

She said people in the car behind the driver jumped out and attacked him while she grabbed his car keys.

She phoned her fiancé, Delano Peters, who rushed her to Wentworth Hospital where they were told the baby's heartbeat was faint.

They consulted a private gynae and a GP but were told her baby was dead.

"I went into labour for 10-and-a-half hours to give birth to a dead baby. It was devastating," said Carrie.

Cops confirmed a case of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm had been opened.

Uber said the attacker's vehicle was not registered on its database.

LOSS: Carrie Wilson, Delano Peters

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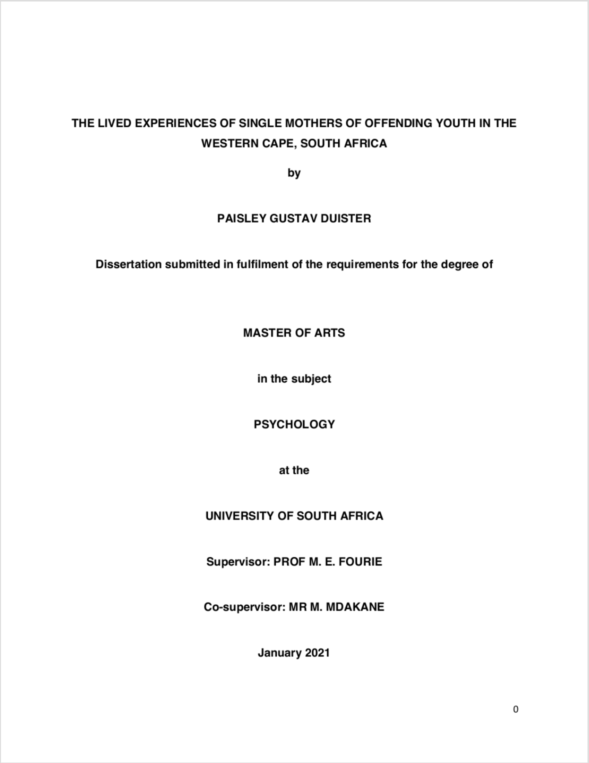

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS OF OFFENDING YOUTH IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

PAISLEY GUSTAV DUISTER

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisor: PROF M. E. FOURIE

Co-supervisor: MR M. MDAKANE

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