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**“A study of the reading practices of parents with young
children in Mitchell’s Plain.”**

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LSTKAT003

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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University of Cape Town

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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Abstract

This study “*A study of the reading practices of parents with young children in Mitchell’s Plain*” was conducted through a sample of five early childhood development (ECD) centres in Mitchell’s Plain. The study adopted a sequential transformative mixed method research design. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the five ECD centres and from that sample convenience sampling was used to select the interview participants. The quantitative data comprised of 137 completed questionnaires and the qualitative data was collected through 14 face-to-face interviews. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the face-to-face interviews.

Main findings:

While 99% of parents felt that reading with children is important only 7% of respondents report reading with their children on a daily basis. Parents are aware of the importance and developmental benefits of reading, but do not seem to be making the time to read frequently. Overall, only 30% of respondents are reading once a week or more with their children. A statistically significant correlation between reading frequency and number of readers was found as well as frequency of library visits and reading frequency. Most of the respondents (64%) reported having between one and ten books at home while there were 8% who do not have a single book at home. No statistically significant correlation was found between number of books or parental education and reading frequency.

The barriers that are preventing parents from reading with their children were found to be a lack of time, financial, environmental and personal challenges as well as libraries not being open on the weekend. Alliteracy and a lack of personal motivation to read was also found to be a barrier to book sharing. Very few parents of the participants interviewed had heard of or been involved with literacy organisations but past experiences with reading seemed to have a positive influence on their current reading practices.

Main recommendations:

ECD centres are uniquely placed to be able to inform, encourage and monitor frequent book sharing. ECD centres should therefore be trained in the importance of early book sharing and in turn provide training and support for their parents. Furthermore, if ECD centres were equipped with libraries that parents who found accessing the local library a challenge they would be able to offer parents an invaluable resource. Investing in local libraries so that they

are able to offer extended operating hours on the weekend and more resources for children under five years old is also recommended. Parenting programmes in various forms are also recommended to provide parents with the information and support needed to encourage frequent book sharing.

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James 2:14-26

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the research

1. Introduction

Chapter one will outline ten sections and a summary. These sections include the statement and location of the problem, the rationale and significance of the study, the aim, research questions as well as assumptions and clarification of key concepts. The main ethical considerations, reflexivity, outline of the chapters to follow and summary conclude the chapter.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Research on early childhood development (ECD) has been gaining momentum as increasing evidence points to ECD as the opportune time for low cost and high impact intervention (Engle et al., 2011). Topics central to ECD are being more frequently discussed and debated on the global stage. This has resulted in approximately one third of countries adopting multi-sectoral policies on early childhood development as well as increased funding to the sector (Daelmans et al., 2017). While many countries are aware of this critical period, as evidenced by specific ECD policies, few have implemented their policies effectively (Daelmans et al., 2017).

It is well established that learning begins prenatally. The foetus recognising the sound of his/her mother's voice is a common example (Krueger & Garvan, 2014; Pino, 2016). During prenatal and early childhood development, the parents or caregivers hold the most responsibility for guiding the development of the child. Cognitive, social and emotional development in childhood is a process that involves learning and mastering age appropriate tasks and concepts. During this developmental period there are many factors which can help or hinder this process. Before a child enters the schooling system, their cognitive and linguistic development has already been stimulated, guided, shaped or influenced by their parents and the environment in which they have grown up (Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006).

Children living in poverty have limited learning opportunities at home and face home learning environments that are often of lower quality and filled with stressors (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014; Cooper et al., 2014). Due to environmental factors hindering their development, children from disadvantaged or low socio-economic families are far less likely to achieve their genetic potential (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). Buckingham, Beaman and Wheldall (2014) note that if parents from low income families invested time into activities that promote and engage the skills and knowledge that their children need to become proficient readers, their children's literacy development need not be disadvantaged. While this

may seem to be a simple solution, low income families often do not have the resources, time or emotional capacity to fulfil this ‘simple’ solution.

Gould and Ward (2015) describe how poverty decreases caregivers abilities to provide adequate nutrition, education, healthcare and a nurturing home environment. While the relationship between poverty and poor mental health is complicated, there are clear links between the two (Kimbrow & Schachter, 2011; Shonkoff et al., 2012). Poor parental mental health can lead to less consistent and less nurturing parenting. This in turn increases the likelihood that their children will experiment with or abuse drugs, practice risky sexual behaviours or become involved with crime (Gould & Ward, 2015). Parents who suffer from poor mental health are likely to provide fewer learning experiences at home with a poorer quality of parent-child interaction (Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006).

Poverty is often described as a cycle as it becomes increasingly difficult for children who have grown up with disadvantages in nutrition, health, cognitive stimulation and socio-emotional competence to achieve well at school (Cooper et al., 2014). Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall (2013) note that there is a well-documented statistical relationship between social disadvantage and poor literacy. Children are more likely to perform below the benchmark if their parents have low levels of education and inconsistent employment. Buckingham, Beaman and Wheldall (2014: 429) state that the complexity of the relationship “helps to explain why it has been so persistent over time and so resistant to efforts to reduce its impact.” In order to mitigate the effects of socio-economic status on literacy, understanding the complex nature of the relationship between the two is crucial (Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013).

Globally, children under the age of five in low and middle income countries (LMICs) are not meeting their developmental potential due to stunting and extreme poverty (Black et al., 2017). Between 2004 and 2010, the estimated number of these children declined from 51% (279 million) to 43% (250 million) (Black et al., 2017:78). The children of Sub-Saharan Africa face the greatest risk of not developing to their full potential with statistics of 70% in 2004 and a slight decrease to 66% in 2010 (Black et al., 2017:78). These statistics clearly highlight the need for early intervention especially in LMICs.

Extreme poverty, stunting attributed to deficiencies in nutrition and inadequate learning opportunities were viewed by Walker et. al (2011) as the primary causes for children not reaching their developmental potential in LMICs. The same authors posit that the number of

children at risk is likely to increase with economic recessions and climate change. Poverty and the associated biological and psychological risk factors create inequalities in early childhood which persist throughout childhood, into adulthood and perpetuate an entrenched cycle of poverty (Walker et al., 2011). As previously established, learning begins prenatally. It stands to reason then, that inequalities in development also begin prenatally and the first few years of life are a critically important and unique period in which these inequalities can be mitigated. The exposure to biological and psychosocial risks that are associated with poverty have effects on a child's developing brain and can compromise their development (Walker et al., 2011).

The genetic potential of many children may be suppressed by the low quality of the home learning environment in which they grow up, thus making the gene-environment interaction an important factor to acknowledge (Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). Daelmans, Darmstadt and Lombardi (2017: 9) build on this by explaining that “epigenetic, immunological, physiological and psychological adaptations to the environment occur from conception and that these adaptations affect development throughout the life course.”. This highlights the time from conception until three years old as a period of critical importance. Cooper et al. (2014) discuss how there is evidence that early social, emotional and cognitive development are strong indicators of future school progress and literacy in developed countries, but note that there is limited evidence from LMICs. In an analysis conducted by Walker et al. (2007:153), in LMICs 10-41% of parents were reported to be providing materials/resources for their children that were cognitively stimulating. Furthermore, their analysis showed that only 11-31% were actively engaging and involving their children in activities which would be cognitively stimulating. These statistics, while dated, point to the lack of cognitively stimulating materials and activities that children in LMICs are exposed to.

Looking more closely at South Africa, it is clear that children are underperforming academically. While South Africa has successful primary school enrolment rates, at about 98%, the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) which are conducted in grade 3 and grade 6, found that South African children have very low levels of literacy and numeracy (Modisaotsile, 2012:2). Although 98% of children attend primary school only 35% of learners in grade 3 and grade 6 are able to read. In Mpumalanga this figure was as low as 12% while the Western Cape had the highest literacy rate of 43% (Modisaotsile, 2012:2). Vally et al. (2015) note that literacy and reading are particular areas of concern due to a trend of deterioration in school grade scores in recent years. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assesses the

reading levels of grade 4 children in 50 countries (United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization, 2016). In the 2016 PIRLS, South Africa was placed last out of all 50 participating countries (Howie et al., 2017). 78% of grade 4 learners were not able to read for meaning or answer simple questions that required them to retrieve basic information from texts, compared to 4% of learners internationally (Howie et al., 2017:4).

PIRLS provides internationally comparative data so it is disheartening to see how low South African children are achieving compared to their international counterparts. While acknowledging that the education system has many problems, ensuring that children have a head start in literacy before they enter grade 1 has the potential to moderate the impact of these problems.

A study conducted by Banda (2003) concluded that literacy practices are influenced by demographic, linguistic, geographical, attitudinal, cultural and socio-economic factors. In South Africa these factors intersect with each other as well as with the legacy of the apartheid and apartheid policies. Throughout the apartheid era, legislation was in place that made accessing and interacting with written texts difficult for the majority of the black population (Banda, 2003). Simple literacy events such as reading a newspaper or accessing libraries were seen to be part of white culture and resulted in there being little space for many people to create a reading and writing culture. Compounding this was the lack of infrastructure, poorly trained teachers and Bantu education which made obtaining good quality education virtually impossible for many black South Africans. Banda (2003) states that the apartheid created the foundation for impoverished literacy practices in black communities. Cooper et al. (2014) corroborate this with their statement that while the data is limited, there appears to be little culture of book sharing in South African indigenous communities.

While there was a 98% enrolment rate for primary school in 2011 only 34% of children (aged 0-4 years old) were enrolled in an ECD institution (Meier, 2014:160). The South African government is working towards full provision of grade R but has revised their target date three times, from 2010 to 2014 and most recently to 2019 (Atmore, 2013). While there has been progress with the provision of ECD services there are still many children, especially in marginalised and rural areas where access to quality ECD services remains problematic (PAN: Children, 2016). The South African government has acknowledged the integral nature of early childhood development for the progress of the country as a whole, as well as for the individual child (Republic of South Africa, 2015). This commitment to investments in early childhood

development is clear in policy but there is still a great disparity between policy and implementation (Meier, 2014). Martine (PAN: Children, 2016) supports this view by stating that the ECD policy objectives and goals will not be met with the current funding levels, they are simply too low. The subsidy system is not providing sufficient funding to allow ECD service providers to administer quality ECD programmes that will impact positively on the child. Due to insufficient funding, ECD centres charge fees in order to cover running costs and are not able to put the subsidy towards improving the quality of the service being provided (PAN: Children, 2016). South Africa has made the commitment to early childhood development, but the reality is that until quality ECD services are available and accessible to all South African children, there are still ways in which parents can prepare their children for a successful school experience.

Engle et al. (2011) state that early childhood is the most effective time, both in terms of cost and impact, to ensure that children are developing to their full potential. Integrated interventions that focus on the many risks that vulnerable children are exposed to, are needed to reduce inequalities in early life. Intervening with parents can be a simple and cost effective way to improve children's cognitive and social-emotional development as well as school readiness (Engle et al., 2011). This is evidenced in a study conducted in South Africa by Vally et al. (2015) where a clear benefit in infant language and attention was found through providing book sharing training to parents and caregivers. There is clear evidence that reading, and book sharing are beneficial to all children and can mitigate the effects of a low-quality home learning environment.

Many studies have shown joint book reading or book sharing to be beneficial to language and literacy development in children (Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Mol, 2010; Duursma, 2014; Hindman, Skibbe & Foster, 2014; Vally et al., 2015). Bus, van IJzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995) found that socio-economic status did not have an effect on the frequency of parent-child book reading while more recent studies conducted by Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall (2014) and Duursma (2014) found contradictory results. The frequency of parent-child book reading was found to vary according to parental education levels. Book reading allows children the opportunity to access new words, ideas and concepts that extend beyond their daily lives and experiences (Hindman, Skibbe & Foster, 2014). Gould and Ward (2015) discuss how Chapter 8 of the Children's Amendment Act (Act No. 41 of 2007) and particularly section 144, focuses on the capacity building of parents and provides a legal mandate for the provision of programmes to support and educate parents.

1.2 Problem context

Due to the low literacy rates in South Africa, campaigns and programmes have been developed to encourage and promote reading as well as offering literacy assistance to schools. These are predominantly non-governmental organisations (NGO) which are attempting to create a reading culture both at school and in the home. The school-based reading schemes are necessary due to the consequences of inequality in early childhood and unequal access to quality early childhood development services.

One such campaign is Nali'bali. Nali'bali is a national campaign that promotes reading for enjoyment (Nali'bali, 2016). The campaign makes use of print media and digital platforms, such as television, to encourage and equip adults to engage with children through reading and storytelling. Nali'bali also provides reading and story resources to the public in the form of free downloads from their website and inserts in newspapers, as well as supporting reading clubs and any community activities that promote reading for enjoyment. Many children have not had positive experiences with reading at school and are taught by teachers who lack the confidence needed to get students to engage with books or stories successfully (Nali'bali, 2016). If children are unable to engage with what they are being taught at school they will be “forever playing catch up as they move, far too slowly, through the system” (Nali'bali, 2016: 2). Not succeeding at school has lasting effects as career choices are significantly limited and this in turn limits the economic growth that a country can achieve. Nali'bali (2016) states that most South African caregivers undervalue reading as an activity and therefore do not spend time reading for themselves or with their children. The organisation also makes the point that teachers are restrained by rigid timetables and a focus on outputs which leaves them hesitant to take time away from teaching for reading or storytelling. Reading for enjoyment is not a priority and often “frankly considered a waste of time” (Nali'bali, 2016: 3).

Nali'bali's theory of change is based on three principles, reading for pleasure, mother tongue-based literacy and positive peer pressure and identity to drive behaviour change. Nali'bali is not school based but provides resources and training for reading clubs which are held in informal spaces such as churches, mosques and community centres. The reading clubs have names which are included in stories and songs which create a safe shared space for adults and children. Through engaging in these safe spaces, children are able to begin building a culture of reading as well as individual reading identities and habits (Nali'bali, 2016). Nali'bali is reaching thousands of children and providing them with books and stories that are written in their mother tongue and depict characters with which they can relate.

Shine Literacy is another example of an organisation with a vision of “A nation of readers” (2016: 1). Shine Literacy operates through several avenues. These include family literacy workshops, school-based Shine centres, Shine chapters and Creating a Culture of Reading workshops. The organisation is based on community involvement and partnerships to reach as many families and children as possible (Shine Literacy, 2016). Through the family literacy workshops parents and caregivers are equipped to build a culture of reading in the home. Parents are encouraged to embrace the pivotal role that they play in their child’s education and are given practical advice, tips and resources to help them do this. In 2016, 34 family literacy workshops were facilitated across three provinces and training and resources were provided to 1599 parents and caregivers (Shine Literacy, 2016: 6). Shine Literacy is working at both the community level with parents to encourage reading for pleasure and as a literacy support programme in schools. In 2016 Shine Literacy piloted a workshop which offered family literacy training to the employees of businesses (Shine Literacy, 2016). Through these for-profit workshops, businesses are able to put resources into giving their employees skills and knowledge which will have long lasting benefits while at the same time providing a source of funding.

Wordworks is a third example of an organisation championing literacy in South Africa. Wordworks offers courses to ECD trainers who in turn train ECD practitioners. These courses allow the trainers to gain a deeper understanding of language development in babies and young children and how to lay the foundations for reading and writing (Wordworks, 2016). Wordworks also offers programmes to schools as well as sharing educational materials and resources. In 2016, 1348 families and 99800 young children benefited from Wordworks’ early language and literacy programme (Wordworks, 2016:2).

Nali’bali, Shine Literacy and Wordworks are not the only organisations which are striving for increased literacy rates among South African children. The existence of these organisations is a clear indicator of the scale of the problem that South Africa faces. While the problem has been acknowledged there is limited research on the reading practices of South African families, particularly in low socio-economic areas, to inform these campaigns. Banda (2003) presents data on the literacy practices of both black and coloured families which stated that coloured families were more likely to have a variety of reading materials and access to libraries.

Mitchell’s Plain is the community in which this study is located. Mitchell’s Plain was established in 1970’s as a middle class coloured community after apartheid legislation forcibly

removed non-white families from their homes (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2011). As a community Mitchell's Plain was planned to be self-sufficient and segregated from white, black and Indian areas. It was originally designed and built to accommodate 250 000 people but the current population far exceeds this number. (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2011:4). Mitchell's Plain is located on the Cape Flats and is 20km away from the City of Cape Town. The forced removals during the apartheid meant that non-white South Africans were moved further away from business and employment opportunities and substantially increased the cost of travel both in terms of time and money for many people. Mitchell's Plain has grown to include at least 19 sub-areas and is the third busiest transport interchange in the City of Cape Town. Approximately 75 000 commuters pass through the interchange in the morning and evening peak hours (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2011:4).

From the most recent data, in 2011, the population of Mitchell's Plain was 310 485 which was comprised of 67 995 households (City of Cape Town, 2013:2). The average household size was recorded at 4.75 people. The demographic profile of Mitchell's Plain is predominately coloured at 90.8% while there is also a small black population (7.3%). The female population slightly outnumbered the male population with 159 452 and 151 032 people respectively (City of Cape Town, 2013:3). The age profile of Mitchell's Plain showed that 45.7% of the population was younger than 25 years old, 50.2% was aged between 25 and 64 years and only 4.1% of people were 65 years and older (City of Cape Town, 2013:3). Examining the adult (those aged 20 and above) education levels, only 34.5% had completed Matric and only 5.9% possessed any form of higher education. Due to these education level indicators it is not surprising that 38% of the population had a monthly household income of R3200 or less (City of Cape Town, 2013:4). 20.1% of households earned between R3201 and R6400, 20.4% of households earned between R6401 and R12800 and only 14.9% of households earned between R12801 and R25000 per month (City of Cape Town, 2013:4). Taking into consideration that the average household size was 4.57, Mitchell's Plain presents as a low socio-economic community. Only 43% of the working age population are employed and almost 40% of people aged between 5 and 24 do not go to school, often citing the need to work or look for work as one of the most important reasons for leaving school (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2011; City of Cape Town, 2013:4). The key challenges that Mitchell's Plain faces are overcrowded living conditions, spatial marginalisation, HIV/AIDS, high levels of crimes and gangsterism and lack of access to public amenities (Department of Provincial and Local

Government, 2011). According to the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD) there are approximately 107 ECD centres operating in Mitchell's Plain.

As already established, low socio-economic status negatively impacts children's development and educational potential, and that reading can moderate this effect. This makes Mitchell's Plain a relevant context in which to locate a study on the reading practices of families with young children.

1.3 Rationale and significance of study

The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (Martin et al., 2014) supports the notion that reading is beneficial for cognitive and psychosocial development, especially for the birth to three year age group. The policy also states that parents need to be supported to promote reading in the home, as well as including reading and literacy development in the school curriculum (Martin et al., 2014). This clearly illustrates the South African government's recognition of the importance of reading in early childhood. The variety of non-school based reading programmes indicate that there is a need for reading interventions. This study is significant as there is no recent body of work that explores the reading practices of parents with young children in low socio-economic areas in South Africa. Findings from this study may be able to inform interventions as well as highlighting the need for reading practices with young children.

Reading is a relevant area of research in South Africa. There have been two national reading surveys completed in South Africa, one in 2006 and a follow up in 2016. The 2016 survey found that the incidence of reading in the past month declined significantly from 65% in 2006 to 43% in 2016 (South African Book Development Council, 2016:16). One explanation that the survey provides is the increase in number of leisure activities that are available in 2016 which creates more competition for limited leisure time. The incidence of reading seemed to increase as the social-economic level increased, with younger age and in English and Afrikaans speaking people. This raises the question of whether education is the driver of reading or whether reading is the driver of education (South African Book Development Council, 2016). Simply put, does increased reading encourage educational attainment or does education encourage children to read.

The survey results showed that most South African adults (97%) are able to read and understand at a basic level (South African Book Development Council, 2016:30). Those who could not read reported the lack of reading opportunities while they were growing up as the

reason. In 2013 the Verification Annual National Assessment (V-ANA) asked Grade 3 children how many books they had at home (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The results showed that 27% of children had no books at home and 38% had ten or fewer (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017:79). Examining the results for the poorest 60% of children showed that 30% had no books and 40% had ten or fewer. 62% of these children were in schools that did not have a school library indicating that many children have very little to no exposure to books either at home or at school (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017:80).

These statistics point to the importance of giving young children reading opportunities at home as well as at school and encouraging a culture of reading from a young age. In general, South African adults do not have a positive perception of reading and only 51% agreed that reading increases knowledge (South African Book Development Council, 2016:34). More concerning, agreement with statements about reading with children was very low even amongst those households which had children (South African Book Development Council, 2016). When asked to agree or disagree with the statement “you encourage your children to read”, it is concerning that only 13% people with children agreed with the statement (South African Book Development Council, 2016: 35). Only 4% of parents agreed with the statement that they read to their children and only 3% that they made up stories to tell their children or families. The fact that 4% of parents agreed with the statement that they believe reading to children before they can talk or read helps them to learn, may be in part explained by the reality that only 3% of respondents reported having been read to every day by their parents (South African Book Development Council, 2016:35). 35% of parents reported reading with their children and 2% of these parents report reading every day. Of those who read with their children, educational materials seemed to be the most common literature source, followed by children’s and religious stories.

South African adults tend to read more newspapers and magazines than books. Those who are reading books tend to be younger and have a post Matric qualification (South African Book Development Council, 2016). When examining the barriers to reading, not having sufficient time was cited as a bigger barrier than cost. This is evidenced in the fact that how people get their books has changed significantly since 2006. While 48% of people reported getting their books from the library in 2006 this dropped to only 24% in 2016 (South African Book Development Council, 2016:78). Even though cost was not reported as the biggest barrier to reading, 58% of South African adults are living in households where there was not one book present (South African Book Development Council, 2016:81). Those households with lower

socio-economic statuses and little education are less likely to have books in the home. These statistics are in line with the global picture of reading and the effects of inequalities on developmental potential.

The survey also examined how many adults had heard about at least one reading initiative. While 1 in 5 reported knowledge of a reading initiative only 7% had been actively involved with one (South African Book Development Council, 2016:97). Only 4% had heard of Nali'wali and 2% had been actively involved in the organisation. This clearly indicates that although Nali'wali has a significant reach there are many people who the campaign is not reaching. Understanding why certain groups of people are not being reached or not responding is an important step to improving and expanding the service that initiatives like Nali'wali offer.

Exploring the reading practices of parents with young children in Mitchell's Plain is a significant research study as it explores an avenue of reading that was not extensively covered in the 2016 survey. While there were some questions regarding reading with children there is much more that can be learnt about what is motivating parents to read with their children and what the barriers to this interaction might be. Mitchell's Plain is a relevant location for the study as it is a mixed income area, although most of the population fall on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, with the opportunity for a rich variety of participants and data.

1.4 Aim of study

This topic has been formulated as an exploration into the reading practices of parents with young children Mitchell's Plain. The aim of the study is to understand what the reading practices are in this community and from there establish what interventions could be used to support parents.

1.5 Research questions

The following research questions were the base from which the questionnaire and interview schedule were developed. The research study developed in order to answer these questions.

1. What are the reading practices of parents with young children?
2. What are the perceptions and beliefs that parents have about reading with young children?
3. What are the challenges or barriers to reading to young children that parents face?
4. What influences the reading practices of parents with young children?
5. To what extent do parents make use of the local library?

1.6 Main assumptions

The main assumptions that were made going into this research were as follows. Firstly, it was assumed that parents believe that reading with young children is important. It was assumed that some parents are currently reading with their young children and the mothers read more than fathers. The assumption that parents know what their children do at the ECD centres was also made along with the assumption that they have access to reading materials and a library. Due to the literature it was also assumed that parental education would influence the frequency of reading. Finally, the questionnaire and interviews were undertaken under the assumption that participants would respond honestly and truthfully.

1.7 Clarification of concepts

Book sharing

A broad definition of book sharing refers to “experiences in which pre-literate children, generally in preschool or kindergarten listen as a more expert reader reads a book to them” (Hindman, Skibbe & Foster, 2014: 288).

Early childhood development (ECD)

The World Health Organisation defines early child development as a period that “encompasses physical, socio emotional, cognitive and motor development between 0-8 years of age” (World Health Organization, 2018).

Home learning environment (HLE)

“Home learning environment is a measure of the availability of literacy resources in the home, cultural enrichment and reading-related parenting practices during the years zero to five” (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014: 432).

Literacy event

A literacy event is an act of reading or writing (Banda, 2003).

Literacy practices

Literacy practices refer to the “social and cultural context that determine the choices people make between different practices, as well as the meaning surrounding such choices” (Banda, 2003: 107).

Reading practices

Reading practices are made up of reading events as well as what, when and how reading takes place in the home.

Socio-economic status (SES)

Socio-economic status is “usually defined by income, occupation, education, or any combination of these” (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014: 428).

Young child

For the purpose of this study a young child is to be defined as children from birth to six to include the years before a child starts Grade 1.

1.8 Main ethical considerations

Research that uses humans as the object of the study needs to follow ethical guidelines. Ethical issues need to be anticipated and specified in the research plan (Creswell, 2003). Fundamentally ethics relate to ensuring that the dignity of research participants is respected and that they are not merely used as a means to achieve a research objective (Mack et al., 2005). The following ethical considerations are relevant to this study: informed consent, violation of privacy, confidentiality and avoidance of harm (Strydom, 2002a).

Informed consent is a necessary condition as it implies that the participant has received all the relevant information about the study, and understands what their role as a participant involves (Strydom, 2002a). Informed consent acknowledges that the rights of the participants have been protected throughout the data collection stage (Creswell, 2003). One of the most important elements is that participation in the study is voluntary, and that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell, 2003). This is important to ensure that the participants are not coerced into participating. Creswell (2003) notes that the purpose and procedure of the study are other important elements that needs to be included on the informed consent form. These are important so that the individuals can make an informed choice to participate with enough knowledge about the nature of the research, how it is likely to affect them and what to anticipate if they do decide to participate. The informed consent should also describe any benefits or risks that may come with participating in the study and state that the individuals have the right to ask questions (Creswell, 2003). The fundamental aspect of the informed consent process is informing individuals about the study in a way that they can understand (Mack et al., 2005).

Achieving informed consent in this study was a multistep process with the first step of meeting with the principals of the selected ECD centres to explain and discuss the research. This was important as the principals are the gatekeepers to the community of parents and their support and understanding was integral to the study. Once verbal consent had been obtained from the

principals they were asked to distribute the questionnaires. Attached to each questionnaire was a letter stating the purpose of the research, the request for participation, the clear indication that participation was voluntary, and the researchers contact details. The return of the completed questionnaire indicated that the participant had read the letter and consented to their data being used in the study.

For the face-to-face interviews, an informed consent form was discussed and signed before each interview began. The researcher explained the research process, talked through risks or benefits and answered any questions that the participant may have had. Once the participant felt confident that they understood what they were consenting to (and that they may withdraw at any time) the form was signed. Both the researcher and participant kept a copy.

Privacy refers to the fact that it is an individual's right to decide to what extent they share their attitudes, beliefs, opinions and behaviour (Strydom, 2002a). The researcher is responsible for safeguarding the privacy and identity of the participants and to conduct themselves with sensitivity when necessary. To avoid the violation of privacy, the researcher did not put pressure on the participants to share any personal information, attitudes, practices or opinions if they do not want to share. In the quantitative questionnaire, this simply meant that the respondents left out any questions which they did not wish to answer. In the qualitative interviews, the researcher recorded the interview with the participant's knowledge and consent and ensured that the individuals were aware that they did not need to share any information that they did not want to. To safeguard for the privacy of the data once it was collected it was stored on the researcher laptop (and backups) which only the researcher has access to. After the research report has been completed the data will be kept for at least one year before being destroyed.

While privacy refers to the participants' personal privacy, **confidentiality** refers to how the researcher handled the information/data that is shared with them (Strydom, 2002a). Confidentiality and anonymity are often confused but are distinctly different. Anonymity ensures the privacy of subjects as their identities are not known to the researcher, while confidentiality implies that the researcher (and possibly a small team) are aware of their identities but will not disclose them in the final report or research process (Strydom, 2002a).

Due to the nature of this study, that the qualitative data collection followed on from the quantitative data collection and the condition that participation was voluntary it was not possible to ensure anonymity to the researcher. Strydom (2002a) discusses that it is sometimes

necessary to identify respondents especially in instances where follow up interviews are required and that when this is the case researchers must not assure the respondents of anonymity when it will not be the case. For this study anonymity, could only be assured to those who did not want to be interviewed. Beyond myself as the researcher, the anonymity of the interview participants is assured. The respondents' answers were kept confidential and in the transcribing process each interviewee was given a pseudonym to protect their identity. The respondents were asked in the questionnaire to provide a telephone number that they could be reached on if they were willing to be interviewed. Those who did not want to be interviewed did not and therefore their questionnaire remained anonymous.

No known harm is another very important ethical point that needed to be considered. The study received ethical clearance from the Department of Social Development at UCT indicating that no known harm will come to the participants, prior to data collection. This ensured that the methodology was well thought out and at a standard that UCT expects as well as protecting the intended participants.

1.9 Reflexivity

As qualitative research is driven by the researcher interpreting and analysing individual experiences understanding one's own biases and assumptions is crucial. Reflexivity is a process whereby the researcher actively takes into consideration their own experiences and identifies any assumptions or biases that may influence the analysis of the data (Clancy, 2013). This process is important in order to provide an explanation of the qualitative data that is credible and plausible and avoids personal assumptions. The reflexivity process allows for increased understanding and a more thorough and rigorous approach to qualitative data analysis (Clancy, 2013).

As this research is focussed on understanding individual experiences the context and concerns of the participants is important. The data gathered from the participants reflects their personal perspectives and cannot be separated from the context of their daily lives (Clancy, 2013). It is impossible for the researcher to fully understand the experiences and perspectives of the participant, meaning that the researcher will experience and interpret the data from personal perspective. This cannot ever be fully escaped (Clancy, 2013). The process of reflexivity asks the researcher to question their attitudes, thoughts, reactions and actions to try and understand their role in relation to others. Becoming aware of where one lacks knowledge and understanding how behaviour may influence others is part of this process. Once the researcher

has examined any factors that affect their positionality they are better able to understand the influence that they may have on the participants or on the analysis of the research (Clancy, 2013).

When undertaking this research study, there were a number of factors that I had to consider. These included my age, gender, ethnicity, my socio-economic status, the fact that I am not a parent and my motivation for the study. These factors could have influenced the way I viewed the participants and the way that they viewed me, which could impact the way I interpreted the research. As a young, white, female conducting research in Mitchell's Plain there was the possibility of not being able to relate to the participants, or that they would feel that they were not able to relate to me. This would have made establishing the rapport needed for in-depth face-to-face interviews difficult. Although there were times that I did not feel comfortable driving on my own through Mitchell's Plain, my training and experience as a social worker gave me the confidence needed to establish a good rapport with my participants. Being able to relate and engage with the participants was not the challenge that it could have been.

My motivation for the study came from my experience as a school social worker, seeing how children were entering Grade 1 and struggling to read as well as a personal love of reading and being read to as a child. Reading has always been an important part of my life and I am interested in seeing what part it plays in the lives of others. My positionality therefore was strongly linked to my previous experiences and my frustration as a school social worker dealing with the consequences of poverty and inequality rather than working proactively to reduce them. My experience with early childhood development in previous research was also a clear motivating factor. I acknowledge the privilege my family benefitted from which allowed them the knowledge, time and resources to read to me as a child which instilled in me a love and culture of reading. I acknowledge that there are many South Africans who have not had this privilege and that their lives may look very different to mine. As I interviewed parents who did and didn't read to their children, I had to make sure that they did not feel judged for the amount of time that they spent reading with their children. I tried to make this clear as the interviews progressed and as my participants were all very open with their reading practices and home lives I feel that I was able to establish a non-judgemental space where they felt safe to share.

I also needed to acknowledge the fact that I am discussing parenting, or a part of parenting, with parents while I myself am not a parent. I was open with the participants with what my motivation for the research was and that I did not have children of my own. This allowed me

to listen as the parents shared their experiences and realities of parenting and reading to their children without making comparisons to experiences. Understanding the socio-economic context that the participants find themselves in was also important to ensure that I did not go into the interviews with expectations or assumptions about what their lives looked like. I feel that my interviews were successful, and I needed to make sure to carry this awareness and reflexivity into the analysis phase.

Making use of a mixed methodology added depth to the study even though I was not as comfortable with the quantitative aspect as I was with the qualitative. Refining my skills in quantitative data analysis was a challenge that I looked forward to. I am grateful for my previous research experience which gave me the skills and confidence needed to feel as though I was able to complete this research successfully. I am also grateful for my training as a social worker which equipped me with the capacity to successfully work in contexts and situations that I was unfamiliar with.

1.10 Outline of the chapters

This research report consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 provides an introduction, background and context of this study. The rationale and significance as well as the aim of the study are discussed, and key concepts are clarified. The importance of intervening in early childhood is highlighted along with the need for research on reading in South Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 presents the policies and legislation that pertain to the study as well as the theoretical framework through which the study can be conceptually understood. The chapter also provides a review of literature in the field of reading in early childhood with specific focus on parent perceptions and reading practices.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research methodology that was used in this study is described in Chapter 3. The research design (a sequential transformative mixed method design) along with the data collection, analysis and verification methods are discussed. The limitations of the study are also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation, Discussion and Analysis of Data

Chapter 4 presents the discussion and analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. A profile of the participants ECD centres begins the chapter. The quantitative data analysis and discussion is followed by the analysis and discussion of the qualitative data. The qualitative findings are analysed through the theoretical framework described in Chapter 2 and are presented with quotations from the participants. The discussion and analysis of the findings are guided by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 5 is the final chapter and provides conclusions made from the findings in chapter 2. Conclusions about the reading practices of parents with young children in Mitchell's Plain are discussed. The conclusions are followed by recommendations from both the researcher and the participants.

1.11 Summary

This chapter provided a context to the research study, as well as an introduction to the main elements of the study. The research questions, assumptions, clarification of concepts, ethical considerations and the significance of the study have been discussed. This chapter establishes the relevance of studying the reading practices of parents with young children and the importance of intervening in early childhood. The negative affect of low socio-economic status on children's development and educational potential are also established along with the moderating effect that shared reading can have. The following chapter provides a review of relevant literature, legislation and a theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. Introduction

This chapter presents the policies and legislation that pertain to the research study as well as a theoretical framework through which the study can be conceptually understood. The chapter concludes with a review of relevant literature. The methodology of the literature review includes a variety of sources. Access to Google Scholar and various data bases was provided by the UCT library website and these were the main search sources. Most of the literature reviewed are journal articles along with a collection of government publications.

2.1 Policy and legislation

Children are the most vulnerable and in need of protection in society. The global commitment to children's rights can be seen in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (UNICEF, 2009). The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international human rights treaty which has been ratified by more countries than any other similar treaty in history (UNICEF, 2016). The Convention applies to all children without exception, and by ratification countries agree to review their laws relating to children (UNICEF, 2009). This process involves assessing the social services, health, legal and education systems and the funding that each of these systems and services receive. Governments are required to take the necessary steps to meet the minimum standards as set out by the Convention (UNICEF, 2009).

Article 28 of the Convention states that every child has the right to free primary education. The goal of education, as detailed in article 29, is for each child to develop to their potential (UNICEF, 2009). Although the Convention does not explicitly state the right to early childhood education, Meier (2014) describes how the right to education can be interpreted to begin from birth and is intricately linked to the child's right to develop to their full potential. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) is a similar document as it encompasses civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights of the child, but is specific to African countries (Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1990).

Global attention to early childhood development has been established through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015 (UN Sustainable Development, 2016). SDG 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. One of the targets is to "ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education" by the year 2030 (UN Sustainable Development, 2016).

The realisation of children's rights is dependent on the quality of the environment in which they develop. Prenatal care and first 1000 days of life are especially important (Republic of South Africa, 2015). If development is hindered or flawed in these early days later developmental problems may occur or the child's potential may not be reached. The first 1000 days are viewed as a critical period to secure optimal development of the child and through that the positive developmental trajectory of a country (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Therefore, it is beneficial for countries to have policies and legislation in place which protect children and promote all areas of development. The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) notes that the realisation of a child's right to ECD depends on the fulfilment of their other rights. While these rights are protected by law, in reality they are often violated.

South Africa has committed to protecting children's rights by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2015). These international conventions set a standard that can be used to guide individual countries' development of policies and legislation that protect children. South Africa has strong legislation in place regarding children and early childhood development. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights are the starting points for legislation pertaining to rights of both adults and children (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right to basic education and again this may be interpreted to mean early education in order to maximise developmental potential (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005) provides legislation that specifically applies to children in South Africa.

The Children's Act is a comprehensive document that provides a mandate for a range of social services for children and families (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011). The aim of the Children's Act is to ensure that the rights of the child are being upheld in various contexts, such as partial care facilities, foster care, drop-in centres etc. and to support families to promote the well-being of their children. The Children's Act sets norms and standards for services provided to children with the objective of regulating service providers and preventing abuse (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011). One of the areas that the Children's Act makes provision for is early childhood development.

The Children's Act states a difference between an ECD service and programme. An ECD service is described as a regularly provided service that is intended to promote the development of children from birth until they are school going age (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011). This

service should not be provided by the parent or caregiver and examples include an ECD centre or crèche. In contrast to this an ECD programme is a programme that is planned and delivered within an ECD service (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011). The intention of the programme should be to provide learning and support that are suitable to the developmental level of the child. ECD programmes are therefore developed to reflect different stages of development and abilities. Due to meeting different needs and developmental stages an ECD service may have more than one programme (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011). The Children's Act also stipulates that any partial care facility providing services to children below the school going age are required to provide an ECD programme. ECD centres are required to register as partial care centres and to register their ECD programme (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011).

The Children's Act provides comprehensive norms and standards that need to be met when looking after or providing a service to children. Compulsory registration is an attempt to ensure that ECD centres are complying with these norms and standards. Any facility that cares for six or more children is required to provide activities that promote learning and development (Berry, Jamieson & James, 2011). The Children's Act also makes provision for prevention and early intervention activities and considers ECD as a form of this. Parenting skills programmes are an important part of prevention and intervention (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017) and could be an essential avenue for educating parents on the importance and benefits of reading with their young children. Some parents may have little to no experience reading with children and may need to be actively shown as was the case in a study conducted in rural Senegal (Weber, Fernald & Diop, 2017).

Looking more specifically at the ECD sector is the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (Republic of South Africa, 2015). The aim of the policy is to give direction to the provision of a comprehensive package of services for early childhood development (Republic of South Africa, 2016). The policy provides a multi-sectoral framework of ECD services which includes national, provincial and local spheres of government. Relevant role players who are responsible for provision of various components of ECD services are identified along with their roles and responsibilities (Republic of South Africa, 2016). The policy provides a legal framework from which to support ECD systems and ensure the universal availability and access to quality ECD services. The focus of this policy is on strengthening systems and providing a statement from the government on the commitment to delivering and funding quality ECD programmes and services.

The policy covers all children from conception until the year before they enter formal school, or until the year before they turn seven in the case of children with disabilities (Republic of South Africa, 2016). The policy states that the provision of ECD services must be publicly provided as they “afford a foundation for good child outcomes as well as national developmental outcomes” (Republic of South Africa, 2015: 20). The policy promotes parents education and support and emphasises how parenting can improve children’s cognitive and psychosocial development (Martin et al., 2014). These effects have been more noticeable in disadvantaged families as well in programmes that offer training opportunities for child care workers and parents. Parent-child interactions are promoted to encourage learning, book-reading and play activities among other things (Martin et al., 2014). Martin et al (2014: 23) discuss how reading stretches the imagination and part of supporting and communicating with parents is to engender a love of reading in their children which will help to develop the “intrinsic motivation to explore and discover”. The development of concepts such as reading, writing and mathematics as well as language development and storytelling are also highlighted in the policy as priorities (Martin et al., 2014).

Another important document that needs to be noted is the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP is a vision casting document that provides the basis for a development plan as well as a summary of key issues and challenges that South Africa faces (National Planning Commission, 2011). Chapter 9 of the NDP discusses education and highlights how education, training and innovation are central to the long-term development of South Africa. Ensuring that children have access to high quality education starts with early childhood development services and programmes (National Planning Commission, 2011). These ECD services and programmes need to support holistic development and have enough flexibility to respond to the needs of children and their families.

Early childhood development is not purely focused on the education that young children receive but also refers to holistic development from conception until they enter formal school (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NDP describes measures that need to be put in place in order to realise their vision by 2030. This vision includes a South Africa where women are able to plan their pregnancies, where micronutrient deficiencies among babies younger than 18 months is eradicated and to ensure that all children have adequate nutrition and enough food (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NDP states that if these objectives are achieved “it will be possible for children to grow up in stimulating environment that support learning

and where they are not held back by their gender or the socio-economic status of their family (National Planning Commission, 2011: 264).

The challenge that South Africa faces in this regard is that the level of stunting and exposure to violence that children are exposed to is unacceptable (National Planning Commission, 2011). The age group that has the highest mortality rate in South Africa is children from birth to four years and stunting affects almost one in five children nationally (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NDP casts a vision for a South Africa where there is universal access to two years of early childhood development and where child under-nutrition and vitamin A deficiencies are eradicated. Having a national document that stipulates that ECD is a priority for national development shows that South Africa is aware and committed to increasing access and quality of ECD services and programmes.

The National Early Learning Development Standards (NELDS) is document that was designed with the specific focus on the early learning needs of children from birth to four years old (Department of Basic Education, 2009). NELDS is a policy initiative that is related to curriculum and “promotes using an integrated perspective which reflects the childcare and education curricular visions of the different departments that handle and provide services for young children.” (Department of Basic Education, 2009: 6). NELDS was designed as a starting point to help practitioners develop a curriculum or home-based programme as well as a monitoring and evaluation tool. The document contains developmental indicators and age appropriate activities that can promote these (Department of Basic Education, 2009). NELDS does not include an exhaustive list of developmental milestones or support activities but was designed as a base from which other material can be developed to suit different contexts and audiences.

Meier (2014) discusses how the NELDS presents a multidimensional vision of transformation for stakeholders in early childhood education. NELDS is expected to improve learning and development through a “focus on child-centred practices and holistic development” (Meier, 2014: 163). It is also expected to be used as a tool for policy makers to develop indicators for school readiness and for monitoring and evaluating children’s progress.

The documents discussed above form the policy framework for early childhood development in South Africa. These policies and documents have been built and developed over time and to replace older legislation. The Interim Policy for ECD (1996) originally established the broad framework for early childhood development as outlined by the White Paper on Education and

Training in 1995 (Meier, 2014). In 1997 provision for ECD services was made in the White Paper on Social Welfare and in 2001 the Department of Education identified critical areas that needed to be addressed into an integrated ECD strategy in the White Paper Five on Early Childhood Development. The White Paper Five called for universal access to Grade R for five year olds by 2010, which by 2012 had only been partly achieved with enrolment of 63% and the target has been moved to 2019 (Atmore, 2013).

The National Integrated Plan (NIP) for ECD (2005-2010) is described by Meier (2014) as providing a framework for how the integration that was called for in the White Paper Five might be operationalised in the ECD sector. The NIP focussed on an integrated approach that included programmes in water, sanitation, health, nutrition early learning and psychosocial care and called for various departments and services to work together (Meier, 2014).

South Africa has strong and comprehensive policies and legislation for early childhood development, but the implementation of this legal framework has yet to be effective.

2.2 Theoretical models

The theoretical framework for this study lies within three different theories, the ecological systems perspective, Vygotsky's theory of proximal development and literacy as a social practice. The theoretical analysis of the findings is located in the intersection of these approaches.

Ecological systems perspective

Bronfenbrenner stated that in order to understand human development the entire ecological system in which growth occurs needs to be considered (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This system is described by Bronfenbrenner as having five subsystems which range from the micro to macro and encompass everything from a person's relationship with their family to the culture in which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Development, Bronfenbrenner argues, takes place over time and through progressively more complex interactions with various systems and processes. The environments in which people live are the context for their development and include relationships between various systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Nothing can be understood in isolation and any outcome (positive or negative) is not due to one singular cause but multiple factors interacting with each other (Jack, 2012).

One of the properties that defines the ecological model is that, especially in the early years but throughout the life course, development takes place through processes of increasingly more

complex reciprocal interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These interactions occur between and the biopsychosocial human and the people, objects and systems in their immediate environment. If the interaction is to be effective it should occur fairly regularly over an extended period of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These ongoing forms of interaction within the immediate environment are described as "proximal processes" and an example of enduring patterns of proximal process can be seen in the parent-child relationship and activities, including reading and learning new skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 38). There are many dynamics which also need consideration such as the form, power and direction of these process as well as the environment in which they take place and the individual characteristics of the developing person.

The environmental context is an important concept to understand and Bronfenbrenner (1994: 39) conceptualises the ecological environment as a "set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls". The first subsystem is termed a microsystem and incorporates patterns of activities, social roles and interpersonal interactions that the developing individual experiences that occur in face-to-face settings. Examples of microsystems include settings such as a family, school or work place environment or friendship groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Proximal processes take place within these immediate environments to promote and sustain development, but the power of these processes is dependent on the content and structure of the microsystem.

The second subsystem described is the mesosystem which is comprised of the processes and links taking place between two or more environments or settings that contain the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). An example of a mesosystem is the interaction between the home system and school system, so essentially a mesosystem is a structure of microsystems. The next level in the cluster of systems is the exosystem. The exosystem involves the links and processes that occur between two or more settings where at least one does not contain the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Although at least one setting does not contain the developing person the events which occur within those settings still indirectly influence the processes within the microsystem. An example of this is the relationship between the parent's place of work and the home, and how this impacts the child.

The macrosystem is the fourth subsystem and is essentially the patterns, belief systems, customs, life-styles and bodies of knowledge of a particular culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Patterns of microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems of a culture

or subculture contribute to the macrosystem, which Bronfenbrenner (1994: 40) terms a “societal blueprint”. When examining the macrosystem one must look further than simple cultural labels as social and psychological features are important to identify as they will undoubtedly affect processes that occur in the microsystem. The final subsystem in the ecological model is the chronosystem. The chronosystem includes the changes and consistency over time in the environment as well as the characteristics of the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These changes include employment, socio-economic status, family structure, business and availability as well as others. The chronosystem overarches the other five subsystems. Taking the five subsystems into account allows for the development of a deeper understanding and perception of human relationships and development.

Development theories provide guidelines to understand and promote children’s development in a balanced way as well as cementing the understanding that ECD is indispensable (Meier, 2014). Development theories emphasise the potential that each young child has. Helping children reach this potential should be the goal of parents and caregivers. While there is increasing evidence that genetic factors determine an individual’s potential the extent to which that genetically predetermined potential is realised is heavily dependent on environmental factors and circumstances (Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013).

Niklas and Schneider (2015) describe how the home literacy environment plays a pivotal role in influencing early success or poor development in reading and spelling. The home literacy environment is made up of elements that facilitate the acquisition of linguist skills and includes the reading patterns and behaviour of the parent, the number of books present in the home as well as how often the child is read to. Applying the ecological model, the home literacy environment develops out of interaction with other systems to impact on the child. In South Africa, the legacy of the apartheid era still influences the way many people live. Poverty, unemployment and low levels of education, which have their roots in the apartheid era, influence the home literacy environment of many people which in turn impacts the competencies of the child and what they are able to achieve. The home literacy environment therefore acts as a mediator but is heavily influenced by the characteristics of the family (Niklas & Schneider, 2015).

In the ecological model the relationship between the child and parent (in the microsystem) is affected by the other subsystems (September, Rich & Roman, 2016). Knowledge, beliefs, values and culture are transferred through the parents to their children. When looking at the

development of young children, it is clear that they are influenced by their family and the systems around them. The work environment of a child's parent will impact on whether the parent has the time or energy to read to their child. Their work environment is influenced by their socio-economic status (the lower the socio-economic status the less employment opportunities) and their socio-economic status is affected by many factors. The historical oppression of the apartheid era has consequences which are still clearly visible in South Africa. Therefore, the reading practices of parents cannot be examined in isolation as the ecological model clearly reflects that there are levels of interaction and influence throughout life.

Within the shared book reading interaction there are three immediate components or systems at play, the reader, the child and the book (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). Each component interacts with the others to create the social interaction of reading. Within these three components there are numerous factors that affect the quality of the interaction such as the culture of the reader, the attachment of the child and the complexity of the book (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). While this study is not examining the quality of reading with young children but rather the reading practices of parents with young children it is still valuable to understand that in the reading interaction the three components are each influenced by other systems and processes.

The ecological systems perspective will be used to examine the way different factors interact to influence reading practices in Mitchell's Plain. This theory is holistic and integrative and will thus enable the examination of the different systems impacting on shared reading practices.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development

Vygotsky's (1978) theory on learning and development posed a new theoretical position, that of the zone of proximal development, to developmental psychology. It is undisputed that learning begins before children enter formal schooling and any learning that is encountered in the school environment has a history in preschool or the home. Learning at school is very different from the learning engaged in at preschool or home level as formal schooling is concerned with the "assimilation of the fundamentals of scientific knowledge" (Vygotsky, 1978: 32). Vygotsky maintained that learning and development are two processes that are interrelated from the child's first day of life and that learning should be matched with the child's developmental level.

The zone of proximal development is defined by Vygotsky as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration

with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978: 32). Vygotsky advocated for two different developmental levels, one that included developmental functions that have already matured, allowing the child to do certain things independently and another that includes functions that the child is able to do with guidance until those functions have matured.

Imitation in learning is an important concept highlighted by Vygotsky who states that children are able to imitate activities that extend beyond their own developmental capabilities (Vygotsky, 1978). Imitation is a tool that children can use to do more in a group activity or under adult guidance than they would be able to do independently. This is important as imitation can be used to extend a child’s learning into the zone of proximal development as any learning that is aimed at developmental levels that have already been reached is largely ineffective for a child’s overall development (Vygotsky, 1978). An essential component to Vygotsky’s theory is that learning needs to create the zone of proximal development. Learning, as described by Vygotsky, “awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalised they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievement.” (Vygotsky, 1978: 35).

Vygotsky described how language and cognitive development in children occurs within the context of social interaction with someone who is more knowledgeable (Vally et al., 2015). Vygotsky considered learning to be rooted in social interactions which are mediated by language which is then internalized. Parents or caregivers are generally the more knowledgeable ‘other’ who support and extend the learning of the child to read, write and solve problems (Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006). Simply put, adults share their interpretation of the world with children to complement what children already know and this allows children to extend their knowledge or expertise (Boomstra et al., 2013). This process is called scaffolding. Scaffolding of children’s learning involves initiating, supporting and encouraging the acquisition of new concepts about their culture, community as well as more literacy based concepts (Duursma, 2014; Vally et al., 2015).

Li and Flear (2015) discuss how adult mediation serves the dual purpose of supporting children’s experiences and motivating their participation. Although this may be mostly unconscious it plays an important role in children’s development of motives. Adults create new conditions, experiences or demands that as children meet stimulates development (Li & Flear, 2015). As already stated these conditions are only effective if they are within the child’s zone

of proximal development. To broaden the child's zone of proximal development the adult should work with the developmental functions that are already present in the child and guide collaborations that allow the child to successfully experience what they are not yet able to do on their own (Li & Fleer, 2015). Through this process the child is building self-awareness of their capabilities and possibilities and is able to interpret situations with increasing developmental maturity.

The developmental functions that are still being formed, or maturing are influenced by the child interacting with other people in tasks or experiences in order to help the child deal with the conflict between what they are able to do independently and what they are able to do with guidance (Li & Fleer, 2015). Other factors influencing the formation of new functions include the child's motives and their environment. Li and Fleer (2015: 1946) provide a succinct description of this "Essentially, the new demands are rooted in the relations between the child and his or her social and physical environment". From this description and Vygotsky's theory that cultural beliefs, values, customs and skills influence development it is clear that this is a theory that can complement Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective (Boomstra et al., 2013).

Book sharing demonstrates Vygotsky's theory as children are given the opportunity to learn different literacy, language and cognitive skills while engaged in a social interaction with a more experienced adult (Duursma, 2014). The reader assists the child with techniques such as labelling pictures, asking questions and making the book and story available in other ways. During shared reading between parents and children, the content, nature and direction of the conversation about those books influences what the child will learn from that reading experience (Boomstra et al., 2013). Duursma (2014) highlights how participating in shared book reading and the conversations that accompany it can help children to become more aware of their cultural background and feel a part of a community.

Frequent reading interactions between parent and child allow the parent to extend their knowledge of their child's language and literacy competency and then allow them to strategically extend the child's emerging expertise (Hindman, Skibbe & Foster, 2014; Vally et al., 2015). Reading picture books creates a prime context for learning new vocabulary because the focus is entirely on the story, children are not required to extract new words from the ongoing activities of everyday conversation (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). Hearing unfamiliar words may encourage children to find out their meaning through the help of an adult or more

competent peer, thus extending their vocabulary. The zone of proximal development is important here as adults need to structure reading to reflect the child's developmental level while at the same time extending the zone of proximal development (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). An adult may be familiar with their child's current developmental level and vocabulary, but it is difficult to know what capacity the child has for new vocabulary or developmental potential. Fletcher and Reese (2005) suggest that through early and frequent picture book reading adults are able to become more sensitive in their estimation of their child's language learning potential.

This theory of development is relevant to the study as it explains many of the benefits of frequent shared book reading as well as framing the developmental process that takes place through shared book reading. It provides a framework for the developmental aspect of the study and complements the ecological systems theory.

Literacy as a social practice

Literacy as a concept can and has been defined in various ways (Graff & Duffy, 2008). Graff and Duffy (2008) discuss how literacy is difficult to measure and is often condensed down into what can be tested and measured. Conceptualising literacy in this way is problematic as it excludes many literacy events and practices that cannot be measured. Graff and Duffy (2008: 43) define literacy as:

“basic or primary levels of reading and writing and their analogs across different media, activities made possible by a technology or set of techniques for decoding and reproducing printed materials such as alphabets, syllabaries, pictographs, and other systems, which themselves are created and used in specific historical and material contexts.”

Context, as highlighted in this definition is an influential factor and an integral aspect of literacy as a social practice.

Two different models or ways of viewing literacy are discussed by Horn (2016). These two models are the autonomous model and the ideological model. The autonomous model maintains that literacy is a skill that needs to be mastered and does not have social implications (Horn, 2016). In this model literacy is suggested to develop separately from social and cultural contexts and people are viewed in the dichotomy of literate or not, often with biased views attached to what it means to be literate. The autonomous model views literacy as a precondition for economic growth, social progress and transformation and generally informs the way literacy is taught and assessed at schools (Horn, 2016). While the autonomous model

views literacy as a precondition of social transformation, simply acquiring literacy does not guarantee the access to power or transformation (Horn, 2016). The way in which societies or individuals use literacy can generate power but literacy on its own is not empowering as it is so heavily based in circumstance and context (Horn, 2016).

The ideological model on the other hand suggests that both literacy and the way it is used are dependent on social contexts (Horn, 2016). This model proposes that literacy is a social practice and therefore is learned through social interactions that are contextually and situationally dependent. Literacy as a social practice is framed by the varying contexts and changing situations that people find themselves in and responding to (Horn, 2016). Due to different contexts and the fact that circumstances and situations change, this model argues that literacy is an influencing variable on individual's lives and the successes that they may have. Literacy as a social practice emphasises the way in which literacy development is supported by social interactions (Theodotou, 2017).

Stewart (2011: 45) describes the link between literacy events and literacy practices as well as providing a clear differentiation between the two models when stating that "A social practice approach recognises the limits of a focus on the autonomous skills of reading, writing, numeracy and language" to embrace what people do with literacy as well as where, how and with whom. Literacy events are activities such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, or any activity that is linked to literacy and can be found in the home environment, school context or the general community environment (Horn, 2016; Theodotou, 2017). Literacy events inform literacy practices. The way that people use literacy and literacy events make up literacy practices and these practices are heavily influenced by cultural and social norms and contexts. Literacy events and literacy practices are both important contributing factors to the development of literacy as a social practice (Theodotou, 2017).

Banda (2003) expands on this by discussing how the choices people make between different literacy practices are influenced by their knowledge, identity and being. These factors also impact the way people interact with reading and writing (Banda, 2003). The choices people make regarding their literacy practices reveal much about their culture, history, socio-economic status and their position in relation to power structures. Literacy practices are therefore viewed as "socio-culturally determined ways of thinking and doing reading and writing in different cultural contexts" (Banda, 2003: 108). In South Africa, due to the legacy of the apartheid era,

often what gives meaning to the choices that people make are determined by socio-economic factors, material resources or lack thereof and historical factors (Banda, 2003).

Theodotou (2017) notes that literacy events and practices reveal how people interact with literacy but they do not necessarily reflect their literacy knowledge. This is important to distinguish due to the preconceived opinions that are often held regarding what is or is not literacy and literacy knowledge. As this theory purports that literacy is a social practice and therefore dependent on social context it stands to reason that literacy practices and literacy knowledge will be different and mean different things to different contexts. Literacy has a fundamental role in everyday life as it gives people the skills and knowledge required to interact in and interpret society (Theodotou, 2017). Literacy extends to non-verbal as well as verbal communication and exists naturally in everyday life.

For children and especially young children social interactions are at the centre of knowledge achievement and literacy as a social practice plays a pivotal role in learning (Theodotou, 2017). As literacy events and practices are interwoven into daily activities children learn through observation, imitation and participation (Horn, 2016). Children are able to observe the importance of print media (along with other verbal and non-verbal forms of literacy) and learn how it is used to accomplish tasks. The literacy events that children are exposed to help to socialise them into particular literacy practices (Horn, 2016).

Literacy as a social practice can be clearly seen in South Africa. Due to the legacy of the apartheid era the choices that many people make regarding schools is not necessarily determined by literacy, but heavily influenced by their socio-economic status, material resources or lack thereof as well as historical factors such as land and where they are currently living (Banda, 2003). Banda (2003) discusses how legislation during the apartheid era made it difficult for the majority of black people to interact with written text and therefore develop a culture of reading and writing. Dick (2012: 11) details the history of South Africa's book and reading culture and provides clearly states that "an uneven book and reading legacy was bequeathed to a new South Africa". Even though this is the case Dick (2012) also notes that the intellectual life, the literacy practices and events, of free blacks and Cape slaves has been underestimated due to the evidence of literacy, the love of books and handwriting in different languages and scripts. Literacy as a social practice can be clearly seen throughout South Africa's history as "what books meant to readers changed in the spaces of homes, courtrooms,

prison libraries and prison cells” and how literacy practices were determined by what you were legally allowed access to and how this changed over time (Dick, 2012: 124).

This theory of literacy as a social practice complements Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development as well as the ecological systems perspective. Literacy as a social practice is an important model in which to frame the study as it gives context to the choices that people may make with regards to reading practices. When examining the choices that parents have made regarding what, when and how they read to their young children it is important to remain mindful that there are many factors which influence those choices, some of which the parent may not be aware of. Duursma (2014: 437) supports this view when she states that “it is important to keep in mind how literacy is viewed and incorporated in the lives of young children differs by culture”. Coupling this model with the ecological systems perspective will provide a macro framework from which to examine not only the reading practices but the meaning behind those practices.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study is located at the intersection between the ecological systems perspective, Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development and literacy as a social practice as seen in figure 2.1. Examining the data from within this framework will allow for a holistic and well-rounded discussion of the findings.

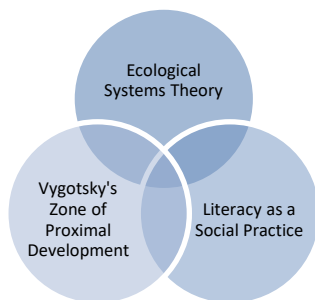


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework.

2.4 Themes linked to objectives

The following themes are linked to the research objective, reading practices of parents with young children, the benefits of reading to young children and parents, factors influencing reading practices and challenges with reading and parenting.

The reading practices of parents with young children

In Western culture, reading aloud is considered to be an important activity to promote language and literacy development in young children (Duursma, 2014). Cooper, Vally and Tomlinson (2014) advocate for reading aloud and claim that carer-infant prolonged joint interactions occur

more often during shared book reading than any other activity. Reading aloud and other early experiences have been shown to play a formative role in shaping school readiness (Chatterji, 2006). The home learning environment and the literacy interactions that parents have with their children are therefore very important. Most of the research regarding reading with young children has been conducted in middle-class Western contexts and has focused on the quality of the social interaction and not necessarily on what reading practices are taking place. There is little data available for South Africa and Cooper, Vally and Tomlinson (2014) discuss how in indigenous South African communities there doesn't seem to be much of a culture of shared book reading.

Fletcher and Reese (2005) discuss a general picture that emerged from numerous studies. For children younger than 18 months the parents tend to point to the pictures, deviate from the text and talk about the pictures while for children older than 18 months parents focused more on asking questions and having conversations around the pictures. Research has indicated that reading with young children is a different process to reading to older preschool children and by extension older children (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). For children under three years the parents tend to choose the books/reading material and direct the activity but once the child is familiar with a story they may begin to request it. As children get older they begin to take more responsibility for choosing stories and directing the social interaction.

A study conducted by Britto, Brooks-Gunn and Griffin (2006) found similar results that reading patterns vary between simply reading the text to discussions of events related to the book. Shared book reading can be both a joined bonding activity and an opportunity for the reader to engage the child in conversation that goes beyond what is simply written on the page. Parents have been shown to label, comment and ask questions during shared book reading and without the guidance and support of parents or caregiver, books are only partly accessible to young children (Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Fletcher & Reese, 2005). Duursma (2014) describes how babies grow from chewing and slapping books to learning how to hold the book and turn the pages themselves. The adult needs to show the child how to get to that stage as well as influencing the child's reading habits and attitudes towards books and reading. The younger the child the more initiative the reader needs to take to identify learning opportunities.

Fletcher and Reese (2005) note that changes in the reading behaviours and literacy practices of parents could enhance the language development of their young children. The way that the parent interacts with their child during reading is an important element in developing an interest

for reading in the child (Li & Flear, 2015). Parents who read frequently with their children will also have more knowledge of the children's language competence. Having this knowledge will allow them to extend their children's zone of proximal development (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). Fletcher and Reese (2005: 91) advocate for reading to young children when they state that "starting to read early optimises the quality of reading, which in turn increases the frequency of reading and hence increases the likelihood for language learning."

A study conducted by Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995) states that the nature and the number of book reading experiences between the parent and child are assumed to lay the foundation for differences in academic achievement. While this is a dated study it is a concept which can be found in the more recent literature (Duursma, 2014; Hindman, Skibbe & Foster, 2014; Vally et al., 2015). Duursma (2014: :443) conducted a study on parental book reading practices in the Netherlands and found that 75% of children under the age of two and 60% of three and four year old children were read with every day. The Netherlands is a developed country where almost everyone would have access to books or reading materials. In a similar study of Australian children, Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall (2013) found that 62% of children, who had a parent with tertiary education, were read to every day while only 28% of children, with parents who did not complete school were read to on a daily basis. In contrast in a South African survey 35% of parents reported reading with their children and 2% of these parents reported reading every day (South African Book Development Council, 2016).

Duursma (2014) discusses how children growing up in middle class families are exposed to on average between 1000 and 1700 hours of one on one book reading compared to an average of 25 hours for a child growing up in a low income family. In LMIC parental involvement in their children's cognitive development is estimated to be fairly low (Walker et al., 2007). Walker et al. (2007) estimate that only 10-41% of parents in LMIC provide their children with cognitively stimulating materials and only 11-33% of parents engage their children in activities that are cognitively stimulating. According to Duursma (2014: 452) "For each year a child receives book reading, their income possibilities increase." Spending as little time as reading 20 minutes a day will help prepare them for their adult lives.

Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall (2013) discuss a survey that uses the self-reported number of books in the home as a proxy for socio-economic status. Having 25 books or fewer was categorised as 'few' and 200 or more books as 'many' and represented social economic status. Of those children who had 'few' books at home, 40% performed below the

benchmark compared to only 16% of children who had ‘many’ books at home. Smith, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov (1997 as cited in Chatterji, 2006) found that lower quality home learning environments explained the associations between economic disadvantage and low academic performance. Bus, Van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini’s study (1995) poses a contrasting view on the relationship between shared reading and socio-economic status. Their study stated that “the effect of the frequency of parent-pre-schooler book reading is not dependent on the socio-economic status of the families” (Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995: 15). This is an interesting contrast between the effect that socio-economic status and shared book reading have on each other.

In a South African context, Banda (2003) examined the literacy practices in black and coloured communities and found that apart from SMSs there was little being done in the home environment. Activities such as ‘reading’ images on the TV, listening to the radio and cassette tapes were more common than reading books or newspapers (Banda, 2003). Banda’s (2003) study found that 23.8% of black participants preferred writing in English only compared with 16.3% who preferred writing in isiXhosa only. In the coloured participants Banda (2003) found that 40.5% prefer writing in English only while 16.2% prefer writing in Afrikaans only. Both black and coloured participants reported a fairly high preference for writing in both English and isiXhosa (51.3%) and both English and Afrikaans (43.2%) respectively. Reading habits tended to reflect the participants writing habits with only 2.5% of black participants preferring to read in isiXhosa compared to 40.5% preferring English reading material. Coloured participants reported a 40.7% preference for reading in English and 16.7% for reading in Afrikaans (Banda, 2003). Banda (2003) notes that Afrikaans reading material is more available than isiXhosa reading material and that households with a variety of reading materials are more likely to be coloured than black. Even though many coloured people had some or all of their education conducted in Afrikaans during the apartheid era, there is little support of Afrikaans literacy practices. During the apartheid era many everyday literacy events were seen as part of white culture and access to libraries and reading material was restricted for non-white South Africans. This may be due to the global world in which we live, where literacy in English is often viewed as a tool to increased socio-economic status and mobility (Banda, 2003).

Korat and Or (2010 as cited in Kucirkova, Messer & Sheehy, 2014) studied children’s responsiveness to e-books and printed books. Children were found to respond more to interactions initiated by their mother when reading e-books rather than printed books. With the progression of technology and the introduction of tablets and smart phones, which are common

in most households, there may be some interesting changes in reading practices. Mothers were also seen to support children's reading of e-books more than printed books (Korat, Shamir & Heibal, 2013 as cited in Kucirkova, Messer & Sheehy, 2014).

Perceptions and beliefs about reading with young children

Research on what parents believe about reading to young children seems to be scarce. There is a plethora of research supporting the benefits of language development and academic achievement that reading with young children has (Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006; Chatterji, 2006; Engle et al., 2011; Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Cooper et al., 2014; Duursma, 2014) but very little on parental beliefs and perceptions. Traditionally, research regarding parental beliefs has focussed on cultural differences (Boomstra et al., 2013). This research is aligned with the theory that literacy is a social practice and emphasises the need to take culture and demographic factors into consideration. The ecological systems theory and Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development both regard culture as a pivotal influential factor and thus the South African context in which this study is located cannot be emphasised enough.

South Africa has a complicated history of oppression and this included restricted access to books and literature for certain people. Dick (2012) notes that throughout South Africa's book and reading history, the reading practices of 'common readers', stood in contrast to the library and book programmes that the government or authorities developed for them. The apartheid era government actively disadvantaged non-white children's educational and academic potential and tried to regulate and control what non-white South African's were reading (Dick, 2012). Libraries were segregated, and the size, number and quality of books and resources was based on race. While these measures were successful at the level of institutional education, a book and reading culture was developing that was hidden behind the ongoing suppression (Dick, 2012). Libraries played important roles, being claimed as both political and non-political spaces, and used for meeting and gatherings. In Mitchell's Plain, an adult literacy programme was established and many adults learned how to read and write through being a library member (Dick, 2012). Books and reading are powerful tools and can influence behaviours but choices about literacy practices can in turn be influenced by the systems that the individual finds themselves in. Dick describes this notion as "the physical spaces that books occupy shape their meanings, and the meanings change as the spaces change. Books inhabit private, public and emotional spaces" (Dick, 2012: 135). While there is no longer legal precedent for segregation

and oppression many people are living with the consequences of the apartheid era and these could influence the beliefs that people have or the choices that they make (or are able to make).

Parenting has a direct impact on the behaviour of the child (Gould & Ward, 2015). Children who are exposed to violence in the home and community will grow up with that as the norm and often perpetuate it. In South Africa, parents especially in low income areas, face many challenges and stressors as poverty affects their ability to provide nutrition, health and educational opportunities for their children (Gould & Ward, 2015). As previously discussed the apartheid era and the legacy that it left meant that many people were not able to access written texts and establishing a culture of reading was not a priority (Banda, 2003). Although the access to reading materials and written texts has drastically improved, black and coloured populations have been left without an entrenched culture of reading and there are still many who do not have access to reading materials in their home language (Banda, 2003).

Boomstra et. al (2013) conducted a study in the Netherlands on the reading beliefs of parents. The study defined reading beliefs as “the ideas that parents have concerning the influence of reading and their own efficacy as language teachers to their children” (Boomstra et al., 2013: 1605). Decisions that people take, in any sphere, are generally influenced by the beliefs that are held. This applies to child-rearing choices, including reading practices. Parents may hold strong beliefs about certain aspects of raising their child and less firm opinions on other aspects. There may also be beliefs that are more subconscious in nature, and parents can clash when the assumption is made that their co-parent (if there is one) holds the same belief (Boomstra et al., 2013).

Research has shown that the beneficial effects of reading on the cognitive and psychological development of children are larger in disadvantaged populations (Engle et al., 2011). Engendering an interest in books and reading has also been found to be a result of shared book reading and does not necessarily depend on the temperament of the child (Duursma, 2014). This implies that given the right home learning environment any child could learn to love reading, which could then advantage them once they enter school. To get to this ideal state, the parents need to believe in the value of reading and provide the right type of encouragement and support. Each family and parent have a different history and faces different challenges and the parents may need to be supported themselves, to be able to encourage and engage in reading practices with their young children.

Factors and challenges influencing the reading practices of parents with young children

A child's socio-economic status is represented by their parents and as research by Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman (2014) has shown, socio-economic status and the home literacy environment heavily influence literacy and educational outcomes. By the time children enter formal schooling, gaps in literacy abilities between children of different socio-economic backgrounds is already clear. A high quality home learning environment is not as simple as reading aloud to children but involves active and passive components that need to work together to create a home learning environment of quality (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). The passive component consists of access to literacy materials such as books and educational toys as well as activities such as shared book reading and visiting the library. The active component involves direct teaching from the parent of letters, shapes, numbers and concepts (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). Therefore, encouraging parents to increase the frequency with which they read to their children is important but educating them on the active component is essential if the quality of the home learning environment is going to improve. The home learning environment is very different from a classroom, school or preschool learning environment and exposing children to reading and writing materials outside of this structured learning space can help to engender a culture of reading and writing in the child (Banda, 2003). Showing children that reading is not reserved for school will aid that process.

Children living in poverty face disadvantages in their physical, cognitive and emotional development and often have deficits in cognition, and literacy (Cooper et al., 2014). The home learning environment plays such an integral part in children's development and yet children living in poverty tend to have fewer opportunities to engage in literacy practices. Cooper et al. (2014) note that book sharing between parents and children happens significantly less often in low income families when compared to middle income families. Poverty is self-perpetuating, and education is something that is often negatively impacted. Children who have parents with low educational attainment are more likely to perform below the bench mark (Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Duursma, 2014). This has also been found to be true of children with parents with a high unemployment history. Poverty and the socio-economic status of a family heavily influences the literacy practices and but evidence indicates that the average socio-economic status of the school is also a contributing factor to predicting achievement (Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013). Sénéchal and Lefevre (2014) provide contradictory findings. Their study concluded that the home literacy environment did not

predict developmental outcomes in children. When many other studies are stating that the home learning/literacy environment is key to educational success and development it is interesting to note one that states otherwise.

While low income is a key aspect of low socio-economic status, Buckingham, Beaman and Wheldall (2014) note that it makes only a minor contribution to gaps in literacy ability. It is the multiple factors of a low socio-economic status, that interact to create the poor home literacy environment. Children who grow up in these environments are less likely to be exposed to experiences that promote the development of basic and integral skills for literacy acquisition (Black & Dewey, 2014; Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). Parents with a low socio-economic status can ensure that their children are not further disadvantaged by engaging and investing time into literacy activities at home.

Mental health is another influential factor and Britto, Book-Gunn and Griffin (2006) found that poor parental mental health is associated with fewer learning experiences in the home and poor quality parent-child interaction. Parents who are anxious, depressed or struggling to make ends meet find it difficult to be present both physically and emotionally for their children (Gould & Ward, 2015). There is a definite link between poverty and mental health. A plausible hypothesis is that in low income communities in South Africa there are limited learning experiences and by extension reading interactions.

Niklas and Schneider (2015) provide evidence for the effectiveness of family literacy programmes in enhancing the home learning environment. Focusing on elements such as the personal reading habits of the parents and how often the child is read with as well as the number of books and more specifically children's books in the house can enhance the home learning environment (Niklas & Schneider, 2015). The number of books in the home has been found to predict children's reading achievement and fluency (Myrberg & Rosén, 2009; van Bergen et al., 2017). This is a clear example of the ecological systems theory in play, where once some of the structural needs of the family (lack of books) or individual development (parents attending family literacy programmes) are met, the home learning environment is changed which in turn impacts the child's literacy competencies.

The extended impact of reading to young children

While the beneficial effects associated with shared reading with children are widely acknowledged, the exact role that shared reading plays in the development of emerging literacy skills is not as clear (Evans, Williamson & Pursoo, 2008; Cooper et al., 2014). This is due to

the many different interactions that take place during the shared reading activity (Evans, Williamson & Pursoo, 2008). As reading aloud to a child is a social interaction with multiple parties involved, there are benefits documented for the parent/reader as well. Fletcher and Reece (2005) discuss how more frequent reading interactions allow the parent's knowledge of their children's language competence to be extended and thereafter the parent is able to continually stretch their children on a cognitive level. Parents who are interested and actively involved in their children's schooling are more able to instil an appreciation for the importance of education in their children, who subsequently do better at school than children whose parents are uninvolved (Gould & Ward, 2015).

Book sharing is an effective activity to promote child language development as it happens in a natural and meaningful environment (Cooper et al., 2014). Parents are able to encourage language development through direct teaching of new words and meanings as well as supplementary learning which the child picks up on from verbal and non-verbal contexts and cues. Reading with young children promotes emergent literacy skills which subsequently promotes reading development (Duursma, 2014). Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995) note that one of the benefits of reading with young children is that it begins to familiarise them with the concept of story structures, schemes and some literacy conventions which will lay the foundation for understanding texts. Book reading with children increases their knowledge of language and especially written language and will assist their reading development and achievement (Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995). Fletcher and Reece (2005) report that picture book reading from the ages of eight to thirty six months, which is a period of rapid growth, increases exposure to vocabulary as well as concepts and words which are novel and not necessarily used in every day conversation. Reading with a child not only helps to develop their emergent literacy skills but acts as an avenue to share facts and information about the world with them (Evans, Williamson & Pursoo, 2008). Children's books are a rich source of new vocabulary for children and development of vocabulary is important as it is a "significant predictor of their subsequent reading comprehension, reading proficiency and success at school" (Li & Flear, 2015: 228).

In a study conducted in South Africa, mothers who were trained in a particular method of book sharing were better able to facilitate educational activities, were more expressive with their infants during shared book reading and were also more sensitive to their infants' needs than mothers who had not had the training (Cooper et al., 2014). While shared book reading is important as an activity the conversation that occurs between the parent and the child is

possibly even more important (Duursma, 2014), for both the parent and the child. Gould and Ward (2015) discuss the importance of attachment and self-regulation for success at school as well as curbing any antisocial or aggressive tendencies that could lead to later violence. Parents play a major role in the development of attachment and self-regulation in their children and a simple activity such as shared reading can go a long way towards fostering secure attachment and self-regulation.

Thus, positive parenting is essential to reap the maximum benefits of shared book reading. Parenting interventions promote interactions between the parent and child in order to improve responsiveness, increase attachment and encourage active learning such as book sharing and play activities (Engle et al., 2011). It is important to understand the reading practices of parents in South Africa, and more specifically for this study in Mitchell's Plain as shared book reading is a simple way to increase cognitive development in early childhood (Cooper et al., 2014). Book sharing training has proven to be a low cost, simple strategy to intervene at the nuclear family level and improve the quality of the book sharing that is taking place (Cooper et al., 2014). Not only does intervening in early childhood benefit the child at school but longitudinal studies have shown that there are beneficial effects on adult wage earning potential, health, depressive symptoms and reduction in violence (Black et al., 2017), all pointing to the effectiveness of intervening in early childhood.

Interestingly, Niklas and Schneider (2015) found no statistically significant effects on a family literacy programme which differs from the majority of other studies. Sénéchal and Lefevre (2014) also reported that shared reading at home, or the home learning environment, enhanced oral vocabulary but not knowledge of the alphabet. The authors discuss that only weak associations between shared reading and early literacy exist. If this is the case, shared book reading should still be promoted for the relational benefits between parent and child.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed some of the main literature surrounding the topic of shared book reading as well as providing a conceptual framework for the study. The methodology which the study will use is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the research study. Methodology refers to the different choices that the researcher has made about the process of the research. These choices needed to be thoroughly thought through in order to meet the needs of the research study most effectively. Methodological choices that needed to be made included the research design that the study would follow and how the researcher was going to draw a sample for the study. Decisions around how to collect, analyse and verify the data also needed to be made and limitations of the study needed to be discussed. A timeline was created to guide the progress of the research. Understanding the methodology that you are using and why you are using it is important as it underpins the entire research study.

3.1 Research design

All research needs to be guided by an overarching framework. This framework is known as the research design (Creswell, 2003). Fouche and de Vos (2002) describe the research design as the plan or blueprint for how the study is going to be undertaken. Using an established framework allows the researcher to develop their research plans in accordance with ideas and strategies that are well grounded in literature and supported by previous research (Creswell, 2003). For this research study, the first decision that needed to be made was whether the study was going to follow a quantitative, qualitative or mixed method design. This is an important decision as the data collection, analysis and verification methods are all influenced by the type of research that is undertaken.

Quantitative research aims to predict and quantify (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The role of the researcher is to be an objective observer while the focus of the study is on specific questions and hypotheses (De Vos, 2002a). These questions and hypotheses ideally remain constant throughout the study. The data collection procedure and instrument are designed before the study begins and are applied in a standardised way. Data collection strategies include experiments and surveys and the instruments are designed to yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003). Specific variables are measured and quantified through frequency counts, scales and other means while analysis is centred around obtaining statistical breakdowns of the data (De Vos, 2002a). Qualitative research places the focus on examining behaviour with a view to understand and describe (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Qualitative research is constructivist in nature and is based on the understanding that individual experiences have multiple meanings (Guba, 1981). Experiences and their meanings are understood to be socially and historically

constructed. Data collection strategies include case studies, interviews and ethnographies, as open-ended data is collected with the intent of developing themes (Creswell, 2003).

In a mixed method approach, aspects of both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. The philosophical assumption that underpins this method is based on neither positivist or constructivist approaches and more on practical grounds, such as conscience-oriented and problem-centred approaches (Creswell, 2003). Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected to best understand the research problem. A mixed method approach allows numerical information as well as text information to be gathered so that both quantitative and qualitative data are represented (Creswell, 2003). This study made use of a mixed method research design as it allowed me to gain a broad understanding of the reading practices of parents with young children enrolled at Mitchell's Plain ECD centres as well as a more in-depth understanding based on fourteen face-to-face interviews. When deciding upon a strategy for mixed method research Creswell (2003) suggests four criteria which once considered, will guide the researcher to choosing the most effective strategy.

The first decision is based on how the qualitative and quantitative data will be collected, or also known as implementation. The data collection can be completed in two sequential phases or gathered concurrently (Creswell, 2003). If the data collection is going to be completed in phases, a decision about the sequence of data collection needs to be made. As qualitative and quantitative data have different foci the intent of the research is used to guide the sequence of data collection (Creswell, 2003). The second factor that needs to be considered is whether priority is given to either the quantitative or qualitative data. The priority may be equal, or it may be skewed toward one set of data. The third factor that Creswell (2003) discusses is integration. Integration of the data may occur at several stages of the research process, during the data collection, the analysis, interpretation or in a combination of places. Essentially integration refers to combining the data and Creswell (2003) notes that where the integration happens seems to relate to the implementation strategy. The final factor to consider when choosing a mixed method strategy is whether the design is guided by a larger theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2003: 213) notes that "although all designs have implicit theories, mixed method researchers can make the theory explicit as a guiding framework for the study".

This study used a sequential transformative mixed method design. In this research design the data collection happens in two sequential phases and either the quantitative or qualitative data

may be collected first (Creswell, 2003). The priority may be given to either data set or it may be shared equally. The results are integrated during the interpretation phase. Unlike the other two types of sequential design (exploratory and explanatory) the transformative design is guided by a theoretical perspective. The theoretical perspective can be a conceptual framework, a specific ideology or advocacy and this is regarded as more important in guiding the study than the use of the methods alone (Creswell, 2003). The purpose of this design is to use the methods that will most effectively serve the theoretical perspective of the researcher. By using a sequential design the researcher may be better able to understand a phenomenon or to explore diverse perspectives (Creswell, 2003). This study was guided by the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 and equal priority was given to both the qualitative and quantitative data.

In the implementation stage of this study the quantitative data was collected first and then the qualitative data collection in the second phase. The qualitative data was used to build onto the results of the quantitative data in order to explore reading practices in Mitchell's Plain at a deeper level. The straightforward nature of this two phase design is considered a strength, as a single researcher is able to carry out the design with no need for a team (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Creswell (2003) notes how this design can be useful when unexpected results arise from a quantitative study as the qualitative data can be used to examine those unexpected results in more depth.

Although straightforward there are several challenges associated with this research design. Due to the two phase structure it can be time consuming and careful considerations need to be made with regard to participant selection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The decision needs to be made if the same individuals are going to be used for both phases, if individuals from the same sample are going to be used in both phases or from the same population, this is discussed in the sampling section. Having specific selection criteria for the qualitative phase is important as is deciding which quantitative results need to be further explained (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This can be a challenge as this cannot be determined until after the quantitative data collection and analysis is complete.

There is limited information on the reading practices of parents with young children at ECD centres in Mitchell's Plain. Using a sequential mixed method approach allowed me to examine the reading practices of 139 parents with young children, and then explore some of the results

through fourteen in depth interviews. Both approaches were needed to form a cohesive picture of the reading practices of parents with young children in Mitchell's Plain.

3.2 Sampling considerations

Sampling is one of the most important concepts to take into consideration in the research process (Strydom & Venter, 2002). Sampling is defined by Kerlinger (1986 as cited in Strydom & Venter, 2002: 198) as "taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that population or universe". This definition implies that the sample drawn is considered to be representative, a concept which is important to understand, especially with its relationship to generalisability (Strydom & Venter, 2002). A study can only generalise its findings when it is assumed that what was observed or found in the sample of subjects would also be observed or found in any other group of subjects from the population (Strydom & Venter, 2002).

A population is defined as a complete group with which the research problem is concerned (Strydom & Venter, 2002). Determining the population is essential as it helps to set the boundaries for the study. The population includes all individuals who possess the specific characteristics that the study is examining (Strydom & Venter, 2002). As the population is by definition all-inclusive, it is not feasible to interview or survey each individual and thus a sample must be drawn. Once the population has been determined and a sampling technique decided upon, a sample can then be drawn from the population. The sample is therefore a proportion of the population that comprises the subjects of the study (Strydom & Venter, 2002).

The population for this study was set at "all English-speaking parents who have children six years and younger who attend a registered ECD centre in Mitchell's Plain". Boundaries in a study are important as they provide elements for the research to focus on and to which the final results should be able to be generalised (Strydom & Venter, 2002). As the data collection in this study was conducted in English the participants needed to be confident completing a questionnaire and/or interview in English, thus informing the 'English speaking' boundary. Mitchell's Plain was chosen as the location of the study because although it is a low-income area the majority of the population have access to reading materials and community libraries. I chose 'parents' as the target population, with the term 'parent' encompassing several different meanings. For this study the term 'parents' included male/female parents, same sex parents, single parents, adoptive parents or any adult who has assumed the primary caregiver role. South Africa has many orphans and vulnerable children and it cannot be assumed that all children live in a traditional nuclear family, thus 'parent' is the label that was used when referring to the

primary caregiver. The boundaries of having children six years or younger was set as little research has been focused on the reading practices of parents with children in this age bracket. This age bracket was chosen as I am looking at the years before children generally enter Grade 1 and formal schooling. Once children enter formal schooling reading is monitored and encouraged by teachers and I was interested in exploring what the reading practices are before children enter this system.

Once the population had been set the next step was to determine the sampling strategy. As this study made use of a mixed methodology there was one sampling strategy for the quantitative data collection and another for the qualitative data collection. Depending on the time and resources available to the researcher the sample size may be set before the study commences. I used non-probability purposive sampling to select five ECD centres in Mitchell's Plain. Non-probability sampling is done without randomisation and in purposive sampling the sample is chosen based on the judgement of the researcher (Strydom & Venter, 2002). I had intended on using simple random sampling but was not able to obtain a complete list of all the registered ECD centres in Mitchell's Plain. I worked through the chairwoman of the Mitchell's Plain ECD forum. The forum had strict rules about giving out their database of ECD centre information for valid reasons. We met to discuss the study and after explaining the research and everything involved I was provided with six ECD centres which the chairwoman of the Mitchell's Plain ECD forum felt would be a good a representative sample of the ECD centres in Mitchell's Plain. One of these ECD centres was based in the community of Samora Machel and therefore did not meet the criteria for the study. Going through a legitimate ECD structure was important for me to be granted access to the ECD centres but also to ensure buy in from the ECD centre principals. I visited the ECD forum where I was introduced. I gave a brief outline of the research study and met with several of the selected ECD centre principals.

From this sample of five ECD centres I used a convenience sample to select participants for the study. Creswell (2003) notes that although a randomly selected sample is advantageous in many experiments only a convenience sample is possible. A convenience sample is one where the researcher must use naturally formed groups or volunteers as participants in the study (Creswell, 2003). Due to ethics that need to be considered when working with human subjects, participation in this study was completely voluntary and therefore convenience sampling was applied. Once the sample of ECD centres had been identified the principals at the five centres were asked to distribute the questionnaires to each family who had children attending the ECD

centre. Each family received a questionnaire and then they had the choice to complete it or not. The principals thus assisted me in gaining access to the participants.

As this study followed a sequential mixed method design, once the quantitative data had been collected and analysed I progressed to collecting the qualitative data. Stratified random sampling was used to identify twenty potential participants. Each questionnaire had a space for the participant to provide their name and a contact number if they were willing to be interviewed. Once I had analysed the quantitative data and accounted for willingness to participate I decided on relevant factors that needed to be included in the sample. These factors made up the strata representing possible interview participants with different data. This type of sampling is used to ensure that the different groups in a population have sufficient representation in the sample (Strydom & Venter, 2002). These factors included, level of education, reading frequency, library access and who the primary reader is. Random samples (using a random number generator) for each level in these factors were then chosen as potential interview participants. This method allowed me to randomly select participants, for example from those who had a tertiary qualification and those whose highest level of education was primary school. Accounting for each level gave me a wider scope of participants and access to richer data.

3.3 Data collection

The data collection for this study happened in two distinct phases due to the mixed method design. The first phase, of quantitative data collection was done through a questionnaire. Delpont (2001) describes a questionnaire as a set of questions, both open and closed, which once completed by the participant provides the researcher with data. Creswell (2003) elaborates on this by stating that questionnaires or surveys are useful for providing a numeric description of patterns or attitudes of a population. The purpose of the survey is to generalise the results of the sample to the population so that one is able to make inferences about an attitude or behaviour of that population (Creswell, 2003).

Before distributing the questionnaires to the ECD centres I ran a pilot study. A pilot study is used to test the research design or instrument before embarking on the actual study (Strydom, 2002b). It is usually a small-scale test run and helps the researcher to fine-tune the study. The purpose of the pilot study is to improve the effectiveness of the study and therefore the respondents need to be given space to comment on or criticise the instrument (Strydom, 2002b). These comments then need to be carefully considered during the main investigation. It is

important that the pilot study is administered in the same way that the research study will be. If it is not done in the same manner, then the researcher will not know if the method intended for the study will be effective. The questionnaire was piloted with two respondents who were asked to comment on the wording of the questions, the question sequence, possible redundant questions and any missing or confusing questions (Strydom, 2002b). This helped me to refine the questionnaire before distributing it.

The questionnaire in this study was self-administered and was distributed through the ECD centres. There were ten, closed ended questions which required basic literacy to answer. The participants were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed at the end of the questionnaire. Each questionnaire had an accompanying letter providing an explanation of the study and request for participants to interview. Before the questionnaire was designed I needed a clear idea of what information was to be obtained from the questionnaire (Delpont, 2001). Trying to establish a balance of good quality questions that will provide all the necessary information without having too many questions is important. The cover letter needed to provide the respondent with information about the research and the researcher as well as contact details in case they needed to get in touch with me (Delpont, 2001). I then collected completed questionnaires from the ECD centres. Of 230 distributed 139 (60.4%) were returned.

The second phase of data collection was through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe how interviews allow the researcher to engage with the participant as well as providing the opportunity for observation and discussion. The response rates are higher for face-to-face interviews than interviews conducted by other means and are the most common form in South Africa (Strydom, 2002c).

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to allow for flexibility in the interview. Due to the sequential nature of the design the results of the quantitative data were used to guide the direction of the qualitative data collection, and therefore the interview schedule was only compiled after the quantitative data had been analysed. The creation of the interview schedule was also guided by the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2. Working from the theoretical perspective that literacy is a social practice as well as the ecological systems theory I made sure to include questions about the participants personal reading habits and their history with reading. These questions helped to build a picture of the role that reading has played in the participants lives and help to understand the way they interact with books and reading now, both in their personal capacity and with their children. Knowledge of Vygotsky's theory of the

zone of proximal dissonance helped to guide questions relating to how the parents read with their children, if they encourage active participation, let the child lead the interaction or if they simply read what is on the page without elaborating on it. Having this theoretical framework as a guide allowed me to develop an interview schedule that was structured to answer the research questions and engage the participant.

Before beginning the interview, the participants were given an informed consent form to read through, ask questions about and once satisfied, to sign. This assured the participants about the ethical principles that the study was following as well as providing them with an idea of what to expect from the interview (Mack et al., 2005). Mack et al. (2005) recommend that interviews take place in settings that are free from distractions and that suit the participant. As participation in this study was voluntary, it was important for me to schedule interviews that suited the respondents. I met the respondents at times and locations that were convenient to them. Although this gave me less control over the environment allowing them to choose a familiar setting, often the home, may have helped the participants to relax and resulted in a more productive interview (Mack et al., 2005).

In order to conduct a productive interview, I familiarised myself with the interview schedule which gave the interview a more natural and organic feel. I referred to the schedule but was not dependent on it. Mack et al. (2005) discuss the importance of researchers familiarising themselves with the interview schedule as well as possessing certain skills and techniques. One of these skills is active listening, where the interviewer shows the respondent that they are listening attentively through nodding and making encouraging remarks throughout the interview (Mack et al., 2005). Maintaining neutral and open body language is another skill which can put the respondent at ease and encourage deeper conversation rather than just answering the questions. Reflecting and probing answers allows the researcher to go deeper but also clarify any comments that they are unsure about (Mack et al., 2005). Making sure that the researcher understands what the respondent means is important for the interview to be an accurate recording of their opinions and attitudes. I avoided using loaded or leading questions and spent some time after the interview had been completed to debrief the respondents. Debriefing is important as it allows the respondents some time to process anything that the interview may have brought up as well as feeling that the interviewer values their time and wellbeing.

A smart phone was used to accurately record the interviews and allowed me to be actively engaged and present in the interview. Recording only took place after the participants had given their written consent.

3.4 Data analysis

De Vos (2002b) describes the analysis of data in quantitative research as the breakdown of the data into basic parts from which answers are obtained and hypotheses tested. Analysed data then needs to be interpreted to provide answers to the research questions. The data from the questionnaires was captured and inputted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The distributions of the question responses were visualised using bar graphs.

In order to determine which variables are correlated to reading frequency, Pearson's Chi-squared tests for independence were run using *stats*, *purrr* and *ggplot2* packages in R (Wickham, 2016; Henry & Wickham, 2018; R Core Team, 2018). The p-values for the Chi-squared tests were computed by Monte Carlo simulation with 10 000 replicates (Hope, 1968).

The variables compared were: frequency of library visits, number of books at home, number of readers and parental education. The number of books at home and parental education were chosen as they have been identified as potentially significant in previous research studies (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014; Duursma, 2014; South African Book Development Council, 2016; Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). Frequency of library visits and number of readers were chosen as variables of interest due to the low socioeconomic status of many households in Mitchell's Plain.

In order for there to be a high enough number of observations in each category the responses had to be grouped as follows. Reading frequency was grouped into once a week or more, and less than once a week; library frequency was grouped into more than once a month, and once a month or less; number of books was grouped into one or more, or none; the number of readers was grouped into more than one, and one; and the parental education was grouped into basic (primary and high school) and tertiary. I was then able to distil the information into workable parts and create graphs to present the relationships between the variables. A discussion of the findings based on the graphs could then be presented in a logical and organised manner.

Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. One interview was selected, and the responses read through thoroughly with the research objectives in mind. Tesch (1990) describes making notes in the margins that explain, describe or ask questions. A

coding system was then used to label and link similar notes. I used a colour coded system to organise themes. This process was repeated with each of the transcriptions. The labels were re-evaluated throughout the process. The final product was coded transcriptions from which the labels were grouped into themes, categories and sub-categories to create a schema. The research objectives were kept in mind during the whole process (Tesch, 1990).

Once a schema had been established, it was used to create a framework for analysis from which the findings were written up in accordance with the research questions. The findings were written up with the conceptual framework as a guide and included quotations from the interviews. The findings were discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis is well-documented in qualitative research. It allows the researcher to prepare and interpret the data in a structured manner while being able to link the interviews and generate themes.

3.5 Limitations of the study

There are always limitations in research studies and it is important to identify and acknowledge these. In this study, the limitations were identified as follows:

Research design: The selection of a sequential mixed method research design has a number of limitations. Firstly, the nature of a sequential mixed method design meant that it was a time-consuming process which was compounded by delays due to school holidays. There are also limitations associated with qualitative research, namely the primary role that the researcher plays. The researcher is the primary instrument through which the research is conducted and thus objectivity is essential (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Maintaining objectivity is not an easy task but, due to the reflexive nature of qualitative research, I was able to examine my own biases and assumptions and felt that I was able to approach each interview with objectivity. The social work training that I have received was good preparation for interviewing different people, in different settings. It allowed me to undertake the research with confidence not only in my abilities as a researcher but also in my ability to remain objective. While being reflexive requires insight into one's own assumptions and biases and was at times an uncomfortable process, it laid the foundation for an objective and self-aware approach to the research.

Sampling: The non-probability purposive sampling method that was used for the quantitative data has one major limitation, that the judgement of the researcher (or in this case the gatekeeper) plays a too prominent role in the selection of the sample (Strydom & Venter, 2002). While I originally intended to use stratified random sampling the conditions under which I was

given access to the ECD centres necessitated the use of non-probability purposive sampling. This type of sampling, as it is not random, has limitations in terms of generalisability to the wider population. While this limitation has been noted I trust the expertise of the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper endeavoured to provide me with ECD centres who have families with different socioeconomic statuses in an attempt to reach as many different people in the population as possible. I attempted to moderate this effect by using stratified random sampling to select the interview participants. As all participation in the questionnaires and interviews was voluntary the stratified sampling process was limited to those who had indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Another limitation that needs to be mentioned relates to the availability of participants. Even though the participants had indicated their willingness to be interviewed, there were some whom I was unable to contact. This resulted in fewer than intended interviews and some of the strata selected for sampling were left out.

Data collection: Data collection is an essential step in any research and having the right instrument is imperative. While interviews are a flexible and valuable research tool they are also open to biases and it can be difficult to achieve reliable and valid results (Greeff, 2002). Interviews involve personal interactions and cooperation and therefore being able to connect with the interviewee is essential. If participants do not trust the interviewer they may be unwilling to share or they would share untruthfully (Greeff, 2002). Greeff (2002) notes that it is important that the researcher establish boundaries with the participants to ensure that the interview does not stray from the desired goals. Care must be taken with regards to the relationship between the interviewer and the participants so that it does not shift towards a therapeutic relationship. I found that some of the participants tended to go off the topic but using interviewing skills I was able to draw the conversation back on track. While interviews provide the researcher with rich, in-depth, personal data they are limited in their reliability by not being a standardised approach (Greeff, 2002). In order to accurately represent the interviews in the analysis they were recorded. Greeff (2002) notes that the use of a recording device may unsettle participants and that care should be taken to place the device somewhere inconspicuous to guard against this. The recording only began once the participants had given their consent to the interviews being recorded and the I made sure to put the recording device close enough to capture the interview clearly but without making the participants uncomfortable. One recording failed and I had to make field notes on the interview once it was completed. Care was taken to double check the recording status of the remaining interviews after this incident.

A limitation with the questionnaire relates to the fact that as the respondents completed the questionnaires in their own time and returned them to the ECD centres they were not able to ask any questions or clarify any points of confusion. I provided my contact details on the cover letter and indicated that the respondents were welcome to contact me with questions to guard against this. No one made use of this opportunity.

Data analysis: Due to the nature of qualitative research care needed to be taken to ensure objective analysis of the data. The data analysis was guided by the theoretical framework and the process of reflexivity helped prepare me to analyse the data from an objective point of view. I am less experienced in quantitative data analysis than qualitative, and to ensure that no priority was given to either data set I enlisted the assistance of someone with more experience in quantitative analysis. By acknowledging my limitations in this area, I was able to analyse the data more effectively and therefore yield more comprehensive results. The sample size of the quantitative data proved limiting for the Chi-squared test. The Chi-squared test requires a high expected sample for each combination of group factors. In order to confidently test for independence factors had to be combined to increase the sample number. While this provided greater statistical rigor, it meant that the full detail captured by the questionnaire had to be sacrificed.

3.6 Data verification

Reliability and validity are two issues which need to be addressed when it comes to verifying quantitative data. This is done in relation to the data collection instrument, in this research study the questionnaire. Validity is described as having two parts; does the instrument measure the concept that it is being researched and is that concept being measured accurately (Delpont, 2001). Validity has three elements which need to be considered. Content validity refers to how representative the instrument is to measure the intended concept and can be established through an assessment of the instrument (Delpont, 2001). Criterion or predictive validity is based on an external measure, and is often linked to an outcome (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The questionnaire quantified the reading practices of parents with children at ECD centres in Mitchell's Plain. The external outcome which would establish criterion validity would be the number of hours parents spend reading with their children and other such information. The third element is construct validity and is based on the logical relationship that exists among the variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Construct validity will be established if logical relationships are able to be drawn from the findings of the questionnaire.

Delpont (2001) describes reliability as referring to the accuracy of the data collection instrument. This is established when an independent researcher is able to obtain similar results using the same or a comparable instrument. Reliability is concerned with how well something is measured and the more reliable the instrument the more consistent and dependable the results will be (Delpont, 2001). In qualitative research, data verification is the process of confirming that the data collected is valid. Shenton (2004) describes four characteristics of a qualitative study that contribute to making a 'trustworthy' study. These are: credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. These four terms were previously described by Guba (1981) as; truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

To ensure that a study is **credible** one must examine how congruent the findings are with reality (Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility the interviews were recorded to guarantee accurate transcriptions. Throughout the interviews the participants were given opportunities to ask questions and were encouraged to take the time needed to accurately communicate their thoughts. **Transferability** refers to the extent to which the findings from the research can be applied to other situations or to a wider population (Shenton, 2004). This is difficult with a limited sample but as the background and context of this study is clearly discussed; the population, sampling and selection criteria are specified this would help a reader to place the study into a transferable context. **Dependability** is the third characteristic and addresses the issue of whether or not the study could be repeated in the same context making use of similar methods (Shenton, 2004). Attention to the methodological processes will give future researchers the information needed to repeat the study. **Confirmability** is linked to the question of objectivity (Shenton, 2004). The researcher needs to be open about their biases and ensure, as far as possible, that the findings come from the participants and not the researchers preconceived ideas and opinions. The reflexivity section is a way to do this.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has provided an outline of the methodology that was used in the research study. The use of a sequential mixed method research design was discussed in detail along with the sampling methods. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the five ECD centres from which convenience sampling provided the questionnaire respondents. Stratified random sampling was then used to select the qualitative sample. The use of Pearson's Chi-squared test of independence to analyse the quantitative data was described and followed by an explanation of Tesch's qualitative data analysis method. The limitations of the were discussed as they demonstrate an awareness in the researcher during the research process. The

chapter concluded with a discussion on the need to verify the data in various way. Chapter 4 will provide an analysis and discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: Presentation, Discussion and Analysis of Data

4. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research study. An analysis of the 137 questionnaires begins the chapter which is followed by the qualitative analysis. A profile of the ECD centres and participants is provided with relevant data, as well as a framework for the discussion of the findings. The analysis of the interviews, which include quotations and a link to relevant literature and theory follows. The chapter ends with a summary.

Research questions:

The research questions below provide an opportunity to recap what questions the study was aiming to answer. The findings are presented in relation to these questions.

1. What are the reading practices of parents with young children?
2. What are the perceptions and beliefs that parents have about reading with young children?
3. What are the challenges or barriers to reading to young children that parents face?
4. What influences the reading practices of parents with young children?
5. To what extent do parents make use of the local library?

4.1 Profile of ECD centres

A profile of the ECD centres who took part in the research study is shown in table 4.1. Only one ECD centre reported pupils who receive the Department of Social Development (DSD) subsidy. Registered ECD centres are able to apply for the subsidy which is calculated per child, per day for children whose parents or caregivers pass an income means test (Giese & Budlender, 2011). The subsidy is only available for children from birth until four years old and requires an application from the ECD centre. For all the ECD centres finances are a challenge, especially the payment of fees from parents. Commitment from parents is another challenge that most of the ECD centres face and one that has implications for this research study.

Table 4.1: Profile of ECD Centres

Name	No. of teachers	No. of children	No. who receive DSD subsidy	Years running	Learning programme	Challenges
Hope Forever Daycare	2	21	0	14	SPL & NCF	Payment of fees FET colleges not offering scholarships
Beacon Valley Montessori Based Educare	5	25	0	21	SLP	Finances (salaries etc.) Payment of fees Physical space – no outdoor area Poor commitment from parents
Ebenezer Pre-Primary	5	120	36	10	NCF WCED CAPS	Payment of fees Poor commitment from parents
Little Flowers Day and Aftercare	3	23	0	10	NCF	Payment of fees Space – legally cannot have more children on premises
Vision Kidz.com Educare	7	92	0	10	SLP NCF	Finances (new minimum wage) Payment of fees Poor commitment from parents Registration and reregistration Little support from Government

4.2 Quantitative analysis

A total of 137 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher. The following graphs depict the results from the questionnaire. The questionnaire can be found in appendix D

Figure 4.1 shows the highest level of completed education that the respondent has achieved. Most (98%) of the respondents have completed high school and 37% have completed some form of tertiary education. According to the 2011 census 34.5% of adults (aged 20+) in the study area (Mitchell's Plain) had completed Matric or higher (City of Cape Town, 2013:3). This study has therefore sampled adults with higher educational achievement than the underlying population. This could indicate that parents with higher education are more likely to be able to send their children to ECD centres or that they have a greater appreciation for the contribution that ECD centres can make to their children's education than parents who have not completed high school. Alternatively, as the questionnaire was voluntary it could indicate that parents with higher education were more willing or able to participate as respondents to the study.

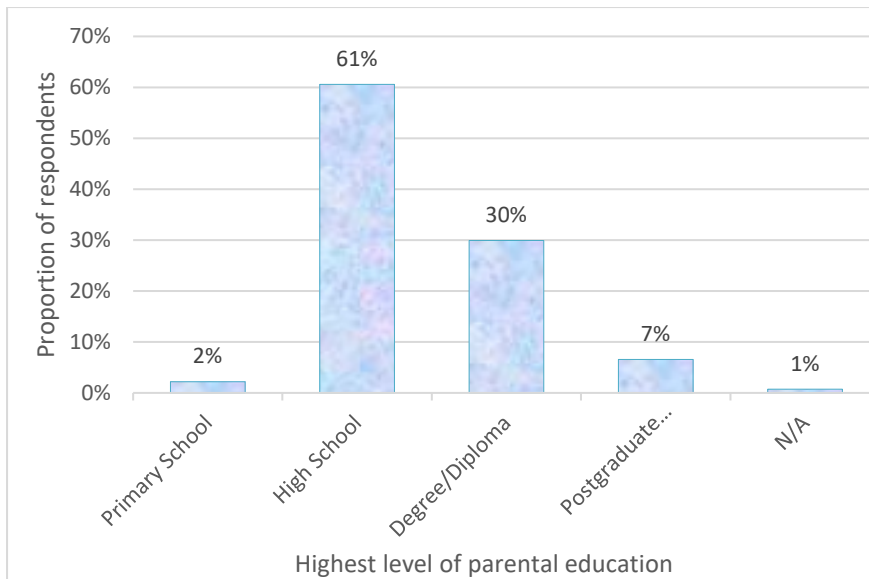


Figure 4.1: Proportion of respondents and highest level of parental education.

When asked whether they thought it was important to read with young children 99% of the respondents answered yes. This indicates that there is an awareness of the value of reading with young children. While it seems as if the awareness is there, figure 4.2 shows that not all 99% who believe it is important to read with young children are currently doing so. 86% of respondents reported that their children are being read with at home and 10% are not.

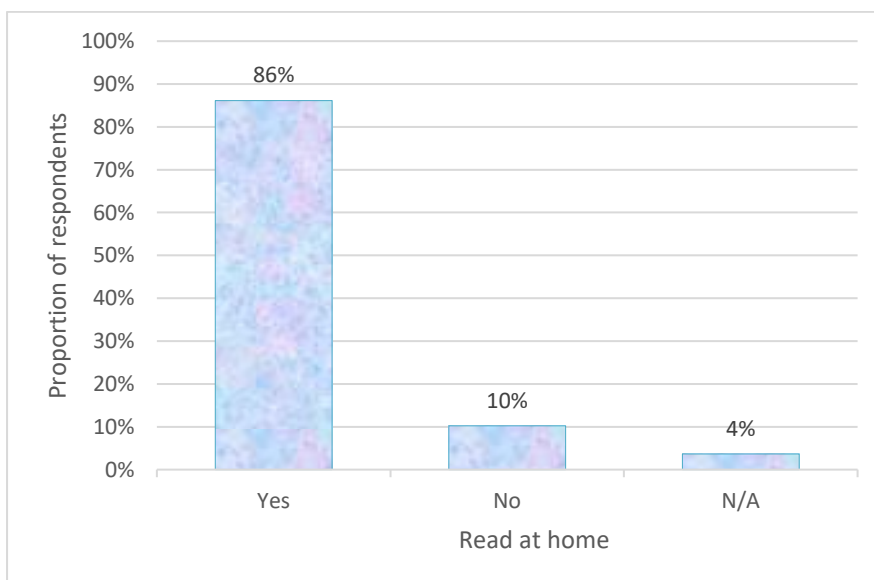


Figure 4.2: Proportion of respondents who read at home.

The frequency of reading is depicted in figure 4.3. 41% of parents read with their children once a month while only 7% read on a daily basis. Duursma (2014:443) found that in the Netherlands, 75% of children under the age of two and 60% of three and four year old children were read with daily. These statistics provide a vast contrast to what we are seeing in South African families.

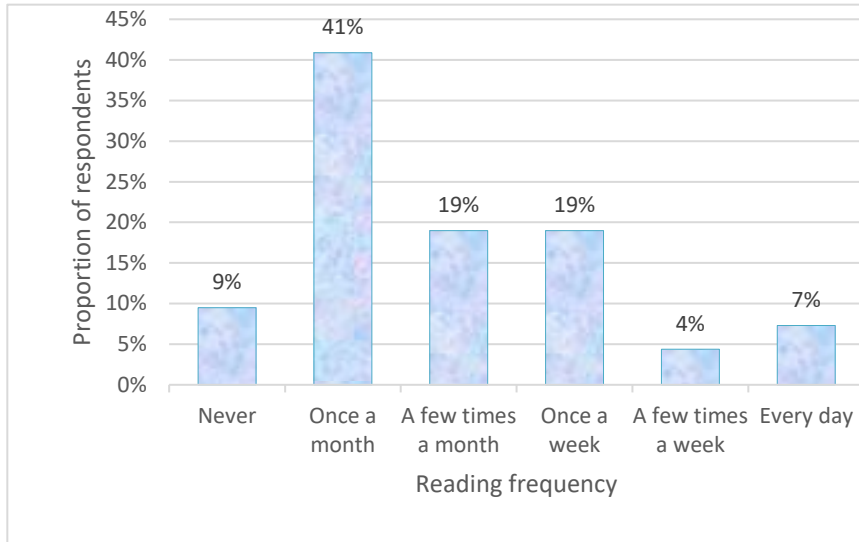


Figure 4.3: Proportion of respondents and reading frequency.

The time of day when children are read with is shown in figure 4.4. It is clear that evenings are the most common time for reading to take place. Very few parents reported reading in the mornings, only 3%. This result is explained in part by the qualitative analysis where time is discussed as a challenge experienced by many parents. Mornings seem to be very busy with parents often leaving early for work and returning only in the evening. The challenges that parents face, especially with time are discussed in detail in section 4.6.1.

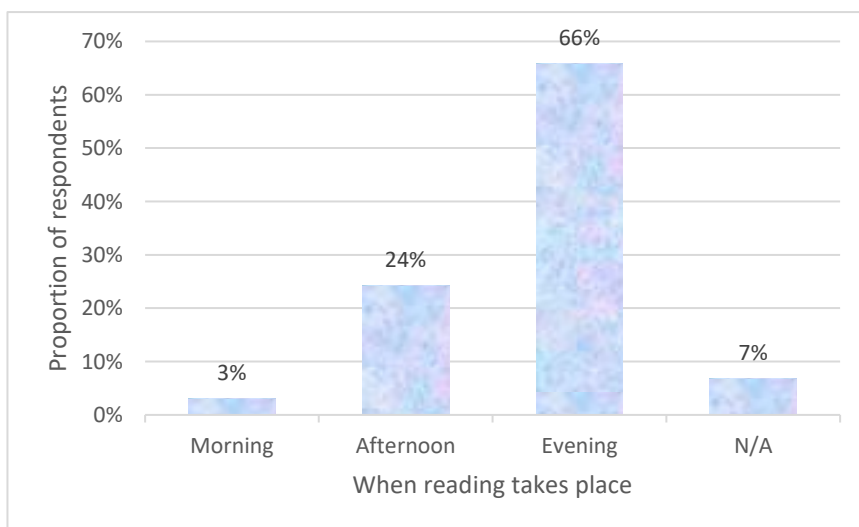


Figure 4.4: Proportion of respondents and when reading takes place.

The family members who read at home with the children (known as the reader/readers) are shown in figure 4.5. The reading burden is shared between multiple members in almost 70% of households. Each respondent was encouraged to note all the readers at home, if there was more than one. Mothers are almost twice as likely to read to their children than fathers are but, interestingly, over a third (40%) of readers are not one of the two parents. This doesn't, however, account for the time each reader contributes to the total reading burden. Mothers, for example, account for 42% of the reported readers but may contribute proportionally more to the total reading that happens. Duursma (2014:444) found that mothers read more frequently than fathers and were the primary reader 65% of the time.

In households where there is only one reader, 73% were reported to be the mother, 10.8% the father, 8.1% a sibling and 8.1% another family member. The same pattern was present when there were two readers, although grandparents seem to share the reading burden 6.1% of the time. Interestingly, when there are more than 2 readers, grandparents are more likely than siblings to be one of the readers although the difference between fathers, siblings, grandparents and other family members is negligible. We can conclude from figure 5 that regardless of the number of readers at home, it is more likely that mothers are reading than any other family member. This is valuable as it indicates that interventions and training should be directed, first at mothers, then fathers and other family members. Although mothers may be the primary target for training, the more the reading burden is shared, the more likely the child will be read with more often, and therefore other family members, especially fathers, should also be encouraged.

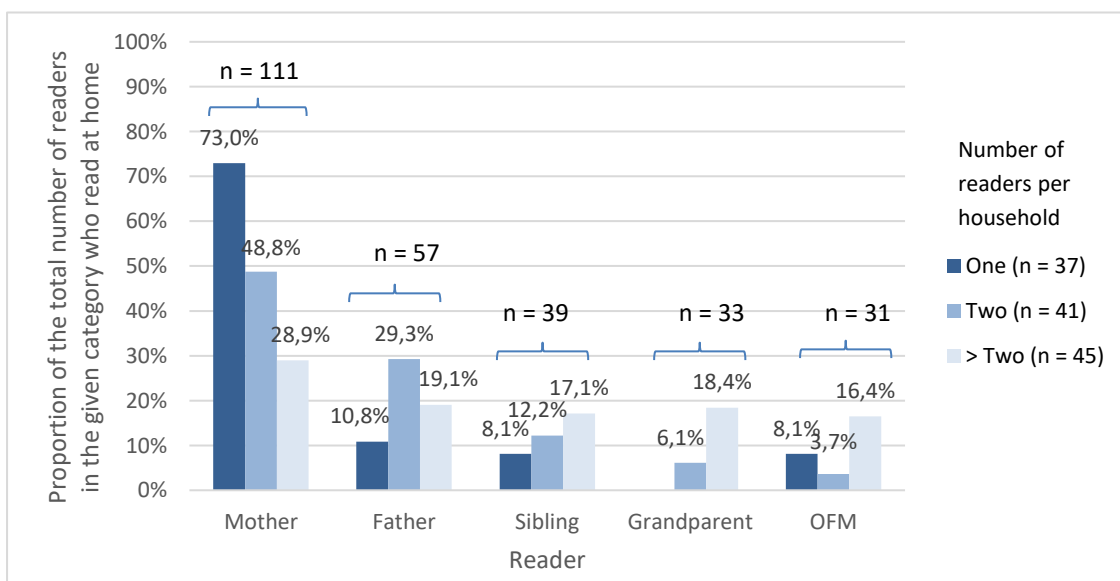


Figure 4.5: Proportion of readers who read at home for households with one, two or more than two primary readers.

The self-reported number of books present in the respondents' homes is shown in figure 4.6. Most of the respondents (64%) reported having between one and ten books while there were 8% who do not have a single book at home. The number of books at home is an indicator for socio-economic status used by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization, 2016). In 2016, approximately 52% of South African grade 4 students reported having 10 or fewer books at home. (United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization, 2016:11). This is a decrease from the 65% reported by grade 3 children in 2013 (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017:79). While a 13% decrease is encouraging it is still a concern that over half of South African children have so few books at home.

The PIRLS reported that in South Africa less than 10% of students had more than 100 books at home, compared to Hungary where it was almost 40% (United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization, 2016:11). In this study only 1% of the sample reported having more than 40 books. This indicates that our sample have less than the average reading material for South Africa. It is interesting to compare the categories used to measure the prevalence of books in the home in the PIRLS and V-ANA studies. The PIRLS is an international study and their categories ranged from “none or very few books (0-10)” to “enough to fill three or more bookcases (more than 200)” (United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization, 2016:11). The V-ANA is a national study and their categories were much smaller: more than 10 books, 1 – 10 books and 0 books (Jamieson, Berry & Lake, 2017). The use of much smaller categories indicates that most South African families do not, or at least are not expected to, have many books at home. The PIRLS report seems to confirm this assumption as only approximately 5% of South African families have more than 100 books at home (United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization, 2016:11)

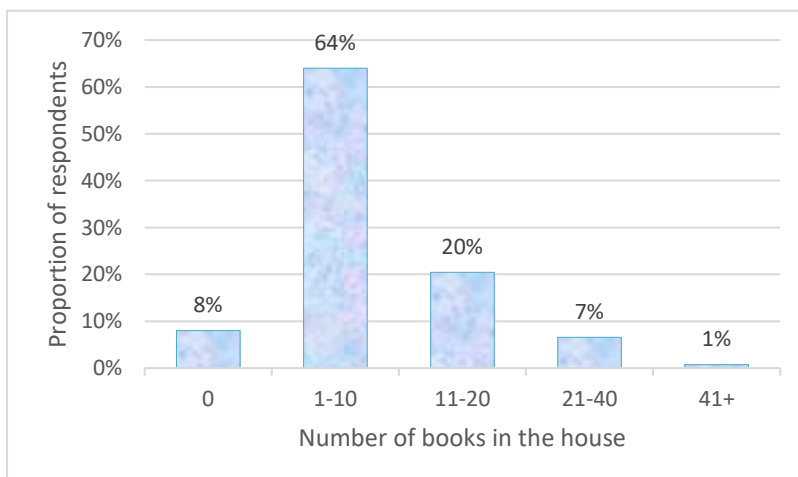


Figure 4.6: Proportion of respondents and number of books at home.

69% of respondents reported that they have access to a library as shown in figure 4.7. While 31% reported that they do not have access to a library it is possible that the question was misunderstood to be asking if they visit the library. There are six public libraries that serve the residents of Mitchell's Plain which should mean that anyone who would like to access one can.

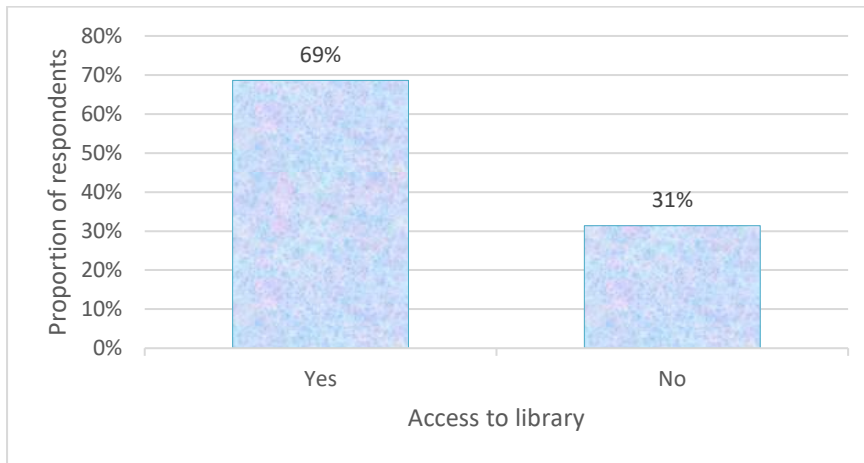


Figure 4.7: Proportion of respondents and access to libraries.

Figure 4.8 shows the frequency of library visits. 52% of the respondents reported visiting the library on a weekly basis while 9% never visit. These statistics are encouraging when we have seen that not many families own more than 10 books.

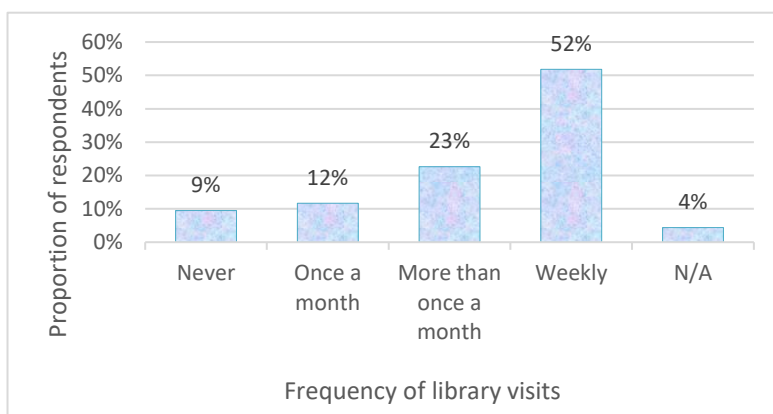


Figure 4.8: Proportion of respondents and frequency of library visits.

Having looked at the data for each question on its own it is now interesting to see if there is any relationship between the variables. Figure 4.9 shows the relationship between frequency of library visits, number of books in the house, number of readers and reading frequency. The number of readers was grouped into single (one reported reader) and multiple (two or more reported readers).

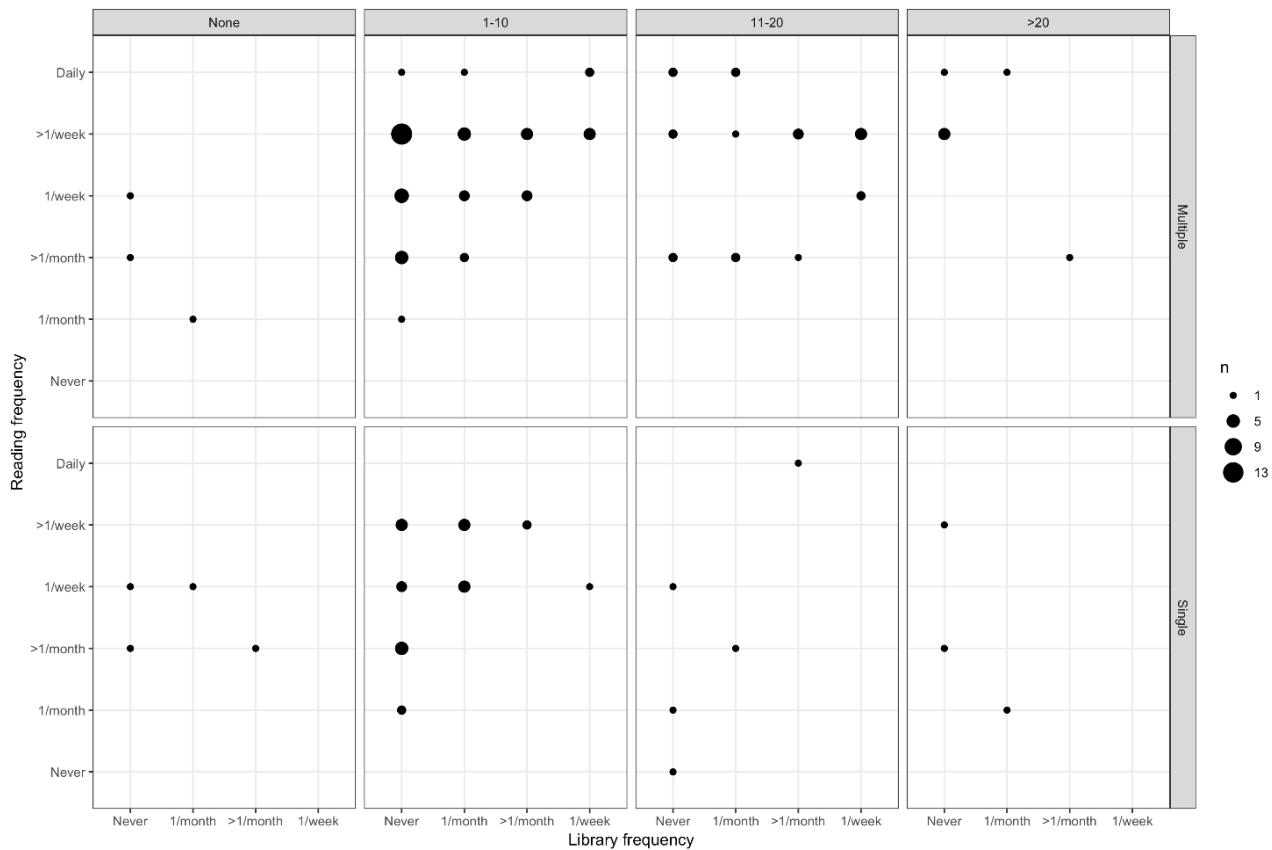


Figure 4.9: Relationship between variables.

For the number of books in the house, the categories 21-40 and more than 40 were combined into more than 20. The size of the circles in figure 4.9 are proportional to the number of respondents (n) for the given response. Frequent and infrequent reading occurs in all scenarios because the variance of reading frequency is high. The degree to which frequent reading occurs in relation to the other variables was tested statistically using Pearson's Chi-squared tests. To account for the small sample size, each variable was grouped into two factors. Reading frequency was grouped into less than once a week and once a week or more. Number of readers was grouped into single and multiple readers (table 4.2). Frequency of library visits was grouped into once a month or less and more than once a month (table 4.3). Number of books was grouped into 0-10 and more than 10 (table 4.4). Parental education was grouped into basic (primary and high school) and tertiary (diploma, degree and postgraduate degree) (table 4.5).

The following hypothesis were tested for each two-way contingency table (tables 4.2-4.5) by Monte Carlo simulation (Hope, 1968) in R (R Core Team, 2018).

H_0 : The frequency of reading is independent of the given second variable.

H_1 : The frequency of reading is not independent of the given second variable.

α : 0.05

Table 4.2: Contingency table of reading frequency and number of readers.

Reading Frequency	Number of Readers	
	Single	Multiple
Once a week and more	23	66
Less than once a week	14	16

$$\chi^2 = 4.54 \quad B = 10\,000 \quad p\text{-value} = 0.044$$

The p-value is less than 0.05 therefore H_0 is rejected. The frequency of reading is not independent of the number of readers.

Table 4.3: Contingency table of reading frequency and frequency of library visits.

Reading Frequency	Frequency of Library Visits	
	Once a month and less	More than once a month
Once a week and more	63	26
Less than once a week	27	3

$$\chi^2 = 4.49 \quad B = 10\,000 \quad p\text{-value} = 0.045$$

The p-value is less than 0.05 therefore H_0 is rejected. The frequency of reading is not independent of the frequency of library visits.

Table 4.4: Contingency table of reading frequency and number of books.

Reading Frequency	Number of Books	
	0-10	More than 10
Once a week and more	64	25
Less than once a week	19	11

$$\chi^2 = 0.78 \quad B = 10\,000 \quad p\text{-value} = 0.49$$

The p-value is greater than 0.05 therefore H_0 cannot be rejected. The frequency of reading is independent of the number of books in the home.

Table 4.5: Contingency table of reading frequency and parental education.

Reading Frequency	Parental Education	
	Basic	Tertiary
Once a week and more	54	35
Less than once a week	22	8

$$\chi^2 = 1.56 \quad B = 10\,000 \quad p\text{-value} = 0.27$$

The p-value is greater than 0.05 therefore H_0 cannot be rejected. The frequency of reading is independent of the parental education.

There is a statistically significant correlation between reading frequency and the number of readers ($\chi^2 = 4.54$, $p\text{-value} = 0.044$). This result was expected as it stands to reason that the more people who are reading with the child at home will mean that the child is exposed to more frequent reading. While this is what the result indicates it cannot be ignored that sometimes there may be a diffusion of responsibility resulting in the child receiving less reading.

There is a statistically significant correlation between reading frequency and the frequency of library visits ($\chi^2 = 4.49$, $p\text{-value} = 0.045$). This result was expected as visits to the library indicate a willingness to invest in book sharing. Families who have fewer books at home may be using the library to access books while those with many may be supplementing what they have at home. This result highlights the value and need for local libraries.

There is no statistically significant correlation between reading frequency and the number of books in the home ($\chi^2 = 0.78$, $p\text{-value} = 0.49$). This result was unexpected as previous research has found that the number of books at home to predicted children's reading achievement and fluency (Myrberg & Rosén, 2009; van Bergen et al., 2017). Van Bergen et al. (2017) found that while the number of books had an effect on reading ability it was a modest effect. The number of books at home may be an indication of how much value parents or family place on reading. This research study took place in a low socio-economic area where financial stress is a challenge. It would be unrealistic to attempt to increase the number of books in each home in Mitchell's Plain, but improving access to and the resources of the public libraries could be a more effective avenue of improving reading frequency.

There is no statistically significant correlation between reading frequency and parental education ($\chi^2 = 1.56$, $p\text{-value} = 0.27$). Both Duursma (2014) and Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall (2014) found that reading frequency varies with parental education levels. Parents with a tertiary education tended to read more frequently than those who did not complete school (Buckingham, Wheldall & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013). Low levels of parental education have also been correlated with low quality home learning environments (Niklas & Schneider, 2015). From these previous research studies, it was expected that reading frequency would have a significant correlation to parental education. As the education levels vary substantially in Mitchell's Plain, the fact that there was no correlation between parental education and reading frequency is a positive place to work from when promoting and encouraging more frequent reading.

Statistical power is determined by the natural variance of the response variable, the degree of dependence between the two variables and the sample size. To reject the null hypothesis for a Chi-squared test with our small sample size of 137 and the high variance of reading frequency, there needed to be a high degree of dependence between the two variables. It is plausible that greater statistical power could be achieved with a greater sample size, particularly if the sample size was high enough that the grouping of variables into fewer factors was unnecessary. If

respondents had given their own answers rather than choosing from the list provided the regression between two variables would have been able to have been tested rather than the frequency of categorical responses.

4.3 Qualitative analysis

A profile of the participants is included as it provides context to the experiences and understanding of the participants and their responses. From table 4.6 it is clear that mainly mothers responded to the call for interview participants. Most of the parents interviewed were currently employed and married.

Table 4.6: Profile of participants

Pseudonym	Employed or unemployed	Mother or father	Marital Status	Children's Ages	Read with child?
Participant A	Unemployed	Mother	Married	5 years old & 1 month old	Y
Participant B	Employed	Father	Married	15 years old, 9 years old & 5 years old	N
Participant C1	Self-employed	Mother	Married	7 years old & 4 years old	Y
Participant C2	Self-employed	Father			
Participant D	Employed	Mother	Married	5 years old	Y
Participant E	Employed	Mother	Single Mother	5 years old & 4 years old	Y
Participant F	Employed	Father	Single Father	14 years old, 8 years old and 3 years old	N
Participant G	Unemployed	Mother	Married	6 years old & 4 years old	Y
Participant H	Employed	Mother	Married	4 years old	N
Participant I	Employed	Mother	Married	3 years old	Y
Participant J	Unemployed	Mother	Single Mum	5 years old	N
Participant K	Employed	Mother	Married	6 years old & 1 year old	Y
Participant L	Employed	Mother	Married	3 years old & 3 months old	Y
Participant M	Employed	Mother	Divorced	15 years old & 5 years old	N
Participant N	Employed	Father	Married	5 years old	Y

Framework for discussion of findings

The framework illustrated in table 4.7 has been developed through an analysis of the qualitative data and is used to structure, present and discuss the findings of the research. The framework and categories were developed through the use of Tesch’s method of data analysis (Tesch, 1990).

Table 4.7: Framework for discussion of findings

Themes	Categories/Sub-categories
Reading Practices	<p>Reading Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical aspects (when, where and what) • Book sharing strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Picture reading ○ Teaching ○ Actions and voices ○ Personalisation • Television and e-book use
Perceptions / Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading at home vs reading at school • Benefits / advantages of early book sharing • Parent’s role • Cognitive dissonance and alliteracy
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Personal challenges • Environmental challenges
Influencing factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal childhood reading experiences • Family structure • ECD centre and literacy organisations
Library Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access • Resources • Parent suggestions

Presentation, discussion and analysis of the findings

This section presents the major qualitative findings of the study and will follow the framework for analysis as represented in table 4.7. The study is divided into five main themes which serve as the focus of the analysis. These themes were drawn from the research questions. The various categories which emerged from these themes have been used in the analysis process.

4.4 Reading practices

Nine out of the fourteen parents interviewed reported reading to their children. This section will therefore be mainly based on the responses of those nine parents.

4.4.1 Practical aspects

When asked about the more practical aspects of their book sharing the parents described what they read, who chooses the stories, where they get their books from, the age they started reading with their children and their own personal reading habits. The analysis and discussion of the questionnaire data (4.2) explores other practical factors.

What they read: While the number of books in each household is discussed in section 4.2 it is interesting to see what families are reading. A number of the participants reported reading the booklets that get sent home from the ECD centres.

...they get like that small books...it's not a book as in a book, it's a piece of paper that they fold it like, so it's in a small...booklet. (Participant A)

...what they do is they photocopy the book and then they will fold like a paper into it...and then put pictures at the bottom they tell what is happening there... (Participant J)

These two participants had no other books in the house apart from the booklets from their children's ECD centres. This clearly emphasises the importance of children attending an ECD centre where they are exposed to books and are given resources such as booklets to take home and engage with their parents. In South Africa the reality is that many families cannot afford to buy children's books and supporting ECD centres who can in turn support these families is essential.

As can be expected the participants reported reading mainly story books with their children. Classic fairy tales, pop-up and musical books as well as books that come in series were discussed as being firm favourites.

Mostly children's books...because like she has a spring book...with Rapunzel, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves (Participant D)

Xylophone, it's got that so every time you turn a page it will tell you like what the character is, and you must read so whenever the sound comes then she has to play the thing... (Participant K)

I made my own books as well, from very small little books...he has a favourite...the pop-up ones. That is one of his favourite ones because he can look and search (Participant L)

Two participants stated that they read Christian literature with their children. They feel that it is important to nurture their children's faith and see book sharing as an opportunity to do this.

We read a lot of Christian literature, so he has his own Bible, so we read out of the Bible to him. (Participant I)

...we have a lot of story books. And we are also Christians, we try to work on his Spiritual dimension. (Participant N)

The choices that the parents make around what they read to their children is influenced by their identities and beliefs (Banda, 2003). This is clear in the families where faith is valued highly as the parents are ensuring that what they read with their children reflects their values.

Who chooses the story: Fletcher and Reese (2005) discuss how children older than three begin to direct the book sharing activity as they grow familiar with stories and request them. For children younger than three the parents tend to choose the book or reading material. When asked who chooses the story most of the participants stated that their children choose. The parents supplement their child's choice when needed.

I'll take books for his age... he will maybe choose a book of cars because he loves cars and then I'll maybe say Ok cars and then I'll pick something else. (Participant A)

He chooses what he feels like reading, what interests him. That is where I am starting with him, with what interests him...If I feel the need for him to read something else then I will choose the book. (Participant L)

Most of the participant's children are over the age of three so their responses are congruent with Fletcher and Reese's (2005) findings.

Where they get their books from: When asked where they get their reading books from, most of the participants reported preferring to buy their books, both new and second-hand. Very few reported going to the library while on the questionnaire 52% of respondents reported visiting the library once a week. Library use is discussed in more detail in section 4.8.

I used to buy it, like on the flea markets, if we are going there the flea markets there are normally children's books for sale, R10 or R5 you know (Participant D)

We buy them. I don't want to take him to the library yet because I feel he's a bit too young for the library. (Participant I)

...Once a month in Cavendish and Somerset Mall they actually sell books for very cheap for R10. So, I always take my kids there, I also buy books there sometimes. (Participant K)

Two participants mentioned family members who they either borrow books from or read at their houses. Niklas and Schneider (2015) discuss the importance of having books in the home for children's literacy development. Due to the legacy of the apartheid era, this is not possible for many families. Although some of the participants in this study do not have books in their own homes their interaction with their families may mediate this, demonstrating the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Because he has a ton of books at my sister's house, picture books...sometimes I take them to the library, and I do have a few books at home because my sister she sends us a stack of books, so I change up every time (Participant G)

Ah there is out grandmother here. She's got books that one...so if he goes there he can read (Participant H)

One family was given books by an employer for their son.

...my wife was working for one of the white ladies, she gave him lots of books. Once she realised that we have a kid who is five years old, he's still an infant so we have a lot of story books. (Participant N)

Banda (2003) discussed how different literacy practices reveal much about people's socio-economic status, their culture and history. Although this interaction was well-meaning and well-received it does indicate a power imbalance which goes beyond the typical employer-employee relationship.

Age parents started reading with their children: It seems as if most parents began reading with their children between the ages of two and three years old.

That was when he was like two and a half, almost three years. (Participant A)

I would say, about three years old. Ja we started to interact with him, but I think he gets that a lot at creche, where he attends, because he's been there since eight months. (Participant C1)

It must have been when my daughter was two years old (Participant E)

Although Participant F does not read to his son he discussed reading with his oldest daughter when she began primary school. The responsibility of having to complete her reading record and actively having to help her learn to read was a motivating factor. As his youngest child does not have these factors it stands to reason that he lacks motivation to read with him. While the curriculum guidelines for early childhood development do state that teachers should read stories with their group daily, understandably there is no homework that requires the parents to be actively involved (Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, 2015).

With my oldest I used to read when she started school they have a reader and obviously try and help her and stuff (Participant F)

Two of the participants discussed reading to their children while they were pregnant. Participant K felt that she and her child bonded because she was reading to her in utero. These mothers understand the importance of prenatal bonding and acted on this knowledge (Pino, 2016).

I actually used to read when I was pregnant...I actually bought a book about babies, mommy and baby and pregnancy...I promise you out of everything that that book taught me, my child and I clicked because I read a book [to the child] when I was pregnant. (Participant K)

...I started reading when he was in my tummy already...(Participant L)

Participant L is a primary school teacher and knows the benefits of reading with children from a young age. Participant N is also an educator, but he is a lecturer at a college. He reported beginning to read with his child when he thought his son was becoming more competent in English which is not their home language.

The moment I realised that now he is in a position to master English, I have been reading to him (Participant N)

It is interesting that he felt that his son needed an understanding of English before book sharing could take place, perhaps indicating the lack of children's books in African languages. In his study Banda (2003) notes that only 2.5% of the black participants prefer reading in isiXhosa compared with the 40.5% who preferred reading in English. He suggests that many people view English as a tool for upwards social mobility and increased socio-economic status which could explain the trend of reading in English.

Parents reading habits: When asked about their personal reading habits some of the parents stated that they do not read although they enjoyed reading when they were younger. Martin et al. (2014) discuss how parents have a responsibility to instil a love of reading in their children, this is corroborated by Niklas and Schneider (2015) in their discussion on the home literacy environment.

I don't actually read...I'm too busy (Participant A)

Not so much anymore. But when I was younger I read anything I could get my hands on (Participant B)

No, I don't read at all...I'll read when she come to read...to be honest, I'm not actually a reader (Participant D)

Some reported that they do a lot of reading for work but that they do not read for pleasure. This is a clear example of the ecological systems model. The work ‘system’ requires them to read which seems to reduce any pleasure they could get from reading, which in turn impacts on the relationship between the parent and child and possible book sharing (September, Rich & Roman, 2016).

Yes, I’m forced to read...I do a lot of research for business (Participant C2)

I’m not a big fan of reading I’ll be honest with you. I think because of being, I do read but it’s not, I won’t read books or novels or anything. Just everyday things, like, I’m on the internet a lot being in IT, so I do read ...a lot of articles (Participant F)

Of the parents who do read for pleasure, the choice of reading material varied between social media, newspapers, religious books and novels.

I do read those, if you’ve heard of them, Naledi and those Zulu stories, I do read (Participant H)

When there is news in the newspapers, so you know you get City Vision every Thursday, I do read, only for myself...actually I only read the Bible [on her phone] (Participant J)

4.4.2 Book sharing strategies

When asked about how parents read with their children, there were many different responses. These different responses indicated different book sharing strategies. For most parents, reading is an interactive process where they try to engage their child through various methods while others seem to take a more formal ‘teacher-like’ approach to book sharing.

Picture reading: The first reported strategy was that of picture reading. This strategy involves parents encouraging their children to look at the pictures and predict what is happening in the story or to make up their own story. This strategy is particularly useful with children who are not able to read yet as it helps them to feel as if they are reading and can encourage confidence.

...he can’t read but he will explain the picture, he will make his own story from looking at the picture. (Participant A)

.... he tells me what he sees over there, even though he can't understand... (Participant L)

Participant E describes using this strategy as a response to her daughter telling her she doesn't know how to read.

I'll ask her to read to me and she says she doesn't know how but I tell her that she can read the pictures even if she can't read the words... (Participant E)

Participant E is demonstrating the scaffolding process which is integral to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. While Participant E, as the parent, motivates her daughter to participate in the reading activity, she is both guiding her child towards new literacy skills that she has not yet mastered as well as playing an important role in how her child's motivations for reading develop (Li & Flear, 2015). Both are important for later success at school.

For Participant K, this strategy is one which she has been taught by her daughter's teacher.

Because her teacher told me that they can actually tell a story just by looking at the pictures. So, every time she gets home, she will actually have a little booklet with pictures, and she'll be able to tell me about the pictures. So, when I'm reading a book...so I would say "Tell me what do you think Oaky is going to do now" and she will tell me then, after she is done, I will actually read the words. (Participant K)

Picture reading as a book sharing strategy demonstrates Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development as the adult strives to make the story accessible for the preliterate child through encouraging interpretation of the pictures (Boomstra et al., 2013). Fletcher and Reese (2005) describe how parents with children younger than 18 months tend to talk about the pictures rather than the text while parents with children older than 18 months focus on creating conversations around the pictures and encouraging questions. Of the parents interviewed only Participants, A, K and L have children younger than 18 months. This is interesting as they were the most vocal about picture reading. Some of the other participants mentioned this strategy but not in as much detail which supports the research conducted by Fletcher and Reese (2005).

Teaching: The second strategy that parents described using when reading with their children all held elements of teaching to them. In particular; asking their children to sound out words, to repeat words back to them or asking them questions about the story. Participant C1 has one

child in Grade 1 and one who is four years old and uses different teaching methods with her two children.

And I also teach her that the sounds are very important because when she knows the sound of a word, she will know the word... (Participant C1 – to her Grade 1 daughter)

...I will say something and then maybe, I will say the dog and then I'll ask him to repeat...so I'll just ask basically to repeat what I said, even say if I do a little prayer, I'll ask him to repeat so that is how I work with him. (Participant C1 – to her four-year old son)

Repetition or asking children to imitate what you, as the more knowledgeable other, have said is an important concept in Vygotsky's theory of learning and development (1978). Participant C1 is extending her child's learning through asking him to repeat and as the words and sounds become more familiar the child will gradually learn to master them. Horn (2016) supports the importance of weaving literacy events, such as book sharing, into daily routines and activities so that children are able to learn through imitation, observation and participation as well as increasingly building their interactions with literacy and literacy practices.

For some parents, book sharing is seen as an opportunity for teaching and learning, in particular participant G who approached reading with her children in a very structured way.

I stand up and hold the book and have to read and explain the pictures to them and all of that so that they can get, like imagination, they can use their imagination with the pictures. Yes, so I let them sit on their chairs and I stand and read to them and then I'll tell them to concentrate and look at the words so that when I sound out the words, they can see. (Participant G)

Other participants reported using more subtle teaching methods to encourage techniques that they will learn in school. Participant L is a primary school teacher and therefore has expert knowledge on how to introduce age appropriate reading aids to her child.

Reading his own little words until he gets to the part where I've read to him because I would show him to use his finger by the words. So, he's following whatever he's reading. (Participant L)

The choices parents make around their role in their children's language education are intricately connected to their beliefs about reading (Boomstra et al., 2013). These beliefs will be explored more fully in section 4.5 but it is important to note that some parents, such as those quoted above, view the teaching element of book sharing more strongly than others do. Buckingham, Beaman and Wheldall (2014) discuss the elements that need to work together to create a quality home learning environment, one of which is the active involvement of the parents in teaching concepts, numbers, shapes and letters. The authors maintain that while any type of reading with children is beneficial, parents need to be shown how to teach their children in order to improve the quality of the home learning environment (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014).

Actions and voices: The third strategy that parents reported using in their book sharing were different methods to encourage their children to engage in the book sharing activity. Most of these strategies involve using different voices for different characters or doing actions to keep their children interested in the story. Encouraging their children to look at and read the pictures was another strategy which has already been discussed.

...and actions and stuff...you need to interact with them, and you need to raise your voice where there should be a raise you voice, and you need to act it out...and they will actually hear... (Participant D)

One father (Participant F) does not read with his son but uses some of the same engagement strategies as the other parents when telling his son stories. The participants describe using voices or sounds to distinguish between different characters in the story.

...I don't read much to my son much, but I try and tell him stories. I actually attempted to do the Goldilocks and the Three Bears the other day, but he stopped me when I made the Papa Bear voice... (Participant F)

Yes, I actually change up the sounds when I read so when a different person speaks then I will change the sound. (Participant G)

It's different voices, different sounds, shouting and screaming. (Participant L)

In families where both parents read with their children, the parents reported different reading styles.

We take turns. Because remember mommy has to have her own way of reading and daddy has his own way of reading and believe you me there is always drama when daddy's reading. He'll be the lion if there is a lion. He'll be a dragon if there is a dragon...whereas mommy will snuggle them in, in their bed and then we will read and there are the pictures (Participant K)

Participant I describes her husband's reading style below.

Yes, he does [read with the children] but I tell him "Be more enthusiastic when you read!" it's so plain. I like to put excitement un it, put action. I like to get him interactive with the pictures. (Participant I)

The difference between their reading styles clearly demonstrates the concept of literacy as a social practice. When asked about their different styles Participant I discussed how she has had practice reading with young children and he has not. This seems to have influenced her confidence and experience with making reading exciting and fun for children.

I don't know, maybe he still has to get there. I've got nephews and nieces, so I've been through that. But he's getting there I think. (Participant I)

Literacy as a social practice posits that literacy is learned through social interactions which in turn are dependent on context and situation (Horn, 2016). Participant I's husband has not had as much exposure or experience with reading with children as Participant I has. His interaction with his wife and her reading style is allowing his style to grow and change which will help him to engage more with his son.

Time spent in shared book reading can also be used to engage with children about what is going on in their life or how they are feeling (Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006). The parent has the opportunity to extend the conversation from simply a story in a book to what may be going on in the child's life. Participant E uses her daughter's favourite book, *The Little Match Girl*, to discuss feelings of sadness and to learn about poverty and sharing.

I think it's such a sad story and we've spoken about why it's sad, that the family has lots of food, but they won't share any with her, and I ask her... (Participant E)

Fletcher and Reese (2005) discuss the main components that exist within the shared reading interaction as being the reader, the child and the book. While these components interact with

each other to create the shared reading experience they are influenced by other subsystems as described in the ecological model (September, Rich & Roman, 2016).

Personalisation: Children enjoy books with which they are able to identify. Kucirkova, Messer and Sheehy (2014) found that children made greater progress on a number of literacy skills when they read personalised books or stories than those who were read traditional stories. A simple action, such as personalising or customising a book is something that parents are able to do which could promote interest in book sharing. This has been documented to elicit increased smiling, laughing and vocal activity in toddlers (Kucirkova, Messer & Sheehy, 2014).

Three of the participants described this in various forms.

It's because, normally the parents are involved in what the children are doing in the book. (Participant G)

Because mommy has a Bible, daddy has a Bible, so I should have a Bible. So, he's excited. (Participant I)

...what they do is every term they have like a personalised book where they would add her name, our names, family names, every quarter of the school. So, for the past two years she was there she got a book called M. She's got her life story, she's got her school stories, she's got cartoon stories, her favourite cartoon and life in general, everything. (Participant K)

Participant I's child is interested in reading his Bible because it belongs to him. He wanted to emulate his parents reading habits and is encouraged to do so by having his own, personal Bible. Participant G notes that her children enjoy stories that they can see themselves in. Being able to relate to the story helps them to engage with it. The importance of children being able to identify with what they read cannot be overstated. Children's books influence the way children develop their self-concept and world view (Chall et al., 1979). The way characters that they identify with and other characters are portrayed can influence their view of certain people or groups. In their study, Chall et al. (1979) state that only 14.4% of children's books published between 1973 and 1975 included one or more black characters in the text or illustration. Statistics provided by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) show that in 2017 out of approximately 3700 children's books received, 938 were written about people of colour

(CCBC, 2018). The CCBC receives the majority of new U.S. published children's and teenage books each year. These statistics reveal that 25.4% of new books were written about people of colour which is a vast improvement from the 14.4% between 1973 and 1975. These are American publishing statistics which may not reflect in South Africa but are still valuable as an indication of how often people of colour are represented in children's stories.

4.4.3 Television and e-book use

When asked about their daily routines it was interesting to see how many participants described routines which involve watching television and yet few have book sharing routines in place. It is also worth noting that at four of the ten interviews that took place in the participants homes, the television was on during our interview.

Before bed we play a game on the you know the tablet...she's got her own tablet yes but reading, like sitting with a book and her looking at the book while I'm reading, nothing like that... (Participant B)

I normally put on a cartoon for them to watch [in the morning] because my son is someone who does not want to go to school (Participant G)

Some of the children seem to have certain programmes which they watch daily. They are aware of when these programmes are on and these programmes take priority over reading or other activities.

I will read something and then his mind is completely off because he is more focussed on his programmes that comes up, and he knows what time this is coming up and what time that is coming up, that is the time I lose his attention. (Participant C1)

Normally once I get home he focuses mainly on cartoons...After that we can discuss what he did at school...it depends on what programme is being shown on the television [when asked if his son prefers reading or TV) because we also use DSTV. If he is more interested in that programme I would rather stop reading and concentrate on that programme and then read later. (Participant N)

Some parents reported reading to their children after they had finished watching their shows or reading while the television was on and noting that they struggle to stay focussed.

I try to just do it when it's time for bed after he's watched his shows...nothing longer [than 20 minutes] because of his attention span... (Participant I)

...we will read to him and then his focus will be both times...he's more on the TV (Participant C1 – the television is on while they read)

Two participants discussed using the television as a way to keep their children occupied when they (the parent) are tired or needed space. It is interesting to note that both participants are single parents.

I mean the kids have a TV in their room and when I get lazy I would put it on and they can choose something to watch but I'm not doing that anymore. I've said no TV in the week and we are trying to read more because I know what screens and things do to me, but I mean they do play games on my phone, my son can download apps. (Participant E)

I'm guilty of him just being OK watching TV and his favourite cartoon is on so I can have a bit of free time to be honest...so when he leaves the TV off so obviously that gives us more time to interact... (Participant F)

Participant D is a teacher at an ECD centre and reports that she is able to see the difference in children who watch a lot of television and children who don't. While there are advantages to reading print books; with the way technology has evolved much of what children read at home in from a screen (Marsh, 2010).

...so, you can see by what children take note and by what children don't take note, what children prefer TV and learning... (Participant D)

Marsh (2010) states that this type of reading, from a screen, has become embedded in children's interests and is central to the way they construct their identities. Screens are now an inevitable part of children's literacy experience and should be used in a constructive way to maximise literacy development. Downloading and reading e-books was fairly common among the participants although more for the parents personal reading than for their children.

I used to download e-books and I read it to them, like bedtime stories... (Participant C2)

To be honest I actually read from the internet. So, we've got WIFI, so I have access to the internet everyday so sometimes when I'm laying down, I will read. Sometimes it's books, sometimes it's the news anything as long as I can read so I don't forget as well. (Participant G)

The portable and accessible nature of e-books were reported as reasons why participants read from their phones.

...I like the books on my phone because I can actually carry them and do them from my phone...because you know I already carry two bags to work... (Participant K)

Some of the participants felt that we are in a new era where television and e-books are more relevant than print books. This seems to align with research conducted by Korat and Or (2010 as cited in Kucirkova, Messer & Sheehy, 2014) who found that children responded more to their mothers when reading e-books and less when reading traditional print books. The same study also found that mothers seemed to be more supportive of their children reading e-books than print books.

Not that she read to them much, but she was coming from the old paper era of print, the only thing that they could do was read books (Participant F)

...he has his own phone where I download books for him and even though it's just pictures, maybe with one word it's still reading for him...and we can't stop them from adapting to what is modern now just like we did. We need to modernise our thinking and out of living as well. (Participant L)

The ecological systems perspective provides context for understanding the shift from print books to e-books. As technology has progressed and e-books and the internet have become more accessible many people have moved towards the convenience that they offer. In particular Bronfenbrenner's (1979) mesosystem and chronosystem help to form a picture of how changing technologies over time have influenced family's reading practices and how they interact with print books and e-books. As e-learning is becoming more common in schools around South Africa it stands to reason that the use of e-books is increasing. Viewing literacy

as a social practice that is dependent on social context as the context changes and develops so too will literacy practices (Theodotou, 2017).

4.5 Perceptions and beliefs

The following sections highlights the key themes that emerged when discussing what parents believe about reading with their young children.

4.5.1 Reading at home and reading at school

Parents were asked their opinion about whether reading at home is important when their children are also being read to at their ECD centre. All the parents stated that they believe it is still important to read at home for the following reasons:

School readiness: One of the strongest motivators for reading at home was to prepare their children for school.

Reading with a parent prepares them more for school...we have enough time to read with them, to send them and then they have no idea of what's going on, so we prefer to prepare them (Participant C1)

No, the thing is, the more they get the reading in, the more knowledge...So I would say, reading at home and reading at creche is actually a good thing to do. (Participant D)

There is a large body of literature that explores the relationship between shared book reading and school readiness, with varying conclusions. While Chatterji (2006) discusses how reading aloud plays an important role in school readiness, Britto et al. (2006) could not conclude in which situations the association is strongest. Engle et al. (2011) state that parenting interventions can improve children's readiness for school. While there is mixed evidence for how book sharing aids school readiness, it is undisputed that parent involvement is a positive factor.

Bonding: Some parents see the time spent reading with their children as a bonding opportunity. Not only is it an opportunity for parents and children to spend time together but also for parents to extend and scaffold their children's learning (Vygotsky, 1978). While the parent may be unaware of the impact of that time spent together, it may manifest in their child's emerging literacy skills.

As parents I feel it just gives him that bond. You just build that bond up. I want him to be able to come to me about anything, and I feel that if you build that little bit of a relationship it can only grow from there. (Participant I)

It is of utmost importance to read at home...because it builds a bond between you and your child. And it builds that confidence in the child in order for him to expose what he is capable of doing. Instead of just being shy in class he will read to you and you can see his progress. (Participant J)

It promotes intimacy between me and him (Participant N)

Forming an emotional bond between child and caregiver is essential for the child to develop healthy social functioning (Black et al., 2017). Responsive parenting helps children learn to regulate their own emotions and to develop behavioural and developmental competence.

Building good habits: Another theme that came through strongly was that reading at home strengthens the idea that reading, and further down the road, school work are not activities that only happen at school. The parents reported reading at home as a way of laying the foundation for a positive association with reading as well as setting good habits.

I don't want to set their mind to that's the only place you do these things...So you associate reading with, like you say the curriculum and school where there is a different kind of reading where it can be fun. And different environment, more laid back and make it fun for them. Which they don't have the time to do in a normal day at school. (Participant F)

It will just make them more enthusiastic about reading in the first place. Reading can be fun because when you only start learning it at school you will think ok fine this is only school work. And once you do it at home, when you start younger they can develop just that skills where they want to do it. I don't want him to think that ok this I only do at school and this I only do at home, I want both of them together. If I don't start now what's it going to be like with his school work? He's going to think oh no I can only do school work at school or what about homework for home. So, you need to actually start that basis somewhere. (Participant I)

As many South African's have grown up without a book reading culture, it is important for parents to nurture a love of reading in their children as well as to provide a home learning environment that encourages children to read and write beyond what is necessary for school (Banda, 2003). These parents are attempting to do just that, to teach their young children that reading is not something that only happens at school.

Staying updated with academic progress: Reading at home allows parents to stay up to date with their children's academic progress and be aware of areas they may be struggling in. It also gives the parent space to supplement the reading/teaching that happens at school with an individual focus on their child.

So ok, the teacher will also stand in front of the class and read, the teacher will make it more fun for but I have to think also how are they going to learn because the teacher doesn't have time to sit with each and every student to say "ok this word sound it out like this" and the teacher is not going to do that with her, she is going to do it in front of the whole class. Where is his attention going to be, his attention isn't going to be the whole time there and the teacher can't watch him the while time? So, I can see, is her paying attention to me when I'm reading you know. (Participant G)

...you know where he is struggling and where, so it's better to do with him because if you don't know the teachers will always be calling you. (Participant H)

I know that teachers do explain it but the teachers explaining it to her and maybe I'll explain differently than the teachers so that she'll fully understand what happened in the story. (Participant J)

These parents are demonstrating the active component needed to develop a quality home learning environment (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). By making sure that their children understand the concepts taught at school and being aware of the areas where they may need extra help, the parents are consistently improving the home learning environment for their children.

4.5.2 Benefits/advantages of early book sharing- why reading is important:

When the parents were asked if they felt it was important to read with their young children, all of them agreed that it was although not all could motivate their response. Various reasons for why parents believe reading to young children is important are discussed below.

Academic success: The belief that reading with young children will help them to achieve at school and succeed later in life is one held by most of the parents. These perceptions are in line with literature that reports a link between academic achievement and reading with young children (Cooper et al., 2014; Duursma, 2014).

In terms of just general ability to focus and learn and things like that. Because reading helps a lot with everything, even though it's reading that's helped her with her maths, you know just that who factor. Those who read always tend to excel better academically for some reason. (Participant F)

Because whatever they need to do in life, it revolves around reading. Even when they need to do mathematics they need to read. And if they can grasp the concepts of reading with understanding it will benefit them in the long run. (Participant L)

Not only does reading with young children expose them to new literacy skills but also the experience of holding a book and turning the pages (Duursma, 2014). Children need to learn to master the fine motor skills needed to turn pages and to learn how to respect and engage with books. One participant noted that her son is learning these skills, and even though he is holding the book upside down at the moment he will gain experience until he knows the correct way to hold the book.

I think it's all based on reading at the end of the day...kids are sponges, they are going to soak up anything. For me reading is one of the best ways to actually help them learn, get them motivated in things, help them to learn new words. He'll sit with a book upside down and he will turn. (Participant I)

Children's developing mental functions are constantly being influenced by their interactions with their parents and others who are more knowledgeable (Li & Fleeer, 2015). These interactions contribute to the formation of skills and developmental functions as described by Vygotsky (1978) and the more experience and exposure they have the more confident they will become. Parents are able to scaffold their children's experience so that they begin to learn, for example, which is the correct way to hold a book.

Vocabulary and word recognition: Numerous studies have reported the benefits of picture book reading on vocabulary, pronunciation and word recognition (Fletcher & Reese, 2005;

Duursma, 2014; Leech & Rowe, 2014; Li & Flear, 2015). Some parents reported seeing these benefits when reading with their children.

I could see, she could have said 'the' like the word 'the' without recognising that's the word, then she would say, this is 'the' or this is 'a' so like pronouncing the letters...so it boosts up their vocabulary. (Participant D)

...reading is one of the best ways to actually help them learn, get them motivated in things, help them to learn new words. (Participant I)

And also, to improve her reading like how to pronounce words... (Participant J)

While many studies have found a correlation between shared booked reading and increased vocabulary, Sénéchal and Lefevre (2014) report that shared reading increases oral vocabulary acquisition but not knowledge of the alphabet.

Encouraging imagination: Some parents believe that reading engages and enhances their children's imaginations as well as vocabulary, pronunciation and creativity. Parents are able to use the structure of the story to scaffold new concepts and words in an age appropriate and engaging way (Vally et al., 2015). Children can be encouraged to think/imagine beyond the written story and this can be an opportunity for creativity and imagination to develop.

For young children I feel that your imagination plays a good role in your learning ability and just being creative and things like that...so sometimes reading helps with their creativity and vision (Participant F)

Well reading is important because it stimulates the child's imagination and helps to grow their vocabulary and it helps to make them think. They are also very busy, at school then playing and they know when we sit down to read it's time to settle down (Participant E)

These statements are corroborated by Martin et al. (2014) who discuss how reading stretches the imagination. According to Walker et al. (2007) most parents in LMICs are not providing their children with cognitively stimulating home environments and thus it is encouraging to hear that parents are engaging with and recognising the transformative potential of reading.

4.5.3 Parent's role

The responsibility that parents have when it comes to their children's education was a theme that emerged during the interviews. Some of the participants admitted that they rely on the ECD centre when it comes to reading with their children while others reiterated the importance of being involved at home. The way that parents interact with their children is influenced by many factors and subsystems (September, Rich & Roman, 2016). Two of the participants are teachers and felt very strongly about the role that parents and home life should play in children's education. Their beliefs are evidently influenced by their experience as teachers as well as being parents.

Small things start at home, you can't expect us to do a thing at creche and you don't do it at home. You expect us to teach your child, but what are you doing at home. Because learning starts at home. Reading starts at home. Reading doesn't start at creche. Many people have that concept, that my child must read at creche, but if you read to your child at home it will prove better to us at creche. (Participant D)

We need to support and help teachers. (Participant K)

One participant mentioned that it is important for parents to hear about activities such as reading with children, as some parents believe that the school and teachers are responsible for all learning. This statement was reiterated by another participant and is an interesting point of view to discuss.

Because we take things for granted, you know, just like we send them to creche and that's it. (Participant H)

You can't just expect the teacher to know what he's doing, you also, as a parent, need to be involved...but our parents [of the children she teaches] feel the need not to do it because they're doing it at school. But the more exposure they get the better it is for their children. (Participant L)

Participant L has experienced the lack of participation from parents which highlights the clear need for programmes that equip and encourage parents to read at home with their children. While the National Integrated Early Development Policy (2015) promotes supporting and providing training to parents it is clear that there is a great need for these types of programmes (Meier, 2014). Through the ecological model we can understand that everyone has different

systems that interact with each other and influence daily decisions and routines. While we recognise that it is important to ensure that parents are being given the opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills around how best to support their children's education.

4.5.4 Cognitive dissonance and alliteracy

One theme that became apparent as the interviews progressed was that a certain amount of cognitive dissonance exists among parents when it comes to reading with their children. All the parents expressed that they felt it was important to read with their young children, yet not all of them do this. Some of the parents did not have a reason for not reading while others expressed guilt or a desire to do more with their children. Understandably there are many challenges that people face when raising children and many different tasks that demand time and energy, but it has been interesting to note the cognitive dissonance that parents experience. Alliteracy is a term used to describe those who are able to read but have no interest in doing so (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015). Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu (2015) state that alliteracy is problem in post-apartheid South Africa and needs to be addressed. Taking into account the history that literacy, reading and libraries have had in South Africa it is understandable that those who grew up without an established culture of reading may have no interest in reading (Dick, 2012).

Many of the parents maintain that they would rather read than watch television or would rather their children read than played on their phones. The inconsistency lies in the reality that their children have tablets and phones and few or no children's books.

...I think the book is more for me because you know the phones are keeping the kids so busy, they concentrate more on the phone because their mind isn't on the reading, their minds are on games and stuff like that, so I prefer the book. (Participant A)

In the above comment, participant A expressed her preference for books and yet there were no books in the house and her son had his own phone. There is a clear inconsistency between belief and behaviour.

She's got her own tablet yes, but reading, like sitting with a book and her looking at the book while I'm reading it, nothing like that. Because I know that's the way you learn to read, because then you just spell, maybe just spell out the words for her...kids, they copy you. Reading, I must do something more about this... (Participant B)

So, I'll tell you I'm guilty for not making the time. (Participant F)

Participant B understands that children learn from their parents but does not model the behaviour in which he believes. Participant F indicated sitting in a place of mental discomfort as he believes that he needs to spend time reading with his children, but he has not put this belief into action. Some of the participants were aware of this dissonance before the interview and for others the interview was a catalyst for new thinking around reading. In 2011, 95.8% of Mitchell's Plain households had a television (Statistics South Africa, 2011) while the results of the quantitative data show that 72% of families have ten or fewer books in their home, with 8% of those owning none at all. This data coupled with the fact that at four of the ten interviews that took place in participants homes the television was on during the interview; clearly indicates a dissonance between what people believe and what they are doing, or in some cases are able to do. The challenges that parents face which may be inhibiting them from reconciling their beliefs and actions are discussed below.

4.6 Challenges

All parents face challenges when raising children. The main challenges expressed by the interviewees and how these challenges may affect the amount of time they are able to spend reading with their children are discussed below.

4.6.1 Time challenges

One of the most commonly expressed challenges that the participating parents faced was time. Some parents felt that they did not have enough time to read with their children while others expressed that they did not use the time that they do have available. The amount of time that parents have available is directly influenced by their employment.

Employment: Parents reported various challenges when it came to balancing their need to work and the time it leaves them with their children. One participant discussed how he is in the process of changing jobs to be able to spend more time with his family. This is an example of the exosystem, as it involves the parent and their workplace and how the events or processes that occur between the two impact on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). If work is causing the parent to be stressed or have little time with their family this will be felt in the interaction that the parent has with their child (September, Rich & Roman, 2016).

I'm soon changing jobs now because my time, because the reason why I left the driving school, because I didn't spend time with my family. I had to work seven days a week

and also with the financial part I didn't benefit financially, and with my family time so I had to give up something. I don't have the time...because I work seven days, you know this is my first weekend off it I don't know how long. (Participant B)

I left working in the private sector, I'm a chartered accountant, to work where I am so that I can spend time with them [children]. There are other offers and jobs that I can be doing but then I might only get home at 7pm and what time do I have with my kids? (Participant E)

With only 43% of working age people employed in Mitchell's Plain (City of Cape Town, 2013: 4), not everyone has the opportunity to change jobs or to find employment that suits their time needs. Participant E is fortunate that she is able to work hours that enable her to fetch her children from school and spend the afternoon with them. She has a qualification that is in demand and therefore she has employment options that many people do not. Several participants reported working rotational shifts which often have a very early start or a late end. The nature of shift work makes getting into a routine with your child difficult and for some, the time they have off is during the day when their child is at an ECD centre.

We do shifts, we do early shifts, we do night shifts, we do late shifts like from 2:30pm until 11pm (Participant H)

Before I worked shifts, sometimes I work 6am in the morning up until 3pm in the afternoon Monday to Friday. It's rotational shifts so you get two days off in a week. So sometimes I would work 8pm until 6am (Participant J)

Routine is important for children and some parents are unable to develop a routine due to their unpredictable work schedules. Other parents reported that they or their spouse are simply too tired once they get home and do not have the energy to read with their children.

Well we used to be in a very good routine, where I would read to them every night, but work has been really busy, what with month end and everything so probably every second night because I'm getting home later at the moment and then I'm too tired to read (Participant E)

My husband will sometimes lay but he is so tired, so he'll listen to the stories with us, but he won't read (Participant G)

Due to parents working late, many ECD centres have chosen to extend their operating hours to accommodate this. While this allows parents to work knowing that their children are being cared for it means that the teachers only finish once the last child has been fetched. Participant M experiences this and it has an impact on the amount of time that she has to spend with her child.

Sometimes it's because there are some kids that stay like after half past five and I must look after them (Participant M)

One way that Participants C1 and C2 have found to make sure that they have time to spend with their children is to run their own business. While this is not a viable option for all parents and does not come without challenges it seems that it is allowing Participants C1 and C2 the time that they desire.

...being self-employed you've got time to spend with them. (Participant C)

Family commitments: Time constraints from work are not the only time challenges that parents face. Family commitments and especially having more than one child are real challenges for some parents.

Yes, very busy with children and everything. You have to balance it. But if you have a good support structure you will get there (Participant L)

Because the first and the second week after the birth I couldn't focus on him because I had to focus more on this one [the baby]. But I'm trying to focus on both, trying to make things equal. (Participant A)

Some parents reported feeling frustrated that there is just not enough time to do all that they would like to do. Participant K explains how their weekends are full of activities and family outings and they do not feel that they have enough time during the week.

I wish I could get home earlier...weekends we go out to picnics, we go out as a family. On Sundays we go to church, it is very short we come home, we have lunch, we watch movies, we spend time you know. (Participant K)

Time is not an excuse: While some parents discussed how they felt that time was a major challenge, others disagreed and felt that parents should make the time to read with their children.

I don't think I can say there have been any challenges. My husband will always say still not an excuse that's [no time]. Because he gets home at 7pm and he still spends time with him (Participant I)

We make the time and they can't tell me there isn't time. At least 15 minutes of the day, it's not a lot of time. They can sit and watch TV for half an hour and I'll work but they can't do 15 minutes (Participant L)

Participant F feels that there are parents who would like to use the time that they do have to read or spend more time with their children but who have just not taken that step to put the time aside.

I think there are a lot of parents like myself who would love to do but just not making the time for it (Participant F)

Participant A stated that she doesn't have time to read to her son and then later in the interview stated that there is time for everything. This demonstrates what Participant F feels, that she would like to make time to read but just has not done so yet.

Most of the time I don't have time to read to him... There is a time for everything, time to play, to talk, to sing (Participant A)

An investment of time spent engaging children in cognitively stimulating activities is a way for parents with low socio-economic status to ensure that their children are not further disadvantaged (Black & Dewey, 2014). While this may seem like a simple solution it is clear that time is often a luxury that many parents do not have.

4.6.2 Personal challenges

Each of the participants reported their own individual challenges which act as barriers to reading with their children. Keeping the ecological perspective in mind it is apparent that these challenges do not exist in isolation but are the results of interactions with other systems in various forms.

Lack of motivation: Self-reported laziness was a challenge that a couple of participants discussed. While they are aware that reading is beneficial for their children, and they have the time, they do not use this time for reading.

Mostly it's tiredness...and you can say a bit laziness as well. (Participant B)

I'm just lazy I guess (Participant F)

These parents are aware of the benefits that reading with their children would have but do not have the internal motivation to act on this awareness. As already discussed time is a challenge for many parents and free time is often rare. Nali'bali (2016) state that reading as an activity is undervalued by parents. Due to the lack of value ascribed to shared reading other activities tend to take priority. This was seen in the amount of television that the participants and their children watch. The national reading survey completed in 2016 found that incidences of reading in the month before the survey had diminished from 65% in 2006 to 43% in 2016 (South African Book Development Council, 2016: 16). Competition for leisure time is one explanation provided by the national reading survey for the decline in reading. There seems to be many more leisure or 'down-time' activities available to people but time is obviously still limited. Some may have had bad experiences with reading when they were at school and do not view reading as a leisure activity. An attitudinal shift is necessary if we want parents to read more for pleasure and in turn instil that love of reading in their children.

Financial resources: Finances were another challenge reported by the participants. The need to work and the implications that come with inconsistent work hours are often unavoidable. While work schedules have time implications not being employed has its own set of challenges.

She started [creche] at the age of four because there wasn't enough finance wise, like moneywise to send her to creche...and I don't have to give [transport] money because it is like a 15 minute walk from here (Participant D)

Before Participant D was employed they did not have the financial resources for their child to attend an ECD centre. While this does not directly limit their ability to read with their child, financial stress can negatively affect mental health and a parent's ability to be present for their child (Gould & Ward, 2015).

Books are expensive because look the one I recently bought it's like a 280 page book, but I spent R199 for it. (Participant K)

Buying books new is an expensive endeavour. While there are alternative options, such as borrowing, going to the library or buying second hand, books are often an expensive resource which not everyone can afford. While there were several participants who did not own a single book, it was not necessarily due to the cost involved. Lack of time and interest or motivation were bigger barriers to owning books than their cost. This finding is congruent with the 2016 national reading survey (South African Book Development Council, 2016). While the cost of books may not be the most prominent barrier to reading with their children one cannot dismiss financial stress as a challenge. Although financial stress may be more related to lack of choice surrounding their employment and the implications that their work schedule brings it is still a major contributing factor to why parents are not reading as much with their children as they would like.

Learning challenges: In Vygotsky's theory parents are viewed as the more knowledgeable other and are expected to scaffold their children's learning (1978). When parents themselves struggle with reading or other aspects of learning this can be a challenge.

Because myself, I have problems reading...so I would read those thin books, four lines that is the story, and it actually helped my reading, actually improved my reading (Participant D)

I am a creche teacher and it is really challenging for me because I have almost got a small learning difficulty, but I am still busy overcoming it (Participant M)

Even though Participants D and M struggle with reading, Participant D described how reading with her child helped her to gain confidence and her own reading improved. Lack of confidence can be a real barrier for many parents. This is one area where parents could use support, to help them gain confidence needed to practice reading with their children. Engle et al. (2011) discuss the importance of interventions with parents which promote positive interactions between parent and child.

But because of also personal breakups and stuff there was a lot of things that kept me away from focussing on certain things... (Participant F) – single dad

I think I'm lazy, I don't have a real reason. I'm tired, I'm stressed but there is no real reason why I don't read. Actually I think one of the reasons is because I don't have books and I know it's not one of the excuses because there is a library...like right now

I'm not working so I do have time but I do not know what is stopping me from reading to my child, maybe I'm lazy or something I don't know, stress. Personal stuff, financial, family stress (Participant J)

Participant J summarises most of the personal challenges expressed by the other participants. As an unemployed single parent there are many challenges that she faces on a daily basis. While she has the time to go to the library she feels incapacitated by stress to be able to do so. This is an example of the effects of poverty on the mental health that many South African parents experience (Gould & Ward, 2015).

4.6.3 Environmental challenges

Life does not happen in isolation. The ecological systems perspective posits that there are many different factors which work together to exert influence over individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Some of these factors, such as employment, have already been discussed in relation to how they impact the time that parents have to read with their children. The environment in which the participants are living was highlighted as being a real challenge.

Lack of parental involvement: The lack of involvement from parents was a challenge that was highlighted by some of the participants. Young children seem to be left to play on their own into the evening and in areas which are unsafe. According to the most recent Department of Community Safety (2015: 11) statistics, 5780 contact crimes (murder, attempted murder, assault, neglect etc.) were reported in the Mitchell's Plain police precinct in 2013/2014. Looking at property related crimes in the same period, 10 668 were reported to the police and 6432 drug related, driving under the influence and possession of illegal arms and ammunition crimes were detected by the police (Department of Community Safety, 2015: 11). It is evident by these statistics that Mitchell's Plain has a significant amount of crime and that parental supervision is vitally important. Teachers struggle to get parents to commit to the role that they need to play in their children's education which leads to added stress and fatigue for the teacher.

Because you know the young mothers don't like to go to such things, doing things like these...maybe they spend less time with their kids...the environment here isn't good...so the kids must interact with a lot of things, it's much better you know, keep them busy...the environment around here is a bit dangerous sometimes. But the kids are playing like maybe seven o'clock you'll see kids his age (Participant A)

Because there's no parental involvement. For example, at the demographic at our school there's no parent involved. So, you as the teacher need to be the parent...but there is no time, enough time for us to do all those things. (Participant L)

Participant B discussed how he does not let his child play outside of their property. He was supervising a number of other children at the time of the interview. He has taken a proactive step to ensure that he feels his child is safe and subsequently other children benefit from his supervision. External environmental factors impact day to day life as well as mental health. Poor parental mental health has been associated with lower quality interactions between parents and child and fewer learning opportunities in the home (Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006).

People here, they struggle to make ends meet but they party a lot also. So, they, it's like, almost like they are not interested. Like, these kids here [he was looking after about 5 children], my child doesn't go play out. I don't let her go play outside by the neighbours. (Participant B)

The majority, about 60-65% of our parents are still young, are at school, are on drugs. Most of them, most of our kids are staying with their grandparents who are age 65-75 (Participant L)

The home learning environment is influenced by environmental stressors and can contribute towards children not reaching their potential (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014). While environmental stressors can contribute towards a low-quality home learning environment, book sharing may be able to mitigate some of these negative effects (Vally et al., 2015).

Sometimes it's the environment that I'm in. I take them out of that environment sometimes just take a walk which means that I can't sit with them with their books (Participant G)

In an effort to remove herself and her children from her stressful home environment, Participant G tends to take her children out during the day. By leaving the house she feels that she is not able to sit down and read with them. This is a clear example of how environmental stressors are negatively impacting the reading opportunities her children have. While Participant G could read in the park or go to the library it does not remove the stressful environment at home.

Complacency: Environmental stressors occur in all environments. While some people possess the resilience, skills or experience to moderate these stressors others may not. In order to overcome external stressors a certain amount of internal motivation is needed, this is something that Participant F feels many people lack.

What I could never understand, especially in our areas, when people just accept certain things to be. Certain environments. Because I've always wondered when you go into certain less privileged areas where you will find a whole road of people living the same way. And I always think to myself, you can't tell me that each and every person in that household, has the same way of thinking. I'm sure there is one that is going to want to paint their house nicely or one that's going to want to fix the windows, you know what I'm saying. That's how the level of communication is there, that's how teachers do things and that's it. (Participant F)

While there are so many immediate needs and environmental stressors it is understandable that reading with young children may not be a priority. These environmental stressors compound personal stress to create barriers to spending time reading with their young children. Teaching parents methods to reduce the negative effects that environment stressors have on their mental health could increase the educational opportunities of their children.

4.7 Influencing factors

While parents face many challenges that may inhibit their ability to read with their children there are also factors which have positively influenced and encouraged them. Boomstra et al. (2013) discuss how beliefs that parents hold influence their decisions but it is helpful to understand where beliefs about literacy practices come from.

4.7.1 Education

Three of the participants discussed how they are trying to give their children experiences and opportunities that they themselves did not have.

I didn't have what we can give them today, so for me it's very important to see my daughter become something that I always wanted to be, or I wanted to achieve. (Participant C1)

We didn't have all that at our school. Some of the teachers were...so rude you did not want to be in that class. You didn't want to go there so I dropped out of school at the

*time also. Because I went to T*** High and it was just gangsters everywhere. So, I dropped out but with that I can say that I read well. (Participant G)*

I think because of my history, because the thing is, when I was younger I didn't have that privileges of my parents reading to me, therefore I've struggled in school. (Participant D)

This desire of a better life for their children often begins with making sure they are getting the best education that they are able to provide. This implies that parents to some degree, whether consciously or not, believe that education and literacy play a major role in the future successes that their children may have. This belief is in line with Horn's (2016) model of literacy as a social practice. Two of the participants discussed how they had positive experiences with reading at school which have stayed with them into adulthood.

But actually, at my primary school there was, after the break we get a 30-minute reading period. So, at school that is where I learned how to read and everything...I stopped because immediately once I finished Matric, I went looking for a job. (Participant J)

From my Afrikaans teacher...I asked him what can I do to speak better Afrikaans...so he told me, go to the library, get yourself books, it doesn't matter if it's English or Afrikaans the minute you actually engage yourself into reading it can actually change the way you speak, how you carry yourself and actually teach you more about the language you want to learn. (Participant K)

These positive experiences and the lasting memory that they created highlight just how influential reading at school can be. While participant J does not read with her child, participant K developed her love of reading through the encouragement of a teacher. She may now pass her love of reading on to her children and continue the positive cycle. This is an example of how ecological systems theory can have a positive effect on more than one person's life. Her teacher may not know the influence that he has had on her life and how that is going to influence the way that she brings up her children. Participant L is a teacher herself and through her own education she is acutely aware of the importance of reading.

I know how important it is to read, as a teacher. (Participant L)

She is trying to use her influence as a teacher to encourage other parents to read with their children. While many families may not have a culture of reading at home the society in which they live may be able to encourage the way they think about reading. If the broader social and cultural norms begin to change towards a more entrenched culture of reading families may be influenced to follow suit (Theodotou, 2017).

4.7.2 Personal childhood reading experiences

Whether we are aware of it or not our childhood experiences often play major roles in how we live our adult lives. We may imitate our parents or actively try and do things differently. Children learn literacy practices from their families and these in turn influence how they use literacy in their own lives (Horn, 2016). Only four of the participants reported being read with as children. It was interesting to see that out of those four, two remember reading with their father and two with their mother.

...because my father loved to read. (Participant A)

It was instilled in by my father, since I've been five years old I've been reading. (Participant L)

Fletcher and Reese (2005) state that fathers are less likely to read with their children. Frosch, Cox, & Goldman's (2001) comparison of reading behaviours between mothers and fathers found that measures of warmth/support, hostile/intrusive and stimulation of cognitive development were rated similarly. While they measured similarly on those measures, fathers appeared to be more detached when reading with their young children than mothers (Frosch, Cox & Goldman, 2001)

Yes, I actually was [read to], I remember Mother Goose. (Participant I)

My mother only read to me when I was little so by that time, I loved reading already. (Participant G)

While mothers tend to read more with their children than fathers this is not always the case (Fletcher & Reese, 2005; Duursma, 2014). Karrass, van Deventer and Braungart-Rieker (2003, as cited in Fletcher & Reese, 2005:88) found that within their sample of middle-income parents of 8 month old children, 67% of mothers reported reading with their children compared to 50% of fathers. Participant F sheds some light perceptions around fathers reading.

My dad is very old school in terms of you know, he manly man, the provider and stuff and no so much into the whole reading and he's not somebody for that. (Participant F)

His father identified as a 'manly man' and reading did not seem to form part of that identity. This may be a perception held by fathers, that reading is a feminine activity, which precludes them from engaging in reading with their children. There is evidence that when fathers' have favourable employment conditions they are better able to embrace fatherhood and engage with their children in activities such as reading and helping with school work (Richter et al., 2012).

Most of the participants stated that their parents had not read with them as children. For some, they felt that their parents were too busy with work or involved in the struggle against apartheid to spend much time with them.

You know my parents' generation, they were so involved in the struggle that they didn't have much free time for us. So, it was very different then. I want the best for my children and I know that reading is something I can do for them. (Participant E)

Coming from a background where parents were just working and they took some time, some years to get that transition going from the usual to try something different. Our parents were all about just work, get home, too tired to do anything, not that I have a problem with how they did things but now as the more new age we are trying to obviously look at things differently, you know just spending time with the child. It actually does make a lot of difference in how they grow up and what they believe about certain things... (Participant F)

While neither participant resented the fact that their parents did not spend much time with them it is interesting to note that participant E does read with her children and participant F does not. There are many factors at play which help to understand this, but it is encouraging to see that while childhood experiences influence future behaviour they are not the only route to creating literacy practices and habits. Once again this is a clear example of how stress in one system, such as the parents work environment, impacts directly on another system, the home life environment, which in turn impacts the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Access to books and the value placed on reading by society are influential factors that cannot be overlooked.

Two participants discussed growing up with their grandmothers who generally were too old to read (or want to read) with them.

I grew up with my grandmother so she's old and no one read to us. (Participant J)

I can't say that my parents read to me. I suppose I grew up with my grandmother because my parents were also teachers. So, they used to work so I was staying with my grandmother and my grandfather. (Participant N)

Mtshali (2015) discusses how grandparents are increasingly having to take responsibility for parenting their grandchildren. Whether grandparents take on this responsibility by being the primary caregivers for their grandchild or simply assisting with child care, they play a pivotal role. Mtshali (2015) notes that grandparents generally take on the parenting role in response to a variety of factors ranging from substance abuse, financial difficulties, abuse, to parents being unable to care for their children due to incarceration or death. Regardless of the circumstances, if grandparents have taken on the primary caregiver role, they will often hold the most influence over how literacy and literacy practices are viewed and learnt by the child. If the grandparents are in poor health or older, as described by participant J, they may not have the energy or motivation to engage with their grandchildren.

4.7.3 Family structure

Parenting is full of challenges and many parents have to face these challenges without a partner. Single parenting is not uncommon in South Africa as approximately 67% of children have experienced living with a single parent (Modise, 2015). The HIV/AIDS epidemic has left many children without one or both parents often resulting in the responsibility of child rearing falling to grandparents. The reality of a high proportion of fathers who are absent from their children's lives means that many mothers are left to care for their children on their own (Richter et al., 2012).

I have two of my own, my girl is five and my boy is turning four and then I'm basically the mother to my brother's daughter who is ten and I'm a single mom. (Participant E)

Participant E has taken on the parenting of her niece and subsequently has three children to care for as a single parent. Some of the participants who described themselves as single parents still have close contact with their previous partner and many have the help of other family members.

So, I'm a father of three, two girls. My oldest is turning 14 this month and my other daughter is turning eight years old and my son is three years old. I do IT work for this

company, I'm no longer with the mother of the kids, so I'm a single parent. But it's only my son who lives with me permanently and my daughters live with their mum. (Participant F)

The different systems at play in family life are often complicated. Family structures are not static, and many children will have to learn to adapt as their families change over time. Participant B gives an example of how his family structure has changed multiple times.

They are by their mom yes...they both lived with me for six years. Because due to their mom's drinking and all that stuff so I told her, rather give the kids to me because you are not capable of looking after them. And after six years she bettered herself and she asked me for the kids. And I said "OK, I can see that you did something with yourself" but it's up to them, up to the eldest. So, he decided he wanted to go to his mom. But they are here every week. (Participant B)

He split from his partner due to her substance abuse and their children lived with him for some time. Once she was in recovery their children decided to live with their mother. Their father is now remarried with another child. That is a lot of change in family structure and dynamics that those children have had to understand and adapt to. Grandparents are often an important support structure for parents (Mtshali, 2015).

She [grandmother] does help, she can read, and she is still a young grandmother though so she can manage, she can help us, she can support us taking care of him. (Participant H)

4.7.4 ECD influence and reading campaigns

When looking at what may have influenced parents to read with their children it was important to ask if the participants had heard of any campaigns or literacy organisations. Three organisations were mentioned, Nali'bali, Read to Works and Wordworks.

I have heard of Nali'bali. I even know that there is a website where you can download stories...no but you know, these things they cost a lot of money to download and everything. (Participant J)

But I just know 'Read to Works' ...they design a workshop for parents that are at home...not really teach but how to read, how to instil that reading. (Participant L)

...my aunty, she works with Wordworks. (Participant A)

While three participants had heard of organisations that promote reading for pleasure none of them reported being involved with the organisations. One participant felt that their child's ECD centre has the most influence with parents and that, this is an avenue that should be explored more when it comes to reading at home.

I can't say campaigns or organisations, but I can say school meetings when you speak to the principal then they discuss books. I honestly don't know how to get parents interest. The only way is through the creche and that's even if the school has meetings these things need to me mentioned...parents don't have a choice but to listen to the principal. You just don't have a choice. If the principal says you need to bring a box of crayons that is what you got to bring for your child. (Participant I)

The problem of getting parents interested in reading was identified by the participant who believes that the ECD centres have the influence to encourage parents.

4.8 Public library use

Public libraries are important social institutions that can have a transformative effect on the economic and social sphere in which they serve (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015). They are publicly funded spaces that allow people access to information in various forms. Libraries are spaces intended to give children, students and adults access to books and often computers and the internet that they may not have at home as well as offering them somewhere quiet to study or read. Legislation during the apartheid era meant that physical space and book supply to libraries was based on race (Dick, 2012). The implications of these inequalities may still be felt today with libraries being under resourced and too small to be able to effectively serve residents in the area. The following section describes the participant's experience and opinion of the public library as a community resource.

Access: In order to read with their children, parents need to have access to children's books. Many people cannot afford to buy books and should therefore be able to rely on a public library as an access point to age appropriate books. When asked about their access to libraries it seems that there are barriers that prevent parents from using the libraries close to them.

Due to parents working it is important that the libraries opening hours reflect the time that parents have available. As many parents are not able to take the time during the week, excursions to the library generally happen on the weekend. One participant voiced this but was

under the impression that libraries are not open on the weekend. Most of the public libraries are open from 9am until 12pm on Saturday and do not seem to be open on Sundays.

*And I think it closes at half past four, sometimes we get home by four o'clock...
(Participant C1)*

*If they can be open on the weekends when I'm available...they don't open on weekends,
only during the week. Books are expensive (Participant K)*

Clearly there is a lack of information about library opening hours and this could extend to a lack of information about the services that libraries offer. Libraries offer opportunities and services to both parents and children which more parents should be taking advantage of. Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu (2015) discuss how libraries, as a resource for development, are a link that people in South Africa fail to make resulting in undervaluing libraries and less frequent use. This point is demonstrated with the example of service delivery protests and how public libraries were the first municipal structures to be destroyed (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015).

While books are expensive and the library a cost-effective way of having a continuous stream of different books, a trip to the library may mean that they need to take public transport or travel a long distance.

*...I won't be able to go to the library during the week...so I need to take a taxi.
(Participant A)*

*The local library, the problem is that it's in Site C, so I have to move from Driftsands
to Site C...I've never been with him to that library (Participant N)*

Public transport can be unreliable or dangerous and for families where both parents are unemployed a trip to the library may be a rare treat. In the policing needs and priorities report (Department of Community Safety, 2015) respondents stated that they felt most vulnerable in spaces that were gang territory. These spaces included the streets and taxi ranks. Gang violence and violence between the police and gangs is a real threat to public safety in Mitchell's Plain (Department of Community Safety, 2015).

Resources: One participant expressed concern that there are no books for very young children at their local library while another does not feel that the library has changed much since he was a child.

At this time of age there's not many books like this for children at the library. They cater for children maybe 5 years and older. The influence of the library is a good thing, so they need to stock up more on the younger children (Participant L)

...sadly, the level of, quality of books that we have at our local library, like I said there is probably the same book that was there 30 years ago...I'm sure they have new books by now but just walking out it's the same feel from when I was in Grade 1 (Participant F)

While it is important to have books for emergent readers there is a growing need for picture and board books that parents can read with their young children. If parents feel that libraries are not meeting their needs, they will stop visiting them. This is complicated as library run initiatives are only going to be successful if the community values and supports them (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015). Parents need to engage so that libraries are informed on how best to meet the parents' needs. Some parents do not have the resources to provide children's books for their young children. If libraries are not providing parents with access to age appropriate books they may feel that they simply do not have access to books to read with their children.

The threat of fines for late returns is another challenge that was mentioned in discussion on library use and access. While libraries need to have measures in place to ensure that their books are returned, for families with few financial resources the risk of being fined may outweigh the benefits of using the library.

By me taking out books and its going, it's not going to work with my time because on a Saturday I'm so busy, I'll actually forget and at the end of the time I'll pay penalties for taking books late (Participant D)

In contrast to hearing the challenges that some parents face regarding library access it was encouraging to hear that ECD centres are making use of the library as a resource. Participant D describes how the ECD centre that she works at goes to the library once a month.

What we have at creche, we've implemented this now, we go to the library once in a month and then we'd sit by the library. Then we'd take the books, we'll take say, creche can have 30 to 20 books then we would take 20 books and we would take them back to creche. (Participant D)

While it is encouraging that some ECD centres are able to take their children to the library it does not lessen the need for parents to be reading with their children at home. It is therefore important to understand why parents are or are not taking their children to the library. Literacy practices, such as borrowing books from the library, are informed by cultural and social contexts (Theodotou, 2017). Social and cultural contexts are in turn influenced by historical factors and therefore the enhancing literacy as a social practice in South Africa is steeped in inequalities fostered during the apartheid era (Banda, 2003). The barriers to library use have been discussed but it also important to understand why some parents are using the library. The large selection of books and companionship of other children were two main reasons given for going to the library.

There are lots of books that they can choose from. (Participant G)

He enjoys himself at the library because you can see it's just him and her (baby) here. So, I don't know if they read at creche but at the library he feels there are more children that he's around and doing the same thing that he does, and he loves reading the way he does. Because he actually has some friends at the library that often meet to read together. (Participant L)

Participant L feels that the library gives her child the space to meet up with other children who enjoy reading. Not only does participant L make use of the library as a resource to borrow books but also as an opportunity for her child to make new friends who share an interest in reading. Encouragement from other children could be a strong motivating factor for children to ask their parents to take them to the library. Participant I mentioned that she would like to take her child to the library in the future, but she feels that he is too young at the moment.

I don't want to take him to the library yet because I feel he's a bit too young for the library. I feel he's just going to literally get lots in the library. I will take him when he's about four or five. (Participant I)

Parent suggestions: Participant F feels that the children's section in libraries should be offering activities to increase interest in the library. According to the ecological perspective the library system and the community within which it operates, influence each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Libraries are also heavily impacted by the provincial and national governments which dictate policy and funding. Public libraries are funded to promote reading and literature as well as delivering other essential services to their community (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015). Libraries need input from their users in order to stay relevant as well

as continued support and buy in from the community for their initiatives to be successful (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015).

They need to try and do something in that department, and maybe have sections in the libraries as well where, add little theatre plays...they can incorporate books with theatre and poetry and all those kinds of things. (Participant F)

There are six public libraries in Mitchell's Plain. Mitchell's Plain town centre library, Rocklands library, Westridge library, Weltevreden library, Tafelsig library and Lentegour library. According to the City of Cape Town, Weltevreden, Rocklands and Westridge library hosted five, six and nine school holiday events respectively, while Mitchell's Plain town centre library hosted one and Lentegour and Tafelsig libraries did not host any (City of Cape Town, 2018a). The City of Cape Town provided a comprehensive list of school holiday activities including those hosted by libraries and it is the responsibility of parents to do their research as to what it on and appropriate for their children. Rocklands, Weltevreden and Lentegour libraries have Facebook pages where they detail events and engage with library users. Some libraries may be doing more than others but there are ongoing activities for parents who are interested. Another suggestion to increase library access was given by Participant K.

Once upon a time in my primary school years there was a truck that was called the Rainbow something, that came, it used to come to communities. It was a truck that looked like a library...a mobile library. (Participant K)

The City of Cape Town has one mobile library that visits a number of different areas but Mitchell's Plain is not on their route (City of Cape Town, 2018b). The idea of mobile libraries needs further research.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has provided an analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. Bar graphs were used to depict the quantitative data and Chi-squared tests were run to test for independence of certain variables on reading frequency. Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis was used on the quantitative data and a discussion on the findings was provided. Quotations from the participants as well as links to previous research was provided as part of the analysis. The following chapter will offer conclusions from the research study as well as recommendations for increasing reading frequency for parents with young children. Recommendations for further research will conclude the chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5. Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusions drawn from the research study. Each research question will be addressed and recommendations from both the researcher and participants will be provided.

5.1 Conclusions

Chapter 4 provided an analysis of the findings and from that analysis the following conclusions can be drawn. Each research question will be addressed according to the research findings. Conclusions from the quantitative analysis will be incorporated into the conclusions from the qualitative analysis.

What are the reading practices of parents with young children?

While 86% of respondents reported reading with their children, only 7% read every day. Parents are aware of the importance of reading but do not seem to be making the time to read frequently. Overall, only 30% of respondents are reading once a week or more with their children. Reading generally takes place in the afternoon and the burden of reading is shared between multiple members in almost 70% of households. Mothers are more likely to be the primary reader but there was a statistically significant correlation between reading frequency and number of readers. The more people willing to read with the child at home increases the frequency of reading that takes place. Most of the respondents (64%) reported having between one and ten books at home while there were 8% who do not have a single book at home. Although no statistically significant correlation was found between number of books and reading frequency previous research has found contradictory results.

There were three themes that emerged from the qualitative section of the first research question. Conclusions drawn from the categories of; practical aspects of book sharing, book sharing strategies and television and e-book use are as follows.

Practical aspects of book sharing: Five practical aspects of book sharing emerged from the interviews. The first category related to what the parents read with their children. As expected the participants reported mostly reading story books to their children. Classic fairy tales and interactive books, such as pop up and musical books, were often favourites. Two of the participants who reported having no books at home, read the booklets that get sent home by their children's ECD centres. These booklets are either photocopies of books that the centres possess or stories that the teachers have created and then printed. For families with limited

financial resources these booklets allow them to pursue an activity that they otherwise may not be able to. Parents also seem to be reading religious literature with their children, seeing book sharing as an opportunity to build their children's faith and understanding of their religion.

Who the story is chosen by was the second category that emerged. Most of the parents reported allowing their children to choose the story. Giving the child the freedom to choose the story that they wish to read, the parents are encouraging the child to take an interest in the book sharing activity. Some parents stated that both they, and their child chooses a story to read to ensure that the same book is not being repeated every day.

The third category that developed related to where the participants get their books from. Most of the participants reported preferring to buy books, both new and second-hand, rather than visiting the library. Borrowing books from friends and family members was also a prevalent way of accessing children's books and one family was given books by an employer. Very few of the participants reported getting their books from the library. Resources sent home by the ECD centre was another way that participants had access to story books.

The age that the parents began reading with their children was the fourth category that emerged. Most of the participants reported beginning to read with their children when they were between two and three years old. Two of the participants reported reading to their unborn child during pregnancy as they were aware of the benefits that this could bring. One participant reported reading to his oldest child when she started grade 1 as they were required to complete a reading record. This indicates that some parents may be more motivated when there are required to be actively involved.

The final category that emerged was the personal reading habits of the parents. Most of the participants do not read for pleasure. Some reported reading for work and others used to enjoy reading when they were younger but do not anymore. The reading material for those who do read varied between novels, social media, newspapers and religious books.

Book sharing strategies: Four distinct book sharing strategies emerged from this theme. The first is that parents are encouraging their children to read the pictures if their children are not able to read the words yet. This strategy can be used to build confidence and engage children as they learn to predict the story based on the pictures. One of the participants reported being taught this strategy by her child's teacher. This highlights the influential role that teachers play in encouraging book sharing at home.

The second strategy that emerged was that of using book sharing as a teaching opportunity. Asking children to sound out and repeat words and asking them questions about the story were all strategies that parents reported using. Some parents viewed the activity of book sharing primarily as a learning opportunity and used a very structured approach. Other parents reported more subtle teaching methods and encouraging the techniques that are being taught at school.

The third strategy that emerged were the different methods that parents used to engage their children in the book sharing activity. Aside from encouraging their children to look at the pictures parents make use of actions and different voices for different characters to help keep their children's interest in the story. Some parents are more comfortable using these engagement strategies than others and in families where both parents read, different reading styles were reported. Being comfortable engaging with children was something that one participant reported her husband was still learning to do. This highlights the need for encouraging and supporting parents with book sharing.

The final book sharing strategy that emerged was the use of personalised books and relatable stories. Three parents reported various forms of personalisation which helped to peak their children's interest in reading. When children are able to relate to the characters or feel that the book belongs to them, they are more likely to engage with the book sharing activity.

Television and e-book use: It emerged that television use is very much built into the daily lives of the participants' children. More participants had routines in place that involved watching television than book sharing. Children are aware of when their favourite programme is on and these seem to take priority over other activities. Some participants reported reading with their children only after the television shows had been watched, or while the television was on, and noted how their children struggled to focus on the story. The television was also reported to be used as a way to occupy their children when the participants were tired or needed space.

While television was watched by both participants and their children, e-books seem to be used more by the participants for their own personal use. Some parents reported having read e-books to their children and downloading books onto their children's phones or tablets. While most of the participants seemed to prefer print books there were some who felt that e-books and television are more relevant in today's technological world, than print books.

What are the perceptions and beliefs that parents have about reading with young children?

Four themes developed from this research question; namely the difference between reading at home and reading at school, the benefits of early book sharing, the parent's role and a sense of cognitive dissonance.

Reading at home and at school: All the participants felt that it is still important to read with their children at home regardless of whether they are being read with at their ECD centre. The participants reported preparing their children for primary school as one of the strongest motivating factors for reading at home. They recognise that children need support at home in order to succeed at school and that motivates them to read with their children. The bonding opportunities that book sharing provides was cited by some parents as a reason to read with their children at home. Time spent reading will help to foster intimacy and a strong relationship between parent and child.

Some parents felt that book sharing is an important activity to show their children that reading is not something that only happens at school. They want to encourage a love of reading and to instil good habits when it comes to future school work. Essentially, they want to show their children that reading (and schoolwork) does not only happen at school but also at home.

The final reason that parents gave for why reading at home is important was that it helps the parents to stay up to date with their children's scholastic progress. Book sharing allows the parents to see where their children are succeeding and where they may be struggling when it comes to reading. The parents have the opportunity to supplement the reading that is happening at school and give the child the individual attention that their teachers may not be able to give them at school.

Benefits/advantages of early book sharing: All the participants reported believing that reading with their young children is important although not all could motivate why they believe this. The belief that reading with young children will help them to succeed later at school and generally in life was held by most of the parents. The benefits to vocabulary, spelling, word recognition and other important aspects of emerging literacy were noted by some parents. Another benefit that some of the parents believe reading with their young children will yield is to encourage their children's imaginations. Through the use of the pictures and the way that the parents structure the book sharing activity, parents can encourage their children to think/imagine beyond the written story. This can be used as an opportunity to foster imagination and creativity.

Parent's role: While all the parents reported believing that reading at home is important, some admitted to relying on their children's ECD centres to carry the responsibility of reading. The two participants who are teachers themselves, felt very strongly about the role that parents and home life need to play in children's lives. They are in the position of being able to see both sides, the challenges that many parents face but also the challenges that teachers face when parents are uninvolved. This was reiterated by another participant who mentioned that some parents believe that teachers and the school are responsible for all their children's learning.

Cognitive dissonance and alliteracy: A certain amount of cognitive dissonance seems to be present in many of the participants. This is seen in the fact that all the parents stated that reading is important and yet not all of them read with their children. There appears to be an inconsistency in what parents believe and their behaviour. Some of the parents stated that they would rather read with their children than have them watch television and yet they did not have any books and their child had a tablet. The reality of alliteracy, of parents who can read but have no desire to do so, was also apparent. Some parents seem to be aware of the importance of reading with their young children, have the ability to read and financial resources to purchase televisions and tablets, and yet they are not reading. There are of course other factors that need to be considered, but generally speaking there seems to be an inconsistency between what parents believe and their behaviour when it comes to reading.

[What are the challenges or barriers to reading with young children that parents face?](#)

Three themes emerged from the third research question. Conclusions drawn from the time, personal and environmental challenges that the participants described are as follows.

Time challenges: The biggest challenge regarding time seems to be employment. The balance between the need to work and the time left at home is one that many of the participants find challenging. While some of the participants have found employment that suits their time needs, such as running their own business or leaving the private sector, others have not. Jobs that involve shift work are particularly challenging as shifts may change making routine difficult. Long working hours, unpredictable work schedules and time-consuming commutes often on public transport, meant that parents are often too tired to read with their children in the evening. Many ECD centres have recognised the need for extended operating hours to accommodate parents who work or arrive home late, but this has a knock-on effect on the children on the ECD teachers. The lack of control over their own time is something that frustrates many parents who feel that they should be spending more time with their children. Another challenge when

it comes to finding the time to read is that weekends are often taken up with family commitments. Free time on the weekends seems to fill up quickly and book sharing is often not prioritised. Having more than one child, especially with very young children was also a challenge. Finding the time to balance the needs of children at different developmental stages presents very real challenges.

While time was almost an insurmountable challenge for some parents, others felt that time was not an excuse for not reading or being with their children. They felt that parents should ensure that they make the time for their children regardless of their work schedules. There may also be parents who have the time but need to be encouraged to use it to read more with their children. While time spent engaging children in book sharing and other cognitively stimulating activities is an investment and a way to mitigate low quality home learning environment it is not a luxury that many parents in South Africa have.

Personal challenges: Lack of motivation, or laziness was reported by some of the participants as a barrier to reading with their children. The parents are aware that book sharing is beneficial for their children, but they do not have the motivation to act on this awareness. Reading for pleasure seems to be an undervalued activity by the parents and a lack of motivation to read for themselves may be a barrier to reading with their children.

Financial resources are another challenge that parents face. While some parents may have unpredictable work schedules and low salaries, unemployment is often an even greater challenge. The cost of books may not be the biggest barrier to book sharing reported by the participants but as books are expensive, when financial resources are low acquiring children's books is not a priority. Financial stress may be more related to the lack of choice or opportunities in employment, and the implications of the work schedules, that parents face. Financial stress can negatively affect parental mental health and the parent's ability to be present for their child.

Some parents reported their own learning difficulties as a barrier to reading with their children. Due to past experiences or struggles with reading parents may lack the confidence needed to begin reading with their children. While gaining the confidence to take that first step may be a challenge, once they have, the book sharing activity may improve their own reading enjoyment and ability.

Environmental challenges: The environment in which some of the participants live was reported to be challenging. The participants felt that some parents in their area are not involved enough in their children's lives. From a lack of parental supervision allowing young children to be playing on the streets late at night to teachers struggling to get parents to take ownership of the role that they play in their children's education. Stressful home environments also act as a barrier to book sharing. When parents or one parent does not feel safe or comfortable at home and tries to keep their children away from this environment the book sharing opportunities are limited. An unsafe environment, whether at home or in the larger community, impacts on parental mental health and may lessen the learning opportunities in the home.

Challenges and stressors are present in all environments. Some people possess the resilience, resources, skills or experiences to moderate these others may not. One participant was concerned with the complacency seen in many of the parents around them. The lack of motivation to change the negative things in their environment or to be different is a concern for this participant. Children imitate behaviour and it is therefore important for parents to model positive behaviours and attitudes.

[What influences the reading practices of parents with young children?](#)

Four themes emerged out of this research question. Conclusions drawn from the way that parents' education influences their children, their personal childhood reading experiences, the current family structure and in influence of their children's ECD centres and reading campaigns are as follows.

Education: Whether or not they are aware of it, parents are influenced by the education that they received. Some parents reported actively trying to give their children a better education than they had received. Providing their children with experiences and opportunities that they did not have is important to them. Parents reported positive experiences at school and good relationships with teachers as influencing their current reading practices. Education can be influential in fostering a love of reading practices, but a love of reading can alternatively encourage parents to invest in education. Whichever stance is taken the importance and connection of reading and education cannot be denied. Teachers are uniquely placed to encourage both children and their parents of the importance of reading and can have long lasting effects on people's lives. While there is research which states a link between parental education and reading frequency, there was no statistically significant correlation found in this study.

Personal childhood reading experiences: Childhood experiences often lay the foundation for the way we live adult lives. Only four of the participants were read with when they were children. This means that only four had previous experience to draw upon with their children. Mothers seem to read more frequently than fathers. This may be attributed to the perception held by some that reading is a feminine activity. It seems as if many of the participants parents were involved in the struggle during the apartheid and did not have the time or emotional energy to read with their children. Those who grew up in rural areas seemed to have little early experiences with books and reading. Growing up with grandmothers who were too old to read with them was another barrier to early reading experiences that some of the participants faced. All of these childhood experiences influence how they parent their children. Exposure to book sharing in their childhood promoted positive associations with reading which are being passed onto their children.

Family structure: The way that families are structured indirectly influences their reading practices. Single parents are likely to have less time to spend with their children than two parent households. While family structures change, divorce, remarriage, family members living together, having a family that supports reading is likely to influence the book sharing activities that take place in the home.

ECD centre and reading campaign influence: While three participants had heard of reading campaigns (Nali'wali, Read to Works and Wordworks) none of them felt that they had been a factor that influenced their reading practices. They had heard of these organisations but not been part of them. In contrast, the ECD centres and teachers seem to be able to positively influence the reading practices of parents. Parents acknowledge the expertise that teachers have and are on the most part willing to try to meet their expectations. It must be noted that although not all the participants currently read with their children by answering the questionnaire and being interviewed they showed an interest in their children's education that other parents may not have.

[To what extent do parents make use of the local public library?](#)

Two themes emerged within this research question. Conclusions drawn around library access and resources are as follows.

Public library access: Public libraries are intended to provide residents of an area with access to books that appropriate for all ages. Many of the participants felt that there were barriers preventing them from making regular use of the library. The opening hours of the library was

one such barrier. Parents generally have more time to take their children to the library on weekends, but libraries have limited opening hours on Saturday and Sunday. Weekends are often quickly taken up with family and other commitments leaving very little time for library visits. For some, a trip to the library involves the use of public transport. Public transport can be unreliable and unsafe and when financial resources are limited visiting the library may not be an option. Only 69% of participants reported having access to a library indicating that there are challenges with accessing the local libraries. 87% of respondents reported visiting the library once a month or more and a statistically significant correlation between frequency of library visits and reading frequency was found.

Library resources: Concern was expressed that the public libraries do not have enough new children's book or resources. The lack of board books and stories for children young than 5 years old was another concern. The threat of fines for some families may outweigh the benefit of borrowing books from the library. The two main reasons for using the library were the selection of books and making friends with other children who visit the library. While parents seem not to be using the library regularly, it was encouraging to hear that ECD centres are making use of public *libraries and their resources*.

5.2 Recommendations

Although there is evidence that early childhood is the most cost effective and efficient time to ensure that children are reaching their developmental potential, and that the returns on investments during this time is substantial, in South Africa government investment has been low (Engle et al., 2011; Cooper et al., 2014). Concerns have been raised over the immediate cost as well as the logistical challenges that comprehensive investment would be faced with. Cooper et al. (2014) suggest exploring strategies that promote cognitive and pre-literacy skills in early childhood. These strategies should present a less daunting implementation phase as they should be simple and low cost (Cooper et al., 2014). Engle et al. (2011) states that simply through increasing preschool enrolment rates from 25% to 50% the country's benefit-to-cost ratio would range from between 6.4 and 17.6, depending on the quality and other factors.

Buckingham, Beaman and Wheldall (2014) note that although improving the home learning environment will be the most effective way to creating sustained generational change in early literacy, in the short term it has limited promise as a site of intervention. This is precisely why policy is so important. South Africa has fairly strong policy on early childhood development but lacks the resources or political will to ensure that all ECD centres are registered and

adequately equipped with resources and trained staff. There is research that suggests that “high quality research-based pre-literacy programmes in pre-schools which include phonological awareness and shared reading can be an effective means of improving literacy outcomes in school, particularly for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.” (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2014: 439).

When looking at developing programmes to promote early childhood development, the most effective ones have been those that target younger children with low socio-economic status (Engle et al., 2007). Effective programmes provided learning experiences that were both practical and direct to children and their families. Parenting interventions and programmes that are based at ECD centres can improve the cognitive, social and emotional development of children and their school readiness (Engle et al., 2011). While early childhood is the most effective time to intervene, reducing the inequalities faced by many children requires an integrated approach to the multiple risk factors to which they are exposed (Engle et al., 2011).

An example of a programme that has been successful in South Africa is Vally, Murray, Tomlinson and Cooper’s dialogic book sharing programme (2015). The dialogic book sharing programme was shown to benefit children’s language development and ability to focus their attention. Comparing the educational performance of children in South Africa to children in other low middle income countries, South African children are performing particularly poorly (Twist, 2007 as cited in Vally et al., 2015). According to the Department of Basic Education, school grade scores have deteriorated in recent years especially in reading and literacy (Vally et al., 2015). The better prepared children are before they enter the schooling system the more likely they are to succeed. Parents who are responsive and engaged with their children typically exhibit behaviours that support their children’s development (Landry et al., 2011). Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development provides a framework for supporting behaviour. Educating parents on the importance of high levels of warmth and acceptance as well as engaged responses that stretch their children’s cognitive and literacy development are keys ways to improving the quality of the home learning environment (Landry et al., 2011). There are simple, low cost activities such as storytelling, singing and playing with household objects as well as reading, which can be used as learning experiences to promote development (Black et al., 2017).

To this effect parent support and education programmes that target birth to three year olds would make the most impact on the home learning environment while ensuring that quality,

systematic curricula and continued training opportunities for teachers would increase the effectiveness of centre based programmes (Martin et al., 2014). Gould and Ward (2015: 1) state that “supporting parents is critical to national development” and although it may take time to show results the cost benefits, particularly in criminal justice and health make supporting parents a “wise, long term investment”.

Recommendations for encouraging and supporting parents to read with their young children, in relation to the research questions, are provided below. Unless stated otherwise the recommendations come from the researcher.

[What are the reading practices of parents with young children?](#)

While parents seem to be aware of the importance of reading with their young children, daily or even weekly book sharing is not common. Parents who cannot afford books should be encouraged to use the resources that the local library offers. During the book sharing activity it is recommended that parents allow their children to choose the book being read. Allowing children to take ownership of what is being read may encourage their participation and enthusiasm for reading.

It is recommended that parents read with their children before allowing their children to watch television and to limit the amount that is watched close to bed time. Encouraging parents to develop their personal reading habits and an enjoyment in reading habits is also recommended.

[What are the perceptions and beliefs that parents have about reading with young children?](#)

Some parents are aware of some of the benefits that early book sharing has for their children. It is recommended that ECD centres provide parents with information on book sharing, in both print and workshop forms. As parents become better informed, they are able to share this knowledge with other family members and encourage multiple people to read with the child at home.

[What are the challenges or barriers to reading with young children that parents face?](#)

In order to help parents manage the time that they have with their children, it is recommended that businesses/employers need to invest in their employees and take an interest in their personal lives. Providing children’s books perhaps in the form of a company library may encourage their employees to read with their children more frequently. Offering parenting workshops on topics such as reading with their children could significantly impact the quality of the home learning environment for many children. Parenting workshops could also increase

the confidence of some parents so that they feel they are better equipped to lead book sharing activities with their children.

It is also recommended that neighbourhood book clubs are established to provide interested parents with a safe and supportive group to learn and share resources. Book clubs would enable parents to share resources and knowledge and incorporates a social element that may appeal to many parents. These book clubs could be spear headed by the ECD centres.

[What influences the reading practices of parents with young children?](#)

ECD educators have the opportunity to influence, encourage and support parents towards more frequent book sharing. It is recommended that ECD centres be trained on the importance of reading with young children and then impart this knowledge and practical skills with parents. It is also recommended that ECD centres have an accountability programme in place, such as a reading record. This would serve to remind parents that they should be doing as little as 15 minutes of book sharing a day.

It is recommended that parents are encouraged to read for pleasure. If parents enjoy reading and model a behaviour of reading, their children will be encouraged to imitate that behaviour. Parents who enjoy reading will be more likely to have books at home and spend time reading with their children. Both ECD centres and employers could encourage parents to read for themselves.

[To what extent do parents make use of the local library?](#)

It is recommended that more resources are directed to local libraries to increase their range of children's books. Library should have extended opening hours on Saturday and Sunday as this is when parents are most available to take their children.

It is recommended that ECD centres have their own libraries. Parents who find visiting the local library challenging would have the option of using the ECD centre library. There would be no need for extra transport, the children could borrow the books that interest them, and teachers could monitor who is borrowing often or not at all. It would be simpler to provide ECD centres with resources than individual homes. The local libraries can train teachers in basic librarianship, and partner with the ECD centres to establish an efficient book lending system. As parents develop a culture of reading at home they can then be encouraged to visit the local library which has a larger variety of books and other resources. The ECD centre libraries can be used as a stepping stone to encourage parents to visit the local library.

Recommendations from parents: Parents would like libraries to offer a variety of activities, such as puppet shows, to make visits to the library more appealing. They would also like to see more books aimed at children under five years old. Mobile libraries were also recommended as a way to increase access to libraries and books.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

It would be interesting to conduct a similar study with a much larger sample size to gain a broader understanding of the reading practices of parents with young children. A longitudinal study following children whose parents received training on book sharing would be able to distinguish between correlation and causation. Further research on the impact of public libraries, and the barriers to accessing libraries is also recommended.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has provided the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research study. Parents are aware of the importance of reading with young children but are not reading frequently, either for themselves or with their children. Libraries are an important resource that needs further investment and ECD centres are uniquely placed to educate and encourage parents to read more frequently with their children. This research study identifies the ways in which parents are currently reading with their children as well as the barriers to frequent reading and provides recommendations to overcome some of these barriers.

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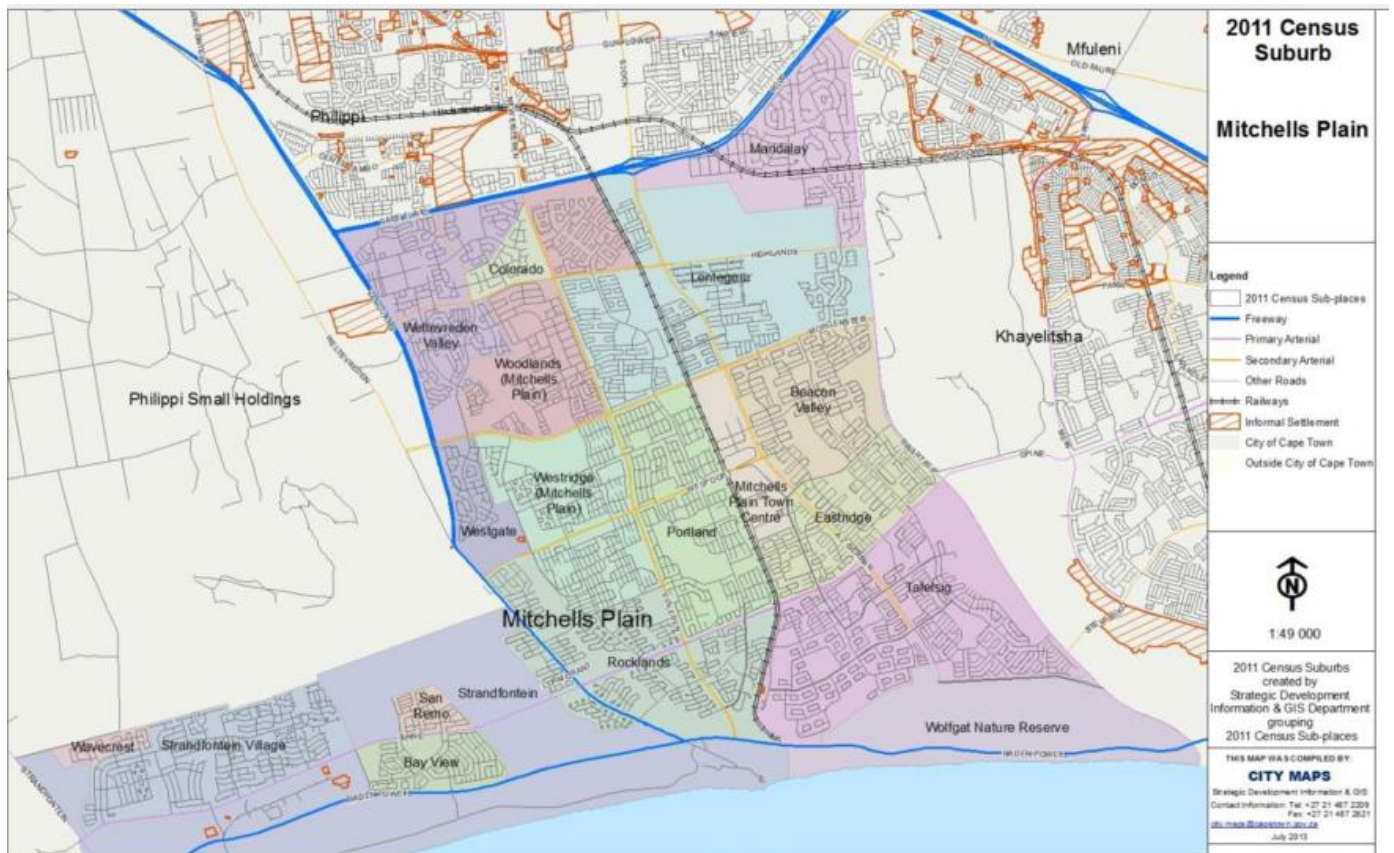
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Appendices

Appendix A : Map of Mitchell's Plain (City of Cape Town, 2013)





Appendix B: Informed consent

As a participant, I agree to the following terms and conditions of the study:

Procedure: I understand that my participation will involve a personal interview which will require approximately one hour of my time.

Risk and benefit: I understand that there is no financial benefit for participating in this study and that there are no associated risks. I understand that my participation will help inform research on early childhood development and reading.

Participant's Rights: My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw my participation at any time, without fear of any negative consequences

Confidentiality: I understand that in order for accurate recording a cell phone will be used to record the interview. The recording will only be listened to by the researcher and a transcriptionist and my identity will remain confidential. Should I withdraw from the study, my interview will be destroyed and no data from it will be used. I understand that my identity will not be identifiable from the completed questionnaire. The results from this study will be used in the researcher's Masters thesis and my identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Contact information: If I have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, I understand that I can contact Katherine Lister (lstkat003@myuct.ac.za) at any time.

I understand my rights as a research participant and I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Cover letter for questionnaire



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Dear parent,

July 2017

I am a Masters student at the University of Cape Town. I am currently studying towards a Masters Degree in Social Development and am working with the Centre for Early Childhood Development. My research is looking at the reading practices of parents with young children with the purpose of identifying the current reading trends.

Your child's ECD centre has been selected to be a part of the study and your participation is requested to complete the attached questionnaire. Participation is voluntary, and all information will be kept confidential. Your answers from the questionnaire will be used in the study but your identity will remain confidential.

Part of the study involves interviews with parents who have completed the questionnaire. If you are willing to be interviewed, for no more than an hour, please leave a contact number in the space provided on the questionnaire.

Please contact me on 071 4929 613 or at lstkat003@myuct.ac.za if you have any questions.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours faithfully,
Katherine Lister



Appendix D: Questionnaire

READING PRACTICES OF PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

1. What is your highest completed level of education?

- Primary School
- High School
- Degree/Diploma
- Postgraduate Degree/Diploma

2. Do you believe it is important to read to young children? (Children younger than 5)

- Yes No

3. If you would like to comment on your response from question 3 please do so below

4. How many children's books do you have in the house?

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-40
- 40+
- None

5. Does your child get read to at home?

- Yes No

6. If yes, who reads to your child? Please tick all that apply

- Mother
- Father
- Sister and/or brother
- Grandparent
- Other family member
- Other – please specify

7. When does your child get read to? Tick all that apply

- In the morning
- In the afternoon
- In the evening

* This questionnaire has 2 pages, please turn over to complete it *

8. How often do you read to your child?

Every day

Once a week

A few times a week

Once a month

A few times a month

Never

9. Do you have access to a local public library?

Yes

No

10. How often do you visit the library with (or for) your child?

Weekly

Once a month

More than once a month

Never

If you are willing to be interviewed for this study, please leave a contact number below

--

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your participation is appreciated.

If you have indicated that you are willing to be interviewed the researcher (Katherine Lister) may contact you to set up a date, time and location that suits you. The interview will not be more than an hour.

Appendix E: Interview schedule

Section A: General questions about the participant, their home environment and their child/children

1. Please tell me a little about your home and living situation, who do you live with, where do you live, how many children do you have etc.
2. Do you work? If so what type of work, hours etc.

Section B:

Objective 1: The reading practices of parents with young children.

1. Do you personally read with your child? (if not does someone else?)
2. Please describe when you read with your child or when your child gets read to at home (before school, after school, before bed etc.)
3. Please describe how you read with your child? (encouraging their participation, pointing to pictures, asking them questions etc.?)
4. What do you read with your child? (children's books, newspapers, etc.)
5. Please describe the process of choosing what gets read with your child. How do you choose, who chooses etc.
6. Where do you get your books from?
7. How does your child respond when they are read with?
8. Please describe your personal reading habits.
9. Were you read with as a child?
10. Does your child have a favourite book?
11. If yes, what is it and what about it do they particularly enjoy?
12. How many books (on average) are read in one sitting?

Objective 2: Perceptions and beliefs about reading to young children.

1. Do you think that it is important/worthwhile to read with young children?
2. In what way, do you think reading is important to young children?
3. Do you know of any benefits of reading with young children?
4. How do you think reading with your child/children benefits you as a parent, your child and the family?
5. How do you feel about e-books or reading from a computer/tablet or cell phone?
6. Is your child being read with at day care/playschool/crèche etc.?

7. Do you think that it is important to read with your child at home even if they are being read with at school?

Objective 3: What influences the reading practices of parents with young children?

1. Have there been any organisations, campaigns etc. that have encouraged you/taught you to read with your children?
2. Do you have access to a local public library?
3. How does having access to a library influence your reading practices with your child?
4. How does the way you were brought up (with regards to reading) influence how you now read with your child?
5. How supportive is the family environment of reading with your child?

Objective 4: Are there any challenges to reading with your young children?

1. Are you satisfied with how often you read with your child?
2. What are the challenges that you have encountered with regard to reading to your child (lack of time, lack of age appropriate books, lack of interest, lack of literacy, lack of books, language of books etc...?)
3. Are there any ways in which you would like to be supported to enable you to read to your child? (book sharing training, help getting a library card, more information on the benefits etc.?)

Section C: Other

1. Is there anything you wish to add that has not already been discussed?
2. Would you be interested in learning more about reading with young children?