

**An exploratory study of the psycho-social factors
contributing to resilience amongst coloured adolescent
females in the Mitchell's Plain suburb of Cape Town.**

Jawaahier Petersen

PTRJAW001

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Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

Supervisor: Ronald Addinall

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the many individuals who have inspired me with their bravery, courage and audacity to hope even when life seemed hopeless.

This work is also in honour of my late father whose life and death taught me the true meaning of resilience.

University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

Young coloured women, particularly within the South African post-Apartheid generation, face a number of psycho-social and economic events and circumstances which are unfavourable, more commonly known as risk factors. These factors include risk of physical harm, the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy, economic and physical deprivation, racial and gender stereotypes, unequal roles and responsibilities between girls and boys, family dysfunction and exposure to or involvement in substance abuse. The community of Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape, with its' historical origin as a 'dumping site' for the coloured people of Cape Town during the implementation of the Group Areas Act, is one that is particularly characterized by these many social challenges. Nevertheless, some children and young people do well in life, especially in academic domains, in spite of inadequate, traumatic or less opportune experiences. They have proved themselves to be resilient. The researcher aimed to understand the factors which act as both hindering and supportive elements in a young women's capacity to overcome these difficulties and excel academically, demonstrating academic resilience. These supportive elements are theoretically described as protective factors.

This research was conducted at five of the top academic achieving schools in Mitchell's Plain using a qualitative approach and an exploratory research design. Sixteen grade twelve, top-achieving coloured female learners were approached for one-on-one interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule to understand their personal experiences of challenges associated with life and being educated in Mitchell's and how, despite this, are they able to achieve academic success. The results of this study demonstrated a number of risk factors which strongly corroborated with research conducted in similar impoverished and statistically violent neighbourhoods. These factors included neighbourhood violence, lack of resources, unemployment and personality based factors. Protective factors were found to strongly lie in supportive relationships, particularly with peers and teachers, personal determination, goal-setting and aspirations and religion, amongst others.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM FORMULATION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the research followed by the research rationale. The topic, research questions and objectives will then be outlined. Concepts underpinning this research will be clarified followed by a detailed outline of the ethical considerations which guided the research process. The chapter also includes a discussion of the reflexivity of the researcher as well an outline of the research report. Some concluding comments will complete the chapter.

1.2 Background to the problem

1.2.1 Risk and opportunity

Every child's development is a unique journey through a chain of events and subjective experiences which differs from others in form and sequence. Each child also has a unique potential for development and growth. However, each child's path is paved with both opportunities and risks which determine how much potential the child will fulfill (Krantz, 2004). Risk threatens to undermine development, sacrificing a child's potential. These factors could include neglect, abuse, exposure to trauma, substance abuse and addiction, poverty and abandonment. Further examples of risk factors may include homelessness, unplanned pregnancy, delinquency, molestation and learning difficulties (Brown, 2004). Conversely, opportunity supports development and therefore promotes the fulfillment of one's potential. Opportune factors which balance out or counter the effects of the risk factors could include family support, peer group belonging, intellectual growth, optimism, flexibility and capacity as well as access to resources (Brown, 2004).

Children are generally exposed to experiences of varying degrees which either involve risk or opportunity. However, children show broad differences in the manner in which they attempt to overcome as well as their ability to cope with threats to their development (Krantz, 2004).

For some time, social work theory and practice has often appeared to focus on the negative effects of adverse circumstances on development and emotional well-being. Nevertheless, some children and young people do well in spite of inadequate, traumatic or less opportune experiences. They have proved themselves to be resilient (Gilligan, 2001). Resilience implies both good internal adaptation despite developmental risks and adequate external adaptation over time, despite exposure to acute stressors or chronic diversity (Siqueira and Diaz, 2004). It is also described as positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health in spite of experiencing hardship (Herrman, Stewart, Diaz-Granados, Berger, Jackson and Yuen, 2011).

Individuals, families and communities worldwide, are increasingly being placed at risk. Youth, including South African youth are not impervious to such risks and one consequence of their increasingly difficult lives is the call for youth enablement and assistance towards resilience (Theron and Theron, 2010). The notion of resilience has great significance in relation to adolescents who experience poverty, intermittent abuse and severe material deprivation. Adolescents in general who are raised in socially impoverished or 'high risk environments' face greater likelihood of reduced emotional, social and intellectual skills acquisitions (Abrams, 2002). Poverty is thus cited as one of the greatest risk factors for successful outcomes in areas such as family life, economics and education (Abrams, 2002).

1.2.2 The coloured demographic

The racial classification known as "coloured" was borne from the era of Apartheid in South Africa (Martin, 2000). The coloureds are described as a mixed racial group descendant from Malaysian slaves, early European settlers and the now largely extinct Hottentots and Bushmen (Morse and Peele, 1973). This population group too has been cast as being on the boundary of racial purity and socially positioned as an in-between category between black and white (Nuttal, 2004) with consequences of ambiguity in the construction of individual self-identification (Hammett, 2009). Coloured individuals with historically ambiguous identities are victims of the evolved negative and condescending stereotype of being a group of lazy, dirty, tooth-less, dishonest, criminal and indecent individuals with a taste for loud music and crass behaviour (Martin, 2000).

1.2.3 The context of Mitchell's Plain

This coloured population group was amongst those hugely affected by the policies of segregation and forced removal between 1948 and 1990 and were forcibly removed from their homes and 'dumped' together in areas such as Hanover Park and Mitchell's Plain on the Cape Flats as part of spatial engineering plans and a prevention effort of black settlement in the Western Cape (Martin, 2000). These Apartheid government-developed living areas for the displaced coloured communities were built on inadequate social services, general service delivery and infrastructure that foretold the development of dysfunctional communities (Hammett, 2009). Social issues which resulted and typified these communities include social dislocation, drug abuse and economic marginalization framed by their histories of exclusion and oppression (Hammett, 2009). Cape Town has a historically high concentration of the coloured population with a statistic of 2.4 million of its 4 million people being coloured (Statistics South Africa 2001).

According to Cole and Narsoo (2007) the suburb of Mitchell's Plain on the Cape Flats in Cape Town has been identified as one of the most over-populated, impoverished, economically inactive and crime-ridden areas in South Africa. Some of their key challenges include gang violence and limited access to fundamental resources. With an estimate of more than 48% of its' population under the age of 25, 74% economically inactive (QSJ Consultants and the University of Stellenbosch, 2006) and staggering reported statistics of 64 cases of murder, 480 cases of sexual crimes, 1014 cases of common robbery, 6260 cases of drug-related crimes, 59 cases of neglect and ill-treatment of children in a given year, the youth of Mitchell's Plain are faced with enormous psycho-social and economic challenges (Erasmus and Mans, 2001).

1.2.4 Gender-specific challenges for modern females

Modern-day adolescent females in particular are forced to cope with a variety of challenges as they negotiate the journey into adulthood. Despite the many significant cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic differences in young women's life experiences, all adolescent females grow up in a society that privileges their male counterparts in the labor market, as well as their traditionally cultural lives (Abrams, 2002). Contemporary society also places a

particular amount of pressure on girls to strive towards contemporary feminine standards and principles, has staggering statistics of violence against girls and women and presents with contradictory messages on sexuality.

The work of Abrams (2002) highlights the influence of culturally varying forms of gender socialization on the origin of contemporary adolescent girl's presenting challenges. The way that female adolescents respond to norms and stereotypes about their gender role may have a significant impact on the shaping of their response to distress and adversity. Despite these many biological, psychological socio-economic and cultural challenges, many young women overcome them and go on to lead successful, well-adjusted lives. An indicator of this includes the distribution of tertiary education enrolments across gender which indicates that women are entering higher education in larger numbers that are consistent with the proportion of women in the country's population (Council on Higher Education, 2010). Across all undergraduate faculties at the University of Pretoria, 53% are female. At the University of the Western Cape 53% of the undergraduate students were female and there was an equal split across gender in undergraduate faculties at the University of the Witwatersrand (Council on Higher Education, 2010), three of the major tertiary education institutions in South Africa. Moreover, some girls are able to withstand these challenges during adolescents and not be involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, have no significant history of alcohol or drug abuse and not become a victim of unplanned teenage pregnancy while excelling academically and making mature, well-informed decisions (Abrams, 2000). This indicates a personal capacity for resilience and the ability to withstand adversity, making them great candidates for tertiary education funding and support.

The central questions are how do some girls withstand adversity without developing negative physical or mental health outcomes and others not? Why do some girls develop adverse outcomes at a lesser degree than others (Herrman, Stewart, Diaz-Granados, Berger, Jackson and Yuen, 2011)? Students from impoverished backgrounds enter university from positions of extreme inequality, most apparent in schooling, but also in terms of financial and other vital resources. A lack of academic preparation, in terms of both social class and the high school curriculum is identified as one of the reasons why students fail to or take longer to master degree requirements and 'survive' tertiary level education despite academic or personal potential (Council on Higher Education, 2010).

1.3 Rationale

South African studies to date, have largely failed to describe the cultural and contextual roots of resilience. Furthermore, there appears to be research gaps in socio-cultural specific areas of research on the manifestation of such resilience (Theron and Theron, 2010). Thus the researcher felt compelled to explore a South African indigenous angle on the development and manifestation of resilience with a particular focus on academic resilience. Understanding this fairly untapped area will enable government departments and organizations to create and endorse projects aimed at supporting the development of (academic) resilience in young women who are disadvantaged in comparison to their male counterparts who have the vehicle of sport which could offer them opportunities for success. It will also attempt to justify support of the assistance of young disadvantaged women in their access to tertiary education that will ultimately improve their possibilities of leading successful, well-balanced lives.

1.4 Topic

An exploratory study of the psycho-social factors contributing to resilience amongst coloured adolescent females in the Mitchell's Plain suburb of Cape Town.

1.5 Main research questions

- 1.5.1 What are the specific risk factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?
- 1.5.2 What are the specific protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?
- 1.5.3 What are the gender-specific risk and protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.
- 1.5.4 What are the unique strategies employed by coloured adolescent females in responding to their risk factors?
- 1.5.5 What are the unique strategies employed in operationalizing their protective factors?

1.6 Research objectives

- 1.6.1 To identify the specific risk factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.
- 1.6.2 To explore the specific protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.
- 1.6.3 To investigate the gender-specific risk and protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.
- 1.6.4 To examine the unique strategies employed by coloured adolescent females in responding to their risk factors.
- 1.6.5 To examine the unique strategies employed in operationalizing their protective factors.

1.7 Clarification of concepts

1.7.1 Adolescent

According to Erikson, an adolescent is a person between the ages of 12 and 18 years old who is also in the psychosocial developmental stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion (Louw and Edwards, 1997). The term adolescence was developed to differentiate between the state of being young and the actual process or condition of growing up and is a term accepted and used to refer to the time period between childhood and adulthood (Erikson, 1968).

1.7.2 Resilience

Resilience is defined as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation, in spite of challenging or threatening circumstances (Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990).

1.7.3 Psycho-social factors

The term 'psycho-social factors', broadly refers to the influence of social factors on an individual's behaviour or mind. It also makes reference to the interrelation between

behavioural and social factors on one's consciousness (Martikainen, Bartley and Lahelma, 2003).

1.7.4 Coloured

"Coloured" refers to a contentious South African racial classification originally used under the political regime of Apartheid. It groups people of mixed lineage, descending from slave heritage brought to the country from east and central Africa, the indigenous Khoisan who lived in the Cape at the time, indigenous Africans and white Europeans. The common languages spoken in this population group are English and Afrikaans. (www.SouthAfrica.info). They are the third largest population group in the country and live primarily in the Western Cape.

1.7.5 Municipal ward (council)

A municipal ward is a smaller unit of a local authority e.g. a suburb, which elects a councillor or councillors to represent the residents of the respective ward on the local authority or municipal council in local governance. The functions of the council who are governed to administer the ward include using their resources in the best interests of the community, to provide services to the community, to be democratic and accountable in the way they govern, to make sure the environment is safe and healthy and encourage communities to be involved in the affairs of local government, amongst others (Ward Committee Resource Book, 2005).

1.7.6 Cape Town

Cape Town is the second-most populated city in the Republic of South Africa and is the provincial capital of the Western Cape. (www.encountersouthafrica.co.za).

1.7.7 Mitchell's Plain

Mitchell's Plain is a suburb located approximately 20 kilometres from the Cape Town city Centre. It was initially developed as a new town in the 1970's under the Apartheid regimes' laws of forced removals to alleviate housing shortages in the coloured communities (Cole and Narsoo, 2007).

1.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues exist in any form of research. The research process is embedded with opportunity for tensions to arise between the aim of generalization for the good of others and the rights of the participants to maintain privacy. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the appropriate application of ethical principles (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001). This research involved interviews with senior high school learners, some of whom were legal minors and the researcher was bound by the University of Cape Town's as well as the Western Cape Education Departments ethics committee's regulations for conducting research. The following ethical considerations, as outlined by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011), were incorporated and applied in this research.

1.8.1 Avoidance of harm

Subjects or respondents could experience emotional harm or discomfort while participating in a qualitative study (De Vos et al, 2011). De Vos et al (2011) claims that the ethical obligation to ensure that respondents are protected against unreasonable limits of such harm- that is not relative to the study- rests on the shoulders of the researcher. To ensure the avoidance of such harm or discomfort, the researcher thoroughly informed the participants beforehand about the potential impact of the interview through a consent letter given to all respondents and guardians to sign, prior to the interview. The researcher also informed the participants of their right to not answer certain questions. The researcher was also sensitive in phrasing her questions that were particularly personal in order to avoid discomfort or emotional harm to the participants. The researcher also offered debriefing sessions after interviews, to work through the experience and its aftermath, though it was declined by all respondents (De Vos et al, 2011).

1.8.2 Informed consent

Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible information regarding the study is adequately explained to the respondents. Emphasis is placed on accurate and complete information so that the respondents fully understand the nature and purpose of the study (De Vos et al, 2011). The researcher informed the respondents adequately of the purpose and goal of the investigation i.e. the interview procedures, advantages as well as the possible

disadvantages such as becoming upset by the matters discussed. The researcher also informed the respondents of their right to withdraw from the study at any point (De Vos et al, 2011).

The researcher obtained permission from the respective principals and governing bodies as well as the Western Cape Department of Education to conduct the research prior to beginning the interview process.

1.8.3 Deception of participants

De Vos et al (2011) described deception of subjects or respondents in a study as the researcher's act of deliberately misrepresenting facts in order to make the respondents believe untruths. De Vos et al (2011) states that information is often withheld or incorrect information is offered in order to ensure the respondents participation in the study. The researcher ensured that the respondents were adequately informed and grasped the necessary information regarding the goal of the study, the real purpose of their participation in the study as well as possible emotionally distressing questions or topics of discussion that may arise (De Vos et al, 2011).

1.8.4 Violation of Privacy

De Vos (2011) describes privacy as that which is not intended for others to observe or analyse. This ethical guideline is based on the respondent's right to self-determination and confidentiality. The researcher respected the respondents' right to decide where, when, to whom and to what extent they were willing to reveal their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. The researcher also requested their permission to use a voice recorder and ensured that the participants' privacy was protected through anonymity and the use of pseudonyms. The researcher also conducted the interviews in a private venue (De Vos et al, 2011).

1.8.5 Actions and competence of researcher

Researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent, adequately skilled and prepared to undertake any research endeavour (De Vos et al, 2011). The researcher had previous experience in conducting research and ensured that she was adequately prepared and skilled to undertake the research from composing the research population, to the sampling procedure, the methodology used and the writing of the report (De Vos et al, 2011). This was achieved through regular communication and feedback from the researcher's supervisor.

1.9 Reflexivity

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the main instrument of analysis of the data. Therefore it is of fundamental importance that the researcher is aware of their feelings towards the subject area of their study in order to be able to separate and prevent their own level of bias, feelings and opinions from influencing the research process (De Vos et al, 2011).

The researcher shared a background of similar socio-economic and personal challenges and identified with the challenges that learners from this background experience during their transition to university (particularly at a historically white institution like UCT). Being from the same racial background and gender as the identified research group, the researcher is quite passionate about the upliftment and development of young women and particularly young women from this particular demographic with these specific set of challenges. Having resided in Mitchell's Plain for a period of time, the researcher had first-hand exposure to the gender-specific challenges of these young women and has great empathy for their plight.

Admittedly, though the researcher and the research group have similarities, there are distinct socio-cultural and possible religious differences which has resulted in stereotypes and set beliefs about the interaction between the young women and their male counterparts and their interaction with each other. The researcher has also developed certain stereotypes about the safety risks in particular areas in Mitchell's Plain and has developed perhaps an unwarranted fear about entering these communities. Conducting this researcher could dispel some of those stereotypes and preconceived notion resulting in a greater understanding and empathy for the struggles of the youth of Mitchell's Plain.

The researcher engaged in regular reflection and supervision with her thesis supervisor to ensure that there is no influence of bias or that the research findings will be influenced by the researcher's personal views and opinions.

1.10 Outline of the Research Report

Chapter one of this report introduced the research and its' problem formulation. Chapter two will outline a discussion of the literature relevant to this area of research. Chapter three

presents the methodology of the research and chapter four presents the findings of this study. The final chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented the problem formulation, rationale, clarification of concepts, ethical considerations supporting the research and the reflexivity of the researcher. It also provided an outline of the research report. The following chapter, the literature review, will discuss relevant literature relating to the study

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a discussion of literature and previous study findings relevant to this study. The chapter will first provide a discussion of some of the major theoretical frameworks underpinning this research. An outline of the general stage and psycho-social challenges of adolescent development will then be presented, followed by a discussion of the gender-specific challenges which contemporary adolescent females face. The researcher will then provide literature and research findings on the social and psychological challenges faced by the residents and youth of Mitchell's Plain including the risk factors which adolescents are exposed to. A separate discussion on the internal and external risk factors both to academic endeavour and successful development, with a particular emphasis on female adolescents specifically will then follow. The concept of resilience and coping will then be explored through the inclusion of risk and protective factors and the notion of academic resilience and its development followed by some concluding remarks.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

There are a number of theories relating to the social and personal factors contributing to the development of resilience or capacity to overcome adversity which underpin this research. A brief discussion on each of these theories and its relevance to this study will follow.

2.2.1 Erikson's psycho-social stage of development

Psychoanalytic psychologist Erik Erikson's theory of psycho-social development (1968), states that an individual's personality develops through facing a series of eight major psycho-social stages throughout one's life. Each stage involves its own specific 'internal crises' or 'conflicts' regarding how we view ourselves in relation to others and the world (Passer, Smith, Holt, Bremner, Sutherland and Vliek, 2009). The period of adolescence marks the

‘identity versus role confusion’ stage which is characterized by the transition from childhood to adulthood and the critical question of ‘Who am I?’ (Sigelman and Rider, 2006).

Adolescence is also a period of significant pressure and uncertainty as a result of a number of new developmental and environmental challenges which includes family conflicts, academic responsibilities, peer pressures and future career choices (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008). While the age boundaries of this developmental stage are not exact, the general assumption across most cultures and societies, is that it spans from ages thirteen to nineteen (Weiten, 2004). The work of Downey, Johnston, Hansen, Birney and Stough (2010) too described adolescence as a period of transition where individuals experience not solely emotional, physical and cognitive changes but also changes in terms of social expectations regarding appropriate behavior patterns and preparation for assuming adult roles. Apart from the clear physical transformations and hormonal fluctuations, other changes and demands too include: achieving new and more mature relationships with peers of both sexes, achieving a masculine or feminine social role, achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults and assurance of economic independence. Moreover, adolescents are tasked with selecting and preparing for an occupation, developing a general sense of self internally and in relation to the world, acquiring an ethical system and set of values as guidance for morality and interaction with others as well as desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour (Downey et al, 2010).

The period of transition from childhood to adolescence can be challenging for many young individuals. Whilst many can navigate this transition without experiencing any major difficulties, some may experience behavioral and psychological difficulty (Downey et al, 2010). Alumran and Punamaki (2008) also suggested that adolescence be viewed as a period of coping; a period of valuable and practical adaptation as the individual is faced with many changes and demands and is required to cope with or adapt to them. Normal adolescents and young adults, like the rest of us, want to feel good about themselves, to feel like an essential part of a community or grouping, to adhere to a meaningful system of values as well as to contribute to the welfare of others (Levine, 2000). Belonging refers to one’s place in relation to a community of human beings and feelings of being accepted for who you are, in spite of your shortcomings. Adolescent sense of identity is beyond just themselves but is additionally represented by a group persona. There are a set of shared goals, experiences, values and emotions which underpin this sense of belonging (Levine, 2000). Groups enable an individual

to feel emotionally connected to others, thereby enhancing them personally. Positive personal effects of group membership include better health, inner security, confidence, stability and satisfaction. There is a feeling of being supported respected, nurtured and validated. A sense of belonging can be accomplished in a traditional family or in a community of like-minded and caring people (Levine, 2000).

Failure to achieve a sense of belonging may lead to feelings of social isolation, loneliness and alienation. Many negative behavioural, psychological, and social outcomes, including mental illness, criminal tendency, and social isolation are explained by lack of sense of belonging (Osterman, 2000). The work of Maslow (1968) indicated that the origin of most emotional breakdowns lies in a need for belonging, being loved, and respected. Belonging and support have been cited to be of particular importance for academic motivation, engagement and performance of adolescents (Becker and Luthar, 2002). If this need is not adequately met in educational environments, students will look for other means of achieving it. Flook, Repetti, and Ullman (2005) emphasized that the lack of sense of belonging as a leading factor in adolescent physical withdrawal from school-based activities which results in academic failure, emotional withdrawal and alienation. The period of adolescence and its many psychological and social challenges is of major theoretical importance to this study as the respondents are all currently in the developmental stage of adolescence and its various crises play a significant role in the manner in which they behave and socialize at this time. This developmental stage was found in research to have a significant influence on the development and demonstration of resilience later in life; hence the influence of adolescence plays a significant role in the investigation of these research questions.

2.2.2 Social disorganization theory

The theory of social disorganization is one that argues that structural factors within a neighbourhood, such as residential mobility and concentrated disadvantage, create a shortage of social capital which prevents the creation of informal social control. Communities that are disadvantaged and have high levels of residential mobility provide a weaker context for the spread of social control derived from the community itself (Warner, Beck and Ohmer, 2010). Other researchers have plainly defined this theory as the inability of a community to determine the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls (Alanezi,

2010). Social control thus symbolically represents the efforts of the neighbourhood to achieve this specific goal as well as society's ability to regulate its residents' conduct and behaviour. So, a rise in crime is expected in the absence of cohesive communities that have social control (Alanezi, 2010).

The issue of social disorganization is viewed and statistically representative of Mitchell's Plain-a community with apparent lowered levels of social organization which makes this theory relevant to the study. Its theoretical relevance lies in the fact that all these respondents, reside, have resided and have been educated in Mitchell's Plain at some point in their lives.

2.2.3 (Systems theory) Ecological perspective

Many social work and sociology theorists have researched the relationship between the environment and the individual in terms of behavior and socialization. Systems theory is a biological one proposing that all organisms are systems, comprising of subsystems and are in-turn, components of larger systems. Therefore, human beings work in response to and in conjunction with the influences of the individuals and systems around them (Payne, 2005). Ecological system's theory is strongly applied and formulated in the 'life model' of social work practice'. System's theorists from this perspective have argued that there are close parallels between ego psychology and the environment, with particular emphasis on the interplay between the environment, actions, identity and self-management (Payne, 2005). The life model views individuals as being in the process of constant adaptations to the influence and varied aspects of their environment. Furthermore, the ecological perspective of system's theory proposes that there is an interchange between both the environment and the individual, thus a reciprocal adaptation exists. Social problems such as discrimination or poverty, reducing the possibility of reciprocal adaptation and thus living systems such as families need to try and maintain a good fit or balance with the environment (Payne, 2005). Additional factors within the environment such as tradition, culture and social practice have too been identified as influential factors. Thus, if anything in the environment shifts or changes, one can expect shifts or changes within the individual (Payne, 2005).

With the many socio-economic issues existing within Mitchell's Plain, there are multiple levels of influence on adolescent development which too, impacts the manifestation of

resilience and coping. Thus, the ecological perspective based on system's theory is relevant and necessary to consider in this study.

2.2.4 Socialization theory

Studies on socialization were initially carried out by theorists concerned with children's internalization of values or their adoption of social standards and behaviors as a means of regulating or guiding their own actions. Socialization has been described as the process by which children acquire the emotional, cognitive and social skills necessary to function in the social community (Grusec and Davidoff, 2010). This includes all the efforts made by society to ensure that their member's learn to behave in a manner deemed appropriate or acceptable. Traditionally, the socialization process included the training of children about gender roles, acceptable behaviour of children versus adults and group, family and occupational behaviour (Weiten, 2004). Gender roles refer to expectations of an individual determined by their sex. Family, community and human development are collectively influential in the interplay between the individual and process of socialization (Weiten, 2004).

Much like the social disorganization and ecological system's theory, the theory of socialization is of significance to this study in that it offers a basis for a greater understanding into the modes of functioning of this specific population and gender group.

2.2.5 Self- efficacy theory

Self-efficacy is broadly defined as an individual's belief about their ability to achieve certain goals and has been found to affect the individual's coping behaviours and capacities as well (Bandura, 1994). This theory focuses on three types of motivation and efficacy-activating processes which include cognitive, motivational and affective processes. It is believed to influence one's motivation in terms of causal attributions, outcome expectations and goals (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy affects causal attributions in that those who have the self-belief that they are ineffective will attribute being unsuccessful to low abilities. Efficacy also influences outcome expectancy because behavior is shaped by beliefs about one's personal capacities and not just the expected outcome of one's behavior.

Self-efficacy theory has been strongly linked to the concept of resilience as a contributing factor to the development thereof. Thus the researcher chose to introduce and explore this theory in the study as a means of understanding ego influences in the development and manifestation of resilience in the respondents.

2.2.6 Resiliency theory

Resilience implies both good internal adaptation despite developmental risks and adequate external adaptation over time, despite exposure to acute stressors or chronic diversity (Rutter, 1999). It is also described as positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health in spite of experiencing hardship (Herrman, Stewart, Diaz-Granados, Berger, Jackson and Yuen, 2011). Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1998) expands on this notion by describing resilience as a representation of the different inherent capacities that all children have. Resilience does not comprise of an individual characteristic or trait. Also, children may show resilient capacities in relation to certain adversities or stressors but not others; similarly, they may exhibit resistance to some psychopathological outcome but not others (Rutter, 1999). The concept of resilience involves a series of processes which bring together quite diverse mechanisms which operate before, during and after the encounter with the said stress or adverse experience (Rutter, 1999). The development of resilience is influenced by the environment and may be used to exploit positive features of the environment for positive outcomes and is not a genetic trait that only a few children possess (Wasonga, 2002).

Various authors and researchers define resilience by way of identifying key characteristics of a resilient individual. The major tenet of resilience, particularly amongst youth, is that it is the capacity for healthy development and academic achievement. Resilient learners are driven to meet their basic human needs for love, respect, power, identity, belonging, challenge, meaning and mastery. When they experience school, home, peer or environments which are loaded in the developmental opportunities and supports for high expectations, caring relations and opportunities for meaningful participation, they develop individual characteristics that define successful learning and resilience (Wasonga, Christman and Kilmer, 2003). According to Kurtz (1991), resilient individuals are those who tend to be somewhat independent and self-reliant. They have nurtured the ability to take care of themselves and have learnt to seek out novel experiences. Werner (1995) describes resilient children as engaging to other people,

have faith that their actions can make a positive difference in their lives and have good communication and problem-solving skills which includes the ability to recruit substitute caregivers. Maddi and Khoshaba (2005) attribute resilience to that which leads us to thrive at work, school and home. Resilient individuals are able to turn disruptive changes and conflicts from possible disasters into opportunities of growth, learn from this process and become more satisfied and successful in the process. Siquera and Diaz (2004) describes a well-developed sense of self, positive orientation to one's surroundings, an internal locus of control, adaptability and high self-esteem as key personality traits of the resilient individual. Wasonga (2002) expands on this list by adding co-operation and communication skills, self-efficacy, goals and aspirations to the list of personality protective factors which contribute to the development of resilience. Herrman et al (2011) describes above-average academic performance, adequate interpersonal relationship skills and capacities, social skills and competence, limited or managed symptoms of depression and/or anxiety and no significant history or involvement in activities of delinquency or that which includes substance abuse as indicators of a resilient individual.

Gilligan (2001) highlights three dimensions of resilience. The first one is the ability to overcome the odds. That is, being a well-rounded and well-adjusted human being despite exposure to high risk. The second is to have sustaining competence under pressure by means of adapting to high risk and the last one is to recover from trauma i.e. to successfully adjust to negative life events. Resilient individuals often assume the role of helper and care for younger siblings or manage the household in the absence of parental input. In spite of being in split families, they are likely to perceive their experiences constructively and frame their lives meaningfully (Kurtz, 1991).

How an individual develops resilience or is able to become a resilient individual has been the question of study for many decades. A number of factors in the lives of individuals have been identified as either making them more susceptible to undesirable outcomes or effects of adverse life events and situations and factors which make which them more able to withstand it, thus developing resilience. Studies, both psychological and sociological, have shown that a broad variety of peer group, school, family and community factors influences the development of an individuals' resilience in the face of adverse life events (Abbott-Chapman, Denholm and Wyld, 2008). As previously stated, these factors are grouped into two large

categories: Risk and Protective Factors. It is widely understood amongst resilience theorists that resilience outcomes depends on the interaction between risk and protective factors (Atwool, 2006). Risks can be cumulative in nature (Howard and Johnston, 2000). Research shows that the more cumulative risk an individual faces, the more likely adverse outcomes become (Atwool, 2006). Protective Factors have the same cumulative effects in individuals' lives in that the more protective factors present in an individual's life, the more likely they are to display resilience (Howard and Johnston, 2000).

2.2.6.2 Risk Factors and Resilience

It is not possible to investigate a child's resistance to adversity and stress without first investigating whether or not they have indeed suffered through experiences which carry an obviously higher risk for the development of psychopathology or maladaptive behavior (Rutter, 1999). Risk factors can be defined as those characteristics or events that make a negative outcome more likely (Carbonell, Reinherz, Giacona, Stashwick, Paradis and Beardslee, 2002). There are a number of factors which need to be taken into consideration when assessing risk in children and young people. These factors are known to predict the kind of harmful behaviour which significantly hinders an individual's capacity to overcome life challenges and difficulties. Risk factors associated with the development of aggression, depression and anxiety which has knock-on effects on ones' academic performance and social competence include: being the victim of any kind of abuse, exposure to violence in the home, exposure to drugs and alcohol in the womb and genetic factors (Fox, 2011). In adolescence, key personal and social risk factors include anti-social behaviour, poverty, high impulsivity, poor social skills, peer isolation and poor assertiveness (Fox, 2011).

The researcher will now discuss theoretical findings and literature relevant to the demographics, context and nature of this research.

2.3 Adolescent Female Development

The work of Abrams (2002) highlights the influence of culturally varying forms of gender socialization on the origin of contemporary adolescent girl's presenting challenges. The way that female adolescents respond to norms and stereotypes about their gender role may have a

significant impact on the shaping of their response to distress and adversity. Despite these many biological, psychological socio-economic and cultural challenges, many young women overcome them and go on to lead successful, well-adjusted lives. Some girls are able to withstand these challenges during adolescents and not be involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, have no significant history of alcohol or drug abuse and not become a victim of unplanned teenage pregnancy while excelling academically and making mature, well-informed decisions (Abrams, 2000). Since this study focuses on the development of resilience in young women, one needs to take into account the developmental dynamics associated with females.

The researcher will now explore the setting of Mitchell's Plain where all the respondents have both lived and been educated. It also presents as the context for the identified and discussed risk and protective factors.

2.4 Mitchells' Plain

2.4.1 Social challenges and its' effect on youth

The social and economic environment in which children and adolescents develop appears to be two of the most important predictors in their general well-being. A considerable amount of empirical evidence indicates that children and adolescents living in poverty and violence suffer adverse life events and persistent strains that are damaging to their positive development (Gizir and Aydin, 2009).

According to Cole and Narsoo (2007) the suburb of Mitchell's Plain on the Cape Flats in Cape Town has been identified as one of the most over-populated, impoverished, economically inactive and crime-ridden areas in South Africa. Some of their key challenges include gang violence and limited access to fundamental resources.

Mitchell's Plain was established as an apartheid chamber town in the mid-1970's to accommodate residents from District Six and other parts of the Cape Peninsula (Cole and Narsoo, 2007). Over the past forty years, it has developed into a large urban area with formal housing as well as an informal housing component and backyard residents throughout (Cole and Narsoo, 2007). The many challenges of Mitchell's Plain include high levels of

crime, unemployment, gang activity and a lack of social cohesion amongst the residents of Mitchell's Plain. This has been argued to be directly linked to the lack of acceptance on the part of some residents of Mitchell's Plain as a desired urban living space as a result of its legacy links to apartheid as a spatial development (Cole and Narsoo, 2007). All of these challenges have often lasting effects on the youth residing in areas such as these.

2.4.2 Neighbourhood Violence and its' effect on youth

Community and school violence continue to be a major public health issue, particularly amongst children and adolescence (Milam, Furr-Holden and Leaf, 2010). South Africa's strong history of violent social relations during the apartheid era has left a legacy of violence, with young people exposed to various forms of violence in their communities and schools (Parkes, 2007). Neighbourhood violence, a defining characteristic of the community of Mitchell's Plain, is an unrelenting source of stress, danger and other unfavorable outcomes for urban youth (Rasmussen et al, 2004). In Cape Town, studies have shown that young people are most at risk within a neighbourhood setting, with over 70 percent of children reporting cases of extreme violence within their neighbourhoods whether as witnesses or victims. Further reports also indicate high levels of anxiety, fear or anticipation of crime within their neighbourhoods (Parkes, 2007).

To a large degree, the fear of crime stems from gang violence which are highly prevalent in many inner-city neighbourhoods. Manifestations of gang activity such as drug use, vandalism, drive-by shootings and intimidation can have a major influence on the places people use for recreation, times when they socialise and on their choice of recreation companions. Adolescence is a period of a lot of social interaction and engagement and this can be hugely compromised by the influence of gang activity (Stodolska, Acevedo and Shinew, 2009). Generally, adolescence remains the age of highest risk for violent crime victimization and surveys of urban youth indicate that by early adolescence, many have had experiences with stabbings, shootings and/or other acts of violence (Bell and Jenkins, 1993) as cited in (Rasmussen et al, 2004). Both the exposure to violent acts as well as direct victimization and phenomena associated with aggravated violence such as drug abuse have been linked to a number of social and psychological problems amongst youth such as posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, pronounced grief, aggressive and

delinquent behaviour, a decrease in academic results and social withdrawal (Rasmussen et al, 2004). Just as alarming as the statistics of young people witnessing violence is that of young individuals who will continue the cycle of violence in their communities by perpetrating violence themselves (Brookmeyer, Henrich and Schwab-Stone, 2005). Bandura (1996) proposed that such exposure to violence can teach new aggressive behaviours to children in addition to reducing inhibition to commit violent acts therefore perpetuating the neighbourhood cycle of violence.

Observational assessments conducted by Milam et al (2010) reported that neighbourhood violence was also associated with decreased academic achievement as it confirmed a relationship between fear, violence and academic performance. The suspected cause is that when students are fearful and in a state of constant worry about their safety, academic focus is compromised. Social disorganization theory suggests that low economic status, residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity and family disruption in a given community leads to social disorganization which leads to problems in behaviours and maladjustment of the children and adolescents in that community (Tiet, et al, 2010).

2.4.3 Neighbourhood poverty and its effect on youth

Individuals, families and communities worldwide, are increasingly being placed at risk. Adolescents in general who are raised in socially impoverished or 'high risk environments' face greater likelihood of reduced emotional, social and intellectual skills acquisitions (Abrams, 2002). Poverty is thus cited as one of the greatest risk factors for successful outcomes in areas such as family life, economics and education (Abrams, 2002). Neighbourhood poverty is defined as adversity due to a simultaneous absence of social, family and economic resources within a neighbourhood (Murry, Berkel, Gaylord-Harden, Copeland-Liner and Nation, 2011). Characteristic features of such neighbourhoods include unemployment, a proportion of low-income neighbours, dropping out of school and residential instability. These effects are viewed to often be influential beyond that of family (Ainsworth, 2002). Furthermore, these high-poverty neighbourhoods lack opportunities which lead to deviant norms and values, limited access to neighbours who can act as positive role models and provide tangible resources as well as a weakening of social institutions (Murry et al, 2011). Earlier studies also concluded that living in a neighbourhood embedded

with major concentrated poverty and its social knock-on effects also results in an absence of positive role models, weakened social institutions and social isolation from job networks (Harding, 2003).

Murry et al (2011) concurs with the view that neighbourhood poverty can be identified for many negative social and psychological outcomes amongst their youth and expands on the notion by suggesting that neighbourhood poverty creates an ecological context affecting an individual's development, growth and adjustment. The previously mentioned biological, social and emotional challenges characteristic of the developmental stage of adolescence can be exacerbated when youth are reared in situations in which their caregivers are unable to adequately provide the resources, experiences and services which are critical for them to thrive and grow into productive and healthy adults (Murry et al, 2011). Furthermore, poverty-stricken neighbourhoods brimming with physical and social disorder such as gang violence and drug trafficking, high crime rates and poor role models present challenging environments for young people to avoid poor developmental outcomes and develop positive social networks. Youth residing in poverty are more likely to be socialized by older peers for risk-engagement activity which results in legal, physical, psychological and socially negative outcomes (Murry et al, 2011). Moreover, educational institutions in poor areas often lack the resources to provide quality education as is evident in the overall low student achievement, high school dropout rates and increased school failure (Murry et al, 2011). Expectations about the benefits of school and time spent on homework and academic preparation are also significantly lower (Ainsworth, 2002).

Stressors, limited opportunity and living space as well as social stigma present in economically disadvantaged and/or dangerous neighbourhoods may hinder the psycho-social developmental milestone of identity exploration and development during adolescence (Murry et al, 2011). While the evidence for this phenomenon is inconclusive, the researcher suggests that it may be due to feelings of inadequacy and the negative effects of various forms of deprivation on the developing sense of self. Indirectly, available studies also revealed that poor neighbourhood conditions have an impact on the cases of depression amongst youth by increasing their levels of vulnerability to negative events and disrupting social ties (Cutrona, Wallace and Wesner, 2006). While neighbourhood poverty is viewed as a distal condition, it does predispose adolescents to depressive symptoms as it exposes youth to a more proximal degree of stressors (Murry et al, 2011).

Parental role and input has also been noted to be negatively affected by neighbourhood and personal poverty. As opposed to previous views of the parental marital status per se as a causal link to poor academic achievement and general youth development, contemporary anthropology and psychology researchers have noted the link between family structure and youth outcomes. The lack of additional income or time that single parents have available to spend with their children has been viewed as a more clear causal link (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert and Stephens, 2001). Specifically, parental involvement predicted higher rates of homework completion and mathematics and reading scores (Ainsworth, 2002). Furthermore, parenting practices are also key mediators in the link between neighbourhood poverty and academic achievement. Parents with limited time and resources are also unable to practice adequate supervision of their children in comparison to those who can (Fauth et al, 2007) as cited in (Murry et al, 2011).

2.4.4 Neighbourhood educational challenges and its effect on youth

Another major challenge for the community of Mitchell's Plain is the shortage of classrooms and having only nine official government subsidized high schools to cater for a population of 283, 285 residents of which 48% is under the age of 25 (Cole and Narsoo, 2007) and therefore a significant number of people of school-going age. The access to, quality of and retention of students in high schools with the ultimate goal of having them enter tertiary educational institutions appears to be a major challenge for students across the Cape Flats. Moreover, girl students appear to have greater difficulty in their general schooling and social experiences despite displaying significant academic potential (Tshabangu, 2011.).

2.5 Adolescent female gender-specific socialization challenges

Researchers of anthropology, sociology and psychology have conducted various studies which highlight the many factors and influences contributing to the gender-specific challenges faced by female adolescents. These challenges can be categorized as psychological, social, cultural and economic (Kuckreja, 1992). According to some scholars, two different kinds of children are raised and socialized: boys and girls. Clear differences can be identified in the raising and socialization processes across cultures, races and societies. Girlhood is also a preparation period and informal training ground for motherhood, but

boyhood is not necessarily an introduction to fatherhood (Kuckreja, 1992). Parental rearing patterns are developed consciously or unconsciously as a result of culture or social influence, in manners that ensure that boys remain children while girls become little women.

The notion of girl child rearing is one of a dichotomy: On the one hand, girls go to school to prepare for life in a technologically and socially complex society. On the other, there is a level of unspoken understanding that the experience of schooling is a period of pseudo-training. It is not meant to interfere with the much more important training to be "feminine", a wife and mother, which is embedded in the girl's unconscious development (Bussey and Bandura, 1999). Gender-specific acculturation leads also to different gender characteristics. The process of male socialization tends to be angled towards achievement and self-reliance while that of girls is geared towards nurturance and responsibility (Bussey and Bandura, 1999). Female maturation occurs in a cultural context that directs females into an exclusive set of emotional and social roles, yet degrades the characteristics connected to those roles due to its viewed limited economic value (Abrams, 2002). On account of their socialization into femininity during the periods of childhood and adolescence, young women experience immense inner turmoil (Abrams, 2002).

2.5.1 Adolescent female gender-specific education challenges

2.5.1.2 Access to and quality of education

Education is a key indicator and determinant of status. Despite the many efforts of the last few decades, girls continue to enjoy a less favourable educational status than boys across many countries and societies (Bussey and Bandura, 1999). Although more girls are educated today than ever before, they continue to be less educated than boys. According to UNESCO statistics, approximately 60 million girls across the globe have no access to primary school education against the 40 million boys who do not. In developing nations, fewer girls enrol in school and far more drop out than boys. Between 1970 and 1986, overall enrolment ratios at all primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in developing countries continued to show significant inequalities in favour of male children (Bussey and Bandura, 1999).

The differences in gender education are visible in South Africa in the overall different scholastic experiences of boys and girls in schools (Tshabangu, 2011). According to a 2003 survey conducted by the Department of Education in the Grade Twelve Senior Certificate

Examinations and Assessments, it appeared that girls were performing better at fundamental competency tests. Furthermore, more girls participated in higher education (Tshabangu, 2011). Even though there has been much improvement in the access and quality of education young people receive in South Africa, in rural and developing areas, cultural and social patterns combined with the comparatively poor quality of schooling, place girls as well as their development in a disadvantaged position (Tshabangu, 2011). A major challenge for these young women is the intolerable level of harassment and violence against girls within and outside of school. Girls and their education are also disproportionately hindered by economic and cultural issues such as domestic duties, school fees and transport costs. (Tshabangu, 2011).

On average, minority or disadvantaged adolescent females differ greatly in terms of educational opportunities and attainment (Riegle-Crumb, 2010). A number of reasons have been identified for increasing drop-out statistics amongst girls in socio-economically challenged areas in South Africa. These include poverty, HIV-AIDS and parent's inability to pay school fees and other educational costs (Tshabangu, 2011). It has also been established that a notable number of girls in these areas in their Matric year, leave school because of marriage or family commitments such as needing to head households in the absence of a parent or sometimes both parents (Tshabangu, 2011). Teenage pregnancy is also a major factor examined when looking at the drop-out rates of girls in high school. Many girls in South Africa, who are neither economically active nor emotional ready to cope with parental roles and responsibilities, give birth during their teenage years (Tshabangu, 2011).

2.5.1.3 Teenage pregnancy, risk and poverty

For the past few decades much scholarly attention has been given to the social challenge and consequence of teenage pregnancy or early childbearing. The notion of 'teenage pregnancy' commonly refers to pregnancy by young girls under the age of nineteen and usually ascribed to immature, irresponsible and sexually promiscuous teenagers (Harden, Brunton, Fletcher and Oakley, 2009). Women who become mothers as teenagers are at greater risk of economic and social disadvantage throughout their lives in comparison to those who have babies in their twenties (Maliki, 2012). This is due to them being less likely to have completed their education, be employed, earn high wages or be happily married. They are also more like to

have larger families as well as receiving welfare (Maliki, 2012). Unplanned pregnancy equals unanticipated family responsibilities which can prevent the young caregivers from entering the work force and may tap into resources that might otherwise go into other household members, children particularly (Maliki, 2012). Additionally, the amount of support the young mother receives both emotionally and financially from the biological father of the baby has been found to be generally unstable and inconsistent, starting out as the opposite in the early stages of the child's life but dwindles with time (Harden et al, 2009).

A number of factors have been cited as possibly contributing to the growing statistic of teenage pregnancy both locally and internationally. The bulk of contemporary social research identifies these factors by comparing the demographic information of the teenagers who have early pregnancies to those who delay it until later in their lives (Maliki, 2012). Among the most significant of these differences are social backgrounds, family influences, schooling and personal cognitive abilities and motivation (Stiffman and Feldman, 1990). For example, teenage mothers were found to have more likely grown up in poverty, have a background of instability in their family of origin and to have encountered social and academic issues at school (Maliki, 2012). Other predisposing factors have been listed to include despair for future plans or opportunities, school failure or academic challenges or a desire to solidify a relationship with a male partner. Locally, the resistance to the usage of contraceptive measures, which are deeply embedded in traditional and cultural practice, is identified as another major contributing factor to the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy (Tshabangu, 2011). The usage of contraception by teenagers in South Africa is often limited by cultural and religious attitudes towards sexual activity before marriage or within stable adult relationships. Social changes in terms of sexual practice and more open discussions on what was previously viewed as a taboo subject, have led to an increase in marriage age in South Africa, accompanied by rising premarital sexual activity and pregnancy (Tshabangu, 2011). Moreover, typified adolescent recklessness, short-term thinking and impulsivity results in unsuccessful and irregular attempts at contraception and may drift into pregnancy as an unintended result of having sex (Maliki, 2012).

Another major factor which is commonly associated with pregnancy and the possibility that it might in fact be planned or intended is poverty. Poverty is a predictor of early and unwed pregnancy amongst minority population groups with great accuracy amongst all age groups (Males, 1992). Child bearing and rearing often provides a tangible psychological and

economic asset to a young woman whose future prospects could look very bleak (Harden et al, 2009). In research conducted by Geronimus (1987) it was found that childbearing is an adaptive response to extreme levels of poverty and restricted life options which results in early childbearing being viewed as a benefit to these young mothers. Early childbearing is thus a 'culturally rational' response to extreme disadvantage. The link between poverty and teenage pregnancy is heightened when correlated to the increasingly publicized 'public costs' thereof (Males, 1992). Unemployed, minor females have a higher probability of receiving state assistance at some time in their lives. Thus in a growing number of communities, there appears to be a causal link between prior poverty, pregnancy and access to social welfare assistance (Males, 1992).

2.5.1.4 Effects of absent fathers and single mothers

The widespread absence of fathers, both biological and substitute within the home and family system has been called a 'social disaster' (Lowry, 2005) and perhaps one of the most significant psycho-socio-economic trends of our time (Horn and Bush, 2003). Public opinion also seems to reflect this concern and the claim then amounts that the well-being of children living with their fathers is much greater than those without fathers. Though this comparison is not well researched and documented both locally and internationally, studies have explored the general effects of absent fathers on the development of children, with a particular emphasis on its effects on girls. The general findings of this research is that children living without fathers are disadvantaged in a number of areas which include educational experiences, physical and emotional health as well as academic performance (DeBell, 2008). One of the other main areas where children are disadvantaged when raised by single mothers is that they are too worse-off financially than children raised by both parents (DeBell, 2008). Income is strongly linked to child well-being. In contemporary society, where more often than not, both mother and father are employed, children living with two parents benefit from a higher average household income, access to resources and lower poverty rates than children in other family arrangements (Ricciuti, 2004). Access to vital resources such as time, money, education and skills are relatively lower amongst single-mother families and children who have both parents (Asmussen and Larson, 1990) as cited in (DeBell, 2008).

Researchers agree that females who lack their father figures are more prone to experiencing poor school performance and diminished cognitive development (Grimm-Wassil, 1994), have weaker mathematical than verbal skills and usually find adjustment to others quite difficult (Adams, Milner and Schrepf, 1984). Absent fathers are generally defined as those who do not interact with their children on a regular basis and as a result, do not play a significant role in the child's development. Death, abandonment and divorce are all forms of absence but have different effects on female development (Krohn and Bogan, 2001). The age at which a daughter loses her father is also significant in that it influences her view on the world, males as well her academic development (Adams, Milner and Schrepf, 1984). How and why the father is absent impacts the emotional and physical outcome of the child (Grimm-Wassil, 1994). Girls who have little to no contact with their fathers, particularly during adolescence have immense difficulty in forming lasting relationships with men. These girls shy away from men altogether, become sexually aggressive or become desperate for male attention (Griffin, 1998). Girls with fathers who are actively involved in their upbringing learn how to interact with the opposite sex through the model of their own father-daughter relationships. The knowledge that they have a concerned male to converse with and at least one male who is all-accepting of them facilitates the development of appropriate and stable capacities to engage with men (Griffin, 1998). Adolescent girls who are raised in fatherless homes are more likely to engage in promiscuous sexual activity, co-habitat, have unplanned pregnancies or have abortions (Krohn and Bogan, 2001). Girls with absent fathers grow up without the daily, regular or consistent experience of caring, attentive and loving interaction with a man. Without this constant sense of feeling loved and valued, young girls do not thrive, but are stunted in their emotional development.

Girls who lose their fathers early in their lives, tend to display a reduced differentiation and awareness of their broader social environments in addition to relationships with individuals outside of their immediate family (Krohn and Bogan, 2001). Losing the presence of a father figure early may result in a preoccupation with family life and other close relationships and internal organization as opposed to larger situations such as classroom environments (Krohn and Bogan, 2001). A gender difference theoretical perspective holds that both mothers and fathers make unique contributions to child development because of their different parental gender roles (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur, 1998). By assuming that parents follow the traditional gender roles, researchers may assume that women are more effective nurturers while the men are more effective disciplinarians (Popenoe, 1996) and that men foster the

development of children's cognitive skills and women interpersonal skills (Carlsmith, 1964). When one parent is absent, the other parent may not make the same contributions to child development in contrast with both parents. As a result, children living without fathers experience less of the valuable and unique behaviours which are modeled by father which may reduce children's short and long-term well-being (DeBell, 2008).

Girls who lose their fathers as a result of death have shown to have a more positive notion of a father while appearing to be most sad about his disappearance. Girls who have lost their fathers before the age of five are very unforthcoming around adult males, rarely smile and avoid physical contact with them (Grimm-Wassil, 1994). Moreover, daughters of widowed mothers are less likely to possess major feelings of anger or seek great amounts of attention from adults or males. With regards to sexuality, these girls have been found to be more scared of men as opposed to daughters of divorced parents who tend to be 'clumsily erotic' (Adams, Milner and Schrepf, 1984).

Girls who have lost their fathers or consistent contact and input from them due to divorce or abandonment appear to be most developmentally and socially affected in comparison to the girls who have lost their fathers to death (Grimm-Wassil, 1994). Research has shown these young women to be more in need or making more active efforts to seek attention from males (Adams, Milner and Schrepf, 1984).

Feelings of security and stability in the world, which are key elements in the development of female psyches, are severely diminished by the absence, loss or abandonment of a father. Women without father figures lack a sense of protection and can become dejected as a result. This phenomenon is commonly exemplified in low self-esteem, academic failure and teenage pregnancy (Griffin, 1998). Absence of a father figure negatively affects the development of stability in a female in that it hinders an ability to make sound decisions, which sparks negative reactions as opposed to positive ones (Griffin, 1998). Daughters achieve secure and stable foundations in the knowledge of what their fathers beliefs are, both in them and a general life viewpoint. This base of confidence allows females to be successful in their undertakings and achieve what they attempt (Griffin, 1998).

2.6 Coping

As a result of the many stressors young people and particularly the youth of Mitchell's Plain face, the need to develop ways in which to manage and/or overcome these stressful challenges becomes necessary. Coping refers to a number of behavioural and cognitive approaches that individuals use in order to manage stress (Downey et al, 2010) and are activated when a person exceeds their resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The function of coping is to supplement, maintain and/or alter control over one's internal or external stressors and to regulate one's own cognitive orientations, behaviors and emotions in times of stress (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008).

During the 1970's and 1980's particularly, numerous efforts were made to understand the nature of effective coping mechanisms which individuals used to manage their stress and deal with the adversity they were exposed to (Rutter, 1999). Research findings showed that there were a number of employed coping strategies and that generally, individuals who did cope well, did so because they had a range of possible ways to deal with challenges rather than one particularly effective coping strategy. Coping strategies can occur on an emotional, behavioral, cognitive or social level. Behavioural coping mechanisms include information seeking and problem solving, amongst others. Emotional coping activity could include denial and avoidance or maintaining an optimistic outlook (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008). Coping strategies are further conceptualized as either situational states or dispositional traits. The latter refers to a person's habitual manner of dealing with stress and challenges which become part of their general persona (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008). The former makes reference to coping strategies which vary or change depending on the specific situation (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985).

2.7 Conceptualizing resilience

Closely linked and often viewed as an overlying theoretical concept or basis to the notion and capacity to develop and employ coping mechanisms is the concept of resilience (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008).

2.7.2 Individual risk factors

2.7.1.1 Previous experience and adolescent temperament

Research evidence has shown that part of the variation in a child's response to adversity and psycho-social stress is the element of their own vulnerability to their risk factor exposure particularly in terms of genetically influenced sensitivity (Rutter, 1999). Variations in the level of sensitivity to environmental risks could also derive from a child's previous experiences. It seems that the experience of psycho-social hardship sensitizes children and makes them more vulnerable to the risks related to the experience of acute stressors (Rutter, 1999). Furthermore, there is an indication that a difficult temperament also makes children more likely to display disruptive behavior when facing family conflict in contrast to children with an easy temperament. Therefore the suggestion is that differences in temperament may play a role in a child's level of sensitivity to psycho-social risk (Rutter, 1999).

2.7.1.2 Diminished self-efficacy

Bandura (1994) 's self-efficacy theory has heavily influenced the concept of self-efficacy and its links to disadvantaged youth and unfavourable social behaviours and choices amongst psychology and social research (Young, Martin, Young and Ting, 2001). Bandura (1994) states that goal setting is influenced by ones' motivation which determines the goals individuals set for themselves, how much effort they put in to achieve those goals, their level of perseverance despite barriers and their resilience to failure. Affective processes, described as that which regulates emotional states such as reactions to stress, anxiety and depression are also influenced by efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Young people who are faced with economic psycho-social disadvantage such as poverty and family instability have significantly lowered levels of self-efficacy. Their dismaying life circumstances disallows them from viewing themselves as having positive life options, they do not plan for successful futures or avoid barriers which could hinder future success (Young et al, 2001). Thus, being drawn into anti-social activity, teenage pregnancy or a lack of life goals could be viewed as some of the common negative outcomes of a lack of self-efficacy (Young et al, 2001).

2.7.1.3 Racial status

When discussing risk and protective factors, the risks of being an ethnic minority has rarely been addressed within South Africa, with the history of the ethnic majority being ruled by the minority. The work of Gibbs and Huang (2001) emphasizes that when ethnic identity is linked to membership in a minority race, children are faced with a dual challenge. While the case of ethnic minority may not necessarily apply to the dynamics of South African society with its majority classes of race being the more disadvantaged, the researcher feels that the dynamics of this research allows one to draw certain parallels. Gibbs and Huang (2001) also notes that an ethnic minority status has often also been connected to a restricted scope of opportunities and children growing up in these families may be exposed to experiences and situations very different to the more stable or majority of the community such as the higher likelihood of neighbourhood violence, poverty, lack of resources and adversity previously discussed (as cited in Wilmshurst, 2011).

2.7.1.4 Gender

Resilience research has indicated that the role of gender in an individual's level of vulnerability to stressors, employed coping strategies and capacity for resilience is too of significance (Downey et al, 2010). In terms of defining problem behaviours, two broad categories have been identified: internalized and externalized behaviours (Downey et al, 2010). Internalizing disorders and behaviours are typified by a basic disturbance in emotion and mood and include anxiety, depression, withdrawn behavior and somatic complaints. Contrastingly, externalizing behaviours are typified mainly by a disturbance in the regulation of behavior as well as acting out behaviours such as aggression, delinquency and rule-breaking (Hughes and Gullone, 2008). In terms of gender distribution, it is broadly accepted that male individuals display more externalizing problem behaviours and disorders whereas female individuals appear to exhibit more internalizing behavior (Downey et al, 2010). Phillips (1998) credits the gender-related social pressures as a possible cause of women exhibiting internalized symptoms such as eating disorders, depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation at significantly higher rates than young men.

2.7.2 Protective factors and resilience

Several researchers have focused on the role of protective factors in shielding some children living in high-risk environments and communities. Contemporary psychological and social work research focus has shifted from an emphasis on risks to identifying resources within the environment and adaptive strengths in children who do not show early indications of deviance (Wilmshurst, 2011). Rutter (1990) suggested that researchers go beyond listing factors of risk to looking at the fundamental mechanisms or processes that are influential in the developing of the buffering effect. These processes were defined as those which reduce the impact of risk, increase factors which promote self-esteem, reduce negative chain reactions and opens opportunities (Wilmshurst, 2011).

2.7.2.1 Individual Influences

Protective factors are generally classified into two sub-groups: 1) personal factors, some with a strong biological element, temperament and physical health status and others closely linked to experiences with the social environment and key personality factors; and 2) resources within the environment such as family or community ties or support (Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy and Rutter, 1994). Personality protective factors include optimism, assertiveness and flexibility (Theron and Theron, 2010). Siquera and Diaz (2004) expand on this by adding independence, initiative, creativity, religious affiliations, humor and morality to the list of personality protective factors. Tiet, Huizinga and Byrnes (2010) builds on this view by stating that life context predictors of resilience in youth have been categorized into three broad groupings: a) characteristics of the child, such as intelligence or bonding with the parents, b) characteristics of the environment within the home and c) characteristics of the environment outside of the home which includes the availability of and access to social support systems which can offer support and encouragement of a child's coping efforts.

Dispositional characteristics include an easy temperament and an autonomous approach and biological factors include intelligence and good health. Family protective factors include healthy family routines, extended family support and supportive parents (Theron and Theron, 2010). Siquera and Diaz (2004) describe parenting styles that are warm, sensitive and consistently caring but firm to be linked to the development of self-control and compliance

with social rules. Contrastingly, power-assertive methods of managing a child's behaviour with hostile affect have generally been associated with less internalization of standards in children and less compliance. Herrman et al (2011) describes positive and secure attachment to the mother, family stability, a secure relationship with a non-abusive parent and the absence of maternal depression or substance abuse as factors associated with fewer childhood behavioural problems, better psychological well-being and therefore the development of resilience. Abbott-Chapman, Denholm and Wyld (2008) relates the ability to manage stressful life events to the individual's ability to identify and access a number of sources of support in building resilience. Individual characteristics fostering the development of resilience includes intelligence, sociability, autonomy, a positive self-concept, academic competence, good communication skills, androgyny, a sense of humor, a reasonable level of self-esteem, rational thinking, good mental and physical health and problem-solving skills (Secombe, 2002). Cyulrick (2006) added to dispositional influences by stating that some defence mechanisms, such as humour, blocking, altruism and narration, may help individuals develop in a positive light and are also strong coping skills.

Values and faith has in recent years too been recognized as strong internal protective factors. There are a number of studies from across the globe showing that religion has a significant effect on people's ability to cope with difficulties and do well in spite of risk factors and hardships in their lives (Masten, 2010). Loewenthal (2007) found that religious conversion and religious activity are found to be associated with raised purpose in life across various areas of research.

Despite a lack of clear identification of what exactly within the frame of religion acts as a protective factor some resiliency studies indicate that global religious variables are consistent with lower rates of teenage delinquency, smoking, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug use in addition to more positive psycho-social functioning (Oman and Thoresen, 2005). Connection to a religious persuasion has theoretically also been linked to a number of coping skills. Respondents to studies on this matter have highlighted a number of religious coping skills. These include the ability to redefine a stressor through religion as a blessing, thus decreasing negative responses to challenging life events. Other religious coping skills are seeking control through working with God thus decreasing feelings of powerlessness, searching for comfort through God's love and care thus lowering anger and acting out behaviour and gaining support through asking others for prayers (Pargament, 1997).

2.7.2.2 Gender

Gender differences are well documented in the concepts of coping and resilience and they follow typical lines: females ventilate emotions and seek social assistance whereas males act out and choose behavioural coping by distractive means such as alcohol and drugs (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008). Adolescent girls typically rely on social relationships to ventilate their feelings whereas boys use emotional numbing, escape, cognitive restructuring and concentrating on relaxing activities as a means of coping with stress (Alumran and Punamaki, 2008).

Research exploring the parenting of boys versus girls has also noted some distinct differences across cultures, nationalities and religions. Researchers of the cause of juvenile delinquency have documented that both parents and workers respond differently to girls and boys, with girls usually at a disadvantage. Examples of such is that parents generally have stricter set rules for their daughters than their sons with regards to drinking alcohol, curfews, using drugs, the consequences of violating them and being sexually active as the most distinct difference. Moreover, parents respond more seriously to daughters than sons who have violated rules within the home rules (Focal Point, 1997). Efforts to delay developmental milestones are viewed by most parents as a protective mechanism in the raising of their daughters (McKinnell, 2012).

2.7.2.3 Factors within home

Social relationships which are built on trust is of immense significance as a mechanism of protection. It relies on everyday routines and implicit memories which together, push out of modern life uncertainty and fear, stable reputations and moral problems (Abbott-Chapman, Denholm and Wyld, 2008). Schoon (2006) described the characteristics of a family which presents as a protective factor in the face of risk. This family is characterized by a stable and supportive family environment, positive adjustment during the periods of childhood and adolescence as well as parents who are actively involved in the lives of their children by taking a keen interest in the education and development of their offspring.

Research on protective factors conducted in Australia suggested that the more community and social support available to young people, the less likely they will be to engage in anti-social and risk-taking behavior (Abbott-Chapman et al, 2008). A study of African American and Latino women and girls similarly showed that connectedness to family is linked to a lower risk of teenage pregnancy, as strict and involved parenting during early adolescence acts as a buffer against sexually risky behavior (Abbott-Chapman et al, 2008). Contrastingly, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) stated that risky behavior during adolescence is a natural and normal part of the exploration and experimentation facet of adolescence as they approach adulthood.

Resilience of family attachment remains important regardless of the ever-changing family forms (Abbott-Chapman et al, 2008). The adolescent draws upon experiences influenced and shaped by religious, cultural and social norms of the family and community in response to the need for self-management of behavior considered to be risky (Abbott-Chapman et al, 2008). Families often have shared belief systems that serve to foster an optimistic attitude and help them overcome times of crises or change. These belief systems represent a collective set of attitudes, values and a manner of thinking that results in positive family outcomes (Bhana and Bachoo, 2011). The individual's relationship with their parents, the parental modeling of what behavior is deemed acceptable and what is not such as the stance on alcohol consumption and socializing norms for example as well as the experience of parenting styles are of particular importance (Abbott-Chapman et al, 2008). Rutter (1999) partially concurs and offers a different perspective on the role of parents in either a child's capacity for resilience against the development of psychopathology. His research findings indicated that parents both shape and select their child's upbringing in addition to passing down their genes and not surprisingly, the two are inter-correlated. Parents who provide increased genetic risks for their offspring also appear to be more likely to provide sub-optimal rearing and environmental conditions. Thus to some degree, family psycho-social risks which appear entirely environmental may too involve some genetically facilitated risks (Rutter, 1999).

Families that establish high expectations for their children's behaviour and abilities from early developmental stages play an important role in developing resiliency in their children (Benard, 1991). Similarly, research work by Roger Mills with parents living in an impoverished housing project in Miami demonstrated the power of a parental attitude that promoted the potential for common sense, learning, maturity and well-being in their children.

The expectation of success in families plays a major role in the reduction of many issues and behaviours, including substance abuse. According to Mills, an attitude expressed to youth that, "You have everything you need to be successful--and you can do it!" played a major role in the reduction of several problem behaviors, including substance abuse, in this disadvantaged community (Mills, 1990).

2.7.2.4 Factors outside of home

Social protective factors include mentoring adults, access to good schools and resources and opportunities for meaningful extra-curricular activities (Theron and Theron, 2010). Providing opportunities for competence and the building of confidence increases the chance that adolescents will successfully overcome developmental hurdles (Siquera and Diaz, 2004). Research on sociological environments have generally shown that social connectedness helps children to internalize social values and become committed to social institutions such as school (Wasonga, 2002). Such connectedness impacts their behaviour as well (Wasonga, 2002). These values are perpetuated through their relationships with peers and adults, both highly-recognized protective factors associated with the development of resilience and achievement at school (Wasonga, 2002). Therefore, youth who experience social interactions and relations which perpetuate high expectations for behaviour and positive values, are likely to possess the ability to identify high-risk behaviours and thus refrain from involvement in them (WestEd, 2000).

Adults influence the lives of adolescents in a number of ways. Bandura (1971) suggests that people tend to display behaviors that are learned either intentionally or inadvertently, by example. Identity formation is a central issue during adolescence and adolescents are therefore particularly likely to be influenced by the adults in their environment (Erikson 1968). Adolescents often look to adults in order to ascertain which behaviours are acceptable, which are not, as well as to identify models of who they want to be like as well as who they do not wish to be like. Adult influences, however, can be both positive and negative, and some adults may be more influential than others. Thus, the behaviour of adults can be viewed as both a risk and protective factor in the development of young people (Hurd, Zimmerman and Xue, 2009).

2.8 Academic resilience

2.8.1 Conceptualizing academic resilience

The phenomenon of resilience requires attention to a spectrum of possible psychological outcomes and not to be entirely focused on one positive level of functioning or purely the avoidance of maladaptive behaviours (Rutter, 1999). Over the last two decades, a number of studies have indicated that educational performance depends to a large degree on factors outside of school (Kristjansson and Sigfusdottir, 2009). Morales (2010) shares this view as his research stated that most definitions of resilience include both the outcome and process of remarkably high academic achievement despite risk factors which foretell low achievement or failure. Academic performance is thus not solely based on the educational processes within the school but more on the circumstances that the child or adolescent lives in, the atmosphere of the peer group, the encouragement and support they receive at home and the lifestyles of the specific adolescent and their families (Kristjansson and Sigfusdottir, 2009). Different groups of adolescents are therefore identified as academically at-risk or possessing factors within their environment that makes academic achievement possible.

Children in poverty are at a higher risk for academic problems (Gizir and Aydin, 2009). Generally, impoverished children are more likely to have difficulty in school, higher school dropout rates, low scores on standardized tests, overall low academic performance, low levels of intelligence tests scores and are less likely to attend or graduate from high school or tertiary education institutions (Gizir and Aydin, 2009). However, a significant percentage of disadvantaged children and adolescents overcome this adversity, demonstrating competence despite the economic hardship and go on to lead highly successful, well-adjusted and productive lives (Gizir and Aydin, 2009). Particularly, despite living in poor households and communities, these resilient children and adolescents perform adequately at school, avoid problem or delinquent behavior, view themselves as self-reliant and satisfactorily manage their relationships with their communities and peers (Gizir and Aydin, 2009).

Riegle-Crumb (2010) reviewed previous literature and in their work stated that the explanations for contemporary female postsecondary advantage focused on two main factors: girls' higher level of academic performance as well as their stronger inclination towards

academically-related activities and behaviours both in and outside of school. Furthermore, prior to and during the period of high school, girls are less likely to be placed in remedial learning courses and to drop out of school. They also achieve higher academic results across subjects and take comparable if not larger numbers of college-preparatory courses (Riegle-Crumb, 2010). On average, girls were found to also spend more time both completing homework and reading outside of the classroom (Buchman and Diprete, 2006). Kristjansson and Sigfusdottir (2009) concur with this view on the academic achievement comparison between boys and girls by stating in their work that a number of studies have indicated that boys in general are doing worse than girls at school. Their average academic grades are considerably lower than for girls and their attitudes towards school is less positive than amongst girls.

The central question in this research is how some teenagers, girls particularly, withstand adversity without developing negative physical or mental health outcomes and why some do not or why some develop adverse outcomes at a lesser degree and others not?

Resilience and academic achievement are partly outcomes of a complex interplay between school, family, community and peer influences. Resilience provides students with qualities that facilitate an effective learning environment and culture that most disadvantaged schools struggle to achieve. The capacity for resilience allows students to improve their quality of life as they will be likely to be self-sufficient, productive and responsible (Wasonga et al, 2003). Academic resilience can be defined as the process and results of an individual who has been academically successful in spite of obstacles preventing the majority of others with the same background from succeeding (Morales, 2010). Academic achievement is considered one of the appropriate indicators of academic competence and resilience for school-going children and adolescents (Morales, 2010). It is also viewed to be a dynamic developmental process that involves the protective qualities related to an individual student (internal protective factors) and their environments (external protective factors) which contribute to the adjustment and academic success of students considered to be at-risk (Morales (2010).

2.8.6 Role of teachers and peers in caring relations

Caring relations with peers, parents and educators have been found to have a positive impact on the development of academic resilience amongst learners. Resilience was longitudinally predicted by bonding to teachers and family, lower levels of parental discord, extra-curricular activity involvement, being less involved with delinquent peers and fewer adverse life events (Tiet, Huizinga and Byrnes, 2010). This finding indicates that adolescents whose need for recognition is met and who receive consistent praise, support and affirmation from significant sources from the environment-including peers- tend to be more resilient (Percy, 2003). For disadvantaged youth, teacher mentors often play significant roles in their success or failure (Rosenblum and Way, 2004). Due to an often limited amount of exposure to other academic role models, the expressed expectations and support from these educators can carry disproportionate weight (Morales, 2010). Youths who have stronger bonds with teachers are more likely to talk to them in times of difficulty and therefore these youths may be more likely to learn interpersonal and coping skills as well as internalize values learnt from teachers (Tiets, Huizinga and Byrnes, 2010).

Educational research findings have shown that girls may have greater resources of social capital that promote completion of secondary education and access to tertiary education. Previous research has indicated that enrolment in tertiary educational institutions is relative to the resources young people can access through their relationships with others such as teachers, peers, parents and other school staff (Reigle-Crumb, 2010). Carbonaro (1998) stated that such relationships have the potential to increase completion of education phases in a number of ways including the provision of emotional support, psychological encouragement, academic assistance and obtaining the relevant information and guidance in the form of career enquiries and applications (Riegle-Crumb, 2010). Focusing on the range and quality of relationships individuals have with school staff, peers and other potential sources of social capital broadens the scope of consideration of factors increasing a learner's chances of completing and furthering their education beyond that of the learners own individuals actions and choices (Riegle-Crumb, 2010).

The work of Lopez (2003) found that within school settings, there is also suggestive evidence that girls more than boys are likely to forge closer ties with teachers and staff possibly as a

result of their greater tendency to ask questions and work to meet and exceed school rules and expectations. Social relationships amongst girls are also forged on the basis of assistance, encouragement, motivation and support (Riegle-Crumb, 2010). Girls for example typically have personal relationships with friends which involve noteworthy amounts of discussion and information sharing, not only about social matters but also relating to academic and school issues. Contrastingly, boy's friendships are more often focused on competition and recreational activity and less on academic support (Riegle-Crumb, 2010). Subsequently, many recent studies into the development and benefits of academic resilience have found stronger links between friendship ties and academic outcomes for girls and boys during high school (Riegle-Crumb, 2010). Girl's greater willingness to engage or seek out interpersonal contact with significant others may therefore be a key to their academic resilience and success (Riegle-Crumb, 2010).

Friendships and affiliations with peers provide a child with a consistent individual or individuals with whom they can interact and rely upon for support. A lack of friends or a significant peer relationship serves as a strong risk factor for maladjustment (Schrepferman, Eby, Snyder and Stropes, 2006). Social interactions are the prime source of support and skills development in human development. It also provides the opportune source for feedback about capacities and behaviour. Positive peer relational experiences promote social competence, motivation, a positive self-image as well as protection from internalizing problems (Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003). These peer connections facilitate children's social skills, self-concept, and a sense of security (Schrepferman, Eby, Snyder and Stropes, 2006).

2.8.2.1 Role of parents in caring relations

Results of studies conducted in Iceland indicate that parental practices such as reasonable monitoring, access to warmth and care and time spent with parents are all significant factors for academic achievement among adolescent girls and boys (Kristjansson and Sigfusdottir (2009). Previous studies have also shown that strong parental bonding is critical to children and adolescents particularly in terms of their social skills, fewer behavioural and emotional problems such as substance abuse and positive self- image (Perry, McFadden and Campbell, 2008). This is possibly due to the greater amount of input and monitoring these children receive from their parents. The role of parents therefore acts as a major external protective

factor (Tiets, Huizinga and Byrnes, 2010). Studies by Urdan, Solek and Schoenfelder (2007) describe aversive family influences as negative family role models and parents with low student expectations. An example of this would be students wanting to excel academically in order to escape what they viewed to be an undesirable home environment and also to disprove low parental expectations.

2.8.2.2 Role of high expectations and goals

Exploring expectations from multiple viewpoints (student, parents and teachers) has offered an enriched view of the significant role of expectations in student performance. Furthermore, it has demonstrated how expectations of valued others and of students themselves contributes to student aspirations and perceptions (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson and Dixon, 2010). Studies conducted by Gizir and Aydin (2009) found that high expectations stemming from parental and family life was considered to be amongst the most important external protective factors in predicting and fostering academic resilience which concurred with previous work conducted by Chao (2000) and Finn and Rock (1997) both cited in (Gizir and Aydin, 2009). The influence of high expectations demonstrates a level of belief in the abilities and capacities of the learners and acts as a motivation for them. Girl learners appear to have a greater sense of awareness of the existence and influence of expectation than their male counterparts. Particularly girls from less-advantaged roots report a stronger awareness of their parents' educational expectations and generally strive harder to achieve them (Gizir and Aydin, 2009).

Major evidence in educational and sociological research has indicated that teachers do form expectations for student performance and do tend to treat students differently based on these expectations (Brophy and Good, 1970). Teacher expectations for student performance and most probably the behavioural manifestations of those expectations, have also shown to be linked to measures of scholastic achievement (Dusek, 1975). Rubie-Davis et al (2010) states that the likelihood is great that students will have self-beliefs and expectations based on the previous achievements, aspirations and experiences of their parents and teachers. When an individual has a strong belief in the capacities and ability to excel or achieve a goal, they are more likely to create steps which lead to that goal achievement, so ultimately they will reach success. Self-belief is also a powerful motivational tool (Rubie-Davis et al, 2010). Studies by

Tavani and Losh (2003) measured a number of psychological variables relative to the academic achievement of senior secondary school learners. Student expectations, external and self-motivation, parental encouragement and self-confidence were highly correlated. In a study by Urdan et al (2007) it was found that parents who held high expectations for their children and provided them with nurturing support were described by the students as having a strong influence on their motivation and achievement. Personal, educational and career goals and aspirations developed during adolescence have consistently been identified in resilience research as having a significant, life-long influence on occupational attainment (Schoon, 2006). Schoon (2006) argues that from the period of adolescence onwards, having clear plans for one's life has major impact on the direction of one's life course and helps to maintain individual adjustment in different environments and situations.

2.8.2.3 Role of encouragement for participation in meaningful activities

Studies by Osterman (2000) found that children who experienced positive involvement with others were more likely to exhibit inherent motivation and acceptance of authority. They also established a stronger sense of autonomy, identity and responsibility to regulate their behavior. Tiets, Huizinga and Byrnes (2010) reported similar conclusions in their evidence that involvement in extra-curricular activities predicted resilience in youth who resided in high-risk neighbourhoods. Several studies have also shown that involvement in extra-curricular activity is related to academic achievement, lower rates of substance abuse and better psychological adjustment (Tiets et al, 2010). Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt (2003) motivates this finding as possibly being due to the many benefits which the involvement in extra-curricular activity offers young people. Much like the work of Osterman (2000), Eccles (2003) describes young people involved in after-school activity as being provided with the opportunity to develop social, cognitive and practical skills, learn to handle challenges, develop a sense of belonging by being part of a group and be part of a contribution to one's community. Engaging in extra-curricular activity also provides children and adolescents with the opportunity to learn pro-social behaviour under the watchful eye and guidance of responsible and competent adults. It also provides them with positive experiences that will increase their self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy. Being involved in activities which involve competent adults may also provide youth with good, positive role-models (Tiets et al, 2010).

Children could also limit the impact that psycho-social risks may have on them by their own actions in having both leisure activities both inside and outside of the home as well as their emotional ties. Rutter (1999) noted that individuals from high risk backgrounds often felt the need to detach themselves from their parental systems. It appeared that when children's own families provide them with negative experiences, it might be helpful for the child to seek pleasure and rewards from extra-familial activity. Positive experiences during adolescence in relation to music, sport or positions of responsibility are associated with increased likelihood of positive functioning as an adult later in life (Rutter, 1999). Circumstantial evidence concurs with previously cited research in that it suggested that the benefits of these activities came from the sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem adolescents gained from these experiences and they were also more likely to show planning and preparation in terms of making major life decisions (Rutter, 1999).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. It reviewed the description and relevance of Erikson's psycho-social stages of development, social disorganization theory, the ecological perspective of system's theory as well as the socialization and self-efficacy theories. It then introduced and explored the theory of resilience by highlighting its' features, exploring its' development as well the theoretically identified risk factors associated with resilience. The researcher then introduced the general stage and psycho-social challenges of adolescent development followed by a discussion of the gender-specific challenges which adolescent females face. A discussion on the literature and research findings on the social and psychological challenges faced by the residents and youth of Mitchell's Plain including the risk factors which adolescents are exposed to then followed. A separate discussion on the internal and external risk factors both to academic endeavour and successful development, with a particular emphasis on female adolescents specifically was then explored. The concept of resilience and coping was explored and the notion of academic resilience and its development followed and concluded the literature review. The following chapter will present the methodology used in the research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of the research. The research design and its approach will be outlined followed by a discussion of the research sample, sampling strategies, data collection and analysis process. The limitations of this research will conclude the chapter.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Research paradigm

Research in general aims to help answer questions, confirm knowledge and address issues and shape or influence thinking for future action or endeavours. (De Vos, 2011) defined the qualitative approach to data collection as a method which serves to offer a broader view of an issue and can inform researchers in an accessible way given the opportunity for respondent elaboration and exploration of the research issues. Qualitative research takes a more in-depth approach to the phenomenon as opposed to a quantitative research approach as its very research process allows for a more deeper, thorough and personal understanding of the subject matter (Higgs, 1997). The researcher chose this research paradigm as it uses a multi-perspective approach aimed at gathering, describing, unpacking and interpreting data in terms of the meaning the research respondents or subjects attach to it (De Vos, 2011). Qualitative research is particularly effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, behaviors, opinions and social contexts of particular populations. Furthermore, this method is also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as socioeconomic status social norms, ethnicity, religion and gender roles, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent.

Given the topic of the research, this research method was particularly helpful in the process of uncovering these intangible factors which were ultimately linked to the researcher's

objectives. A qualitative research approach was appropriate for this type of research as it allowed a greater level of richness and depth of detail. Since this research had a strong exploratory element, a qualitative research method also allowed for a much more detailed investigation of issues, highlighting both the contrasting and common viewpoints of the different respondents (Higgs, 1997). Though this approach is more time-consuming than a quantitative approach, the researcher opted for it for its' holistic, subjective and in-depth data advantages.

3.2.2 Research design

Research within the social realm needs a design or structural format before the data collection or analysis process can commence. In layman's terms, a research design could be understood as a detailed work plan outlining what has to be done to complete the project. The purpose of a research design is to ensure that the evidence gathered enables the research topical questions to be answered as unambiguously as possible (De Vos, 2005). This study made use of the exploratory research design since the research was focused on the viewpoints and opinions of its' adolescent respondents. This approach allowed for the uncovering, unpacking and exploration of each respondent's viewpoint, allowing for deeper and greater information from which to create links and draw parallels.

3.3 Population

A population within the realm of research refers to the usage of the research sample population as an aggregate of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. That is, that the sample used by the researcher provides rich descriptions of the general field being analysed (De Vos, 2005).

The target population of this study was lower-income, coloured high school female students who reside in crime-ridden and poverty-stricken communities who excelled academically and displayed additional standards of resilience. These standards included, not having any biological children, a history of drug abuse or criminal activity and were involved in positive extra-mural activity.

3.4 Sampling strategy

Sampling refers to the process of choosing a portion of a population to represent the entire population. The researcher used non-probability purposive sampling. In non-probability sampling, the chances of selecting a particular individual were not known because the researcher does not know the members of the population (Gravetter and Forzano, 2003). Purposive sampling which refers to the process of selecting respondents who represent the desired population (De Vos, 2005). In order to understand the development of resilience in adolescent females by way of academic success, the researcher needed to interview female learners who were in fact, examples of academic success. Furthermore, they needed to display or have displayed a level of resilience and the capacity to overcome life challenges to offer first-hand understanding and representation of resilience. Therefore, the sampling strategy discussed was suitable for the study.

The researcher contacted the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to identify the top achieving high schools in Mitchell's Plain based on the final Grade twelve results of 2011. From the list issued by the WCED the researcher requested a list of the top achieving young women in Grade 12 for the year of 2012 attended a school in Mitchell's Plain, did not have any biological children, no criminal history or history of drug abuse and were involved in extra-mural activity. Each school then forwarded the list of eligible names and the sample size was decided on the number of learners offered by each school. A total of 16 respondents made up the sample size. These 16 learners were in the top academic bracket of their respective schools Grade 12 group and their schools were collectively grouped amongst top academic achieving schools in this particular Ward, thus making the 16 top achieving young women in Mitchell's Plain at the time of the data collection process.

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Data collection method

The researcher used the data collection method of face-to-face interviews. Face -to -face interviews is advantageous to the research process as it enables the researcher to establish a rapport with potential participants, thus gaining their co-operation. It also allows the researcher to clarify ambiguous answers and seek follow-up information if necessary (De Vos

et al, 1998). The researcher chose this data collection method given the small sample size making the research collection and analysis process less time-consuming. Furthermore, it allowed for the exploration of additional elements which were not necessarily in the interview schedule which fostered a broader understanding of the area of research.

3.5.2 Data collection instrument

Semi-structured interview schedules include elements of both quantifiable and fixed choice questions. This allows the researcher and respondents to explore and investigate research issues in more depth. This it enables a deeper understanding of the respondents' feedback (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). Face-to-face interviews was used in this research process as it created a direct process of extracting and transmitting information from the respondents to the researcher (De Vos, 1998). It also fostered a meaning-making process by helping the researcher understand the subjective worlds of the respondent, their families and communities (De Vos, 1998).

The researcher contacted the respective schools and requested a list of female learners who met the above criteria. After all indemnity and permission forms were signed and received by the researcher, arrangements were then made for an interview space and time on the school premises of the respective respondents. Interviews of approximately one hour each was conducted with each respondent.

3.5.3 Data collection tools

Tape recording of interviews allows for a complete record of the interview as opposed to note taking (De Vos et al., 2005). A digital voice recorder was used to record all the interviews. The researcher requested prior permission from the respondents to tape record the interviews on a proviso of anonymity. This apparatus was selected by the researcher because of the high quality of recordings in addition to the benefit of the researcher being more able to note the nonverbal cues during the interviews. The use of a digital voice recorder also enabled the researcher to engage with the respondents without the distraction or preoccupation of note-taking notes during the interviews.

The researcher also made use of field notes in the collection process of the data.

3.5.4 Piloting of interview schedule

A pilot study or interview is generally understood as a small experiment designed to test the logistical aspects regarding the gathering of information prior to a larger study, so as to improve the latter's quality and efficiency (De Vos, 2011). A pilot interview can reveal shortcomings in the design of a research procedure allowing for the researcher to address them before large amounts of time and resources are expended on large scale studies (De Vos, 2011). Identifying whether the questions were easily understood, whether or not the phrasing of the questions allowed for elaboration, confirming the interview duration period and identifying redundancies were some of the purposes for the researcher conducting a pilot interview.

3.6 Data analysis

The researcher used the broad analytic induction strategy to her data analysis (De Vos, 2005). This approach entailed reading through the transcripts and identifying common themes (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). The aim of this approach was to create general statements which contain the essential characteristics of the concept of resilience, or elements that are found to influence or underlie the existence or development thereof in (De Vos, 2005). This data analysis approach enabled the researcher to search and find cases that either proves or disproves her research questions. Thus, it forced the development of a conceptual framework in a manner that corresponded with the daily experiences of their subjects (De Vos, 1998). An adaptation of Tesch's (1990) approach in De Vos *et al.* (2005) was used to analyse the transcripts. The steps in this approach that the researcher followed are:

1. Thoroughly Reading through all interview transcripts.
2. Re-reading the transcripts and making notes in the margins of the transcripts about the meaning of the data.
3. Identifying themes as well as the categories of those themes.
4. Re-reading and using coloured pens to finally decide on broad themes and categories.
5. Developing a conceptual framework for example, a three column table with themes, categories and sub-categories as headings.
6. Aligning the broad themes with the objectives of the study.

7. Testing the emergent thematic understandings and searching for alternative explanations.
8. This table was then used as a format for writing up the data analysis.

3.7. Data verification

Babbie and Mouton (2010) describe the features of data verification as the elements which increase and ensure the reliability and credibility of qualitative research. The four identified components in the process of data verification are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The research will now define and discuss each element with its relevance and application to the study.

3.7.1 Credibility

This component is believed to demonstrate that the research was conducted in a manner that guarantees that the subject matter being researched is accurately identified and defined i.e., that the researcher accurately reflects the opinions and thoughts of the respondents (Babbie and Mouton, 2010).

To ensure credibility, the researcher recorded all the interviews by means of a Dictaphone which will confirm that the interviews were conducted under the necessary and correct circumstances.

3.7.2 Transferability

Babbie and Mouton (2010) outline this component as the possibility that the current research can be replicated in other contexts using different participants. As this research makes use of a qualitative approach and was strongly compared to similar research contexts in addition to the researcher reporting all findings in a research document, transferability is felt to be highly possible.

3.7.3 Dependability

This element of data verification is described by Babbie and Mouton (2010) as whether or not the research results or findings will remain the same should it be replicated in similar contexts with respondents similar to those in this research endeavor. As previously stated, due to the limited availability of local research on this subject matter, the researcher drew

many parallels with the literature conducted internationally in similar contexts with this research. This ensures that the research could remain constant and sound.

3.7.4 Confirmability

The last element of data verification places emphasis on the data evaluation and the quality thereof (De Vos, 2005). In this study, the researcher will report on all important data and refraining from adding or allowing her own biases and beliefs to influence her report. By doing so, it ensures the validity of the data. Moreover, all data collection components such as the voice recordings and transcriptions will be kept for future request of validation.

3.8 Limitations of study

De Vos et al (2002) refers to the limitations that exists within research studies as important elements for the research to be aware of, acknowledge and clearly state. The first identified limitation to this study was the lack of previous local studies conducted on the issue of resilience and risk and protective factors associated with the youth of South Africa. This gap forced the researcher to use comparative literature with similar contexts as a basis for exploration as opposed to drawing on more relevant indigenous research. The researcher was also aware of the possible limitations in the research in terms of the research methodology and design, the sampling strategy, as well as the data collection and analysis methodologies. Through the identification of these possible limitations and being mindful thereof the researcher was able to plan appropriately in efforts to minimise their effect on the study. The limitations will now be discussed.

3.8.1 Research methodology

The qualitative research design is typified by the researcher using themselves as the tool for data capturing and analysis. Thus, the researcher relies on their skills of interpretation, active listening and rapport building to gain data free from bias or personal influence on the part of the researcher (Babbie and Mouton, 2010). If the researcher is not in possession of these skills or uses them in a bias fashion, it could limit the access to and depth of information the researcher is able to retrieve from the respondents. Thus, to avoid such limiting influences,

the researcher ensured that she maintained her professional skills and the safe, non-judgmental interview environment. She also informed the respondents that confidentiality will be maintained as well.

The qualitative research paradigm also has limitations in that there are no fixed steps to be followed, making replication of the design difficult. Therefore, generalizations cannot be made (De Vos et al, 2002). Furthermore, this research paradigm focusses on the subjective experiences and viewpoints of the respondents and thus they cannot explain causality, limiting generalizability even more (De Vos, 2002). Additionally, since the researcher is directly involved as a tool in the qualitative approach by interactive with the respondents and creating the interview setting, the researcher's own perspectives can influence how events and information is interpreted (De Vos et al, 2002).

3.8.2 Research design

Much like the qualitative research paradigm, the research design is not able to provide generalizable findings as the explorative nature of the study can be considered as brief and possibly the initial stage of a larger research project (De Vos et al, 2002).

3.8.3 Sampling strategy

Non-probability sampling uses a small-scale sample which limits the generalizability of the sample to the general population (De Vos et al, 2002). Purposive sampling also presents with restrictions in terms of generalizations as the sample scale too is small and is limited to the requirements of the researcher (De Vos et al, 2002). An Additional limitation to the sampling strategy in this research is that there are only nine governmentally-subsidized high schools across Mitchell's Plain with only four schools in the identified Ward. This equated to two or three respondents per school to allow for a general and equal view of perceptions. However, even so, the sample could be viewed as too limited to make any form of generalization.

3.8.4 Data analysis

The researcher was mindful of her limited previous research experience which could impact on the data collection and analysis processes in terms of the quality thereof. The researcher

ensured that this limitation had little to no effect by following the theoretical research framework and the input offered by her research supervisor.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, a detailed discussion of the choice and application of the research design and methodology along with its usage motivation and limitations were presented. Other methodological considerations specifically the data collection and data analysis of this research process were highlighted and explored. The limitations of the research were also outlined as a conclusion to the chapter. Chapter four will present the findings of the research.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to identify and explore the factors contributing to the development of resilience amongst young coloured women from Mitchell's Plain, with a particular emphasis on the domain of academic achievement. This chapter will present and examine the findings from the interviews structured according to the five research objectives, with a comparison to findings from relevant theory and literature. This chapter will begin by first providing basic information of the respondents (See Table 1) followed by a framework for analysis (See Table 2). The key findings will then be analyzed and discussed based on the identified themes, namely; the general risk and protective factors associated with living in Mitchell' Plain respectively, the gender-specific risk and protective factors of life in Mitchell's Plain, the general demographic-specific coping mechanisms of youth in Mitchell's Plain and the unique employed coping strategies of the research respondents. The themes will then be analyzed according to the identified categories and sub-categories as adopted by Tesch (1990)'s framework for data analysis. Thereafter, some concluding comments and remarks will be made.

4.2 Profile of the respondents

Below is a table outlining the basic demographic information of the sixteen research respondents. The respondents were requested to provide the exact area within the broad geographical location of Mitchell's Plain in which they reside as a means to gauge and compare living circumstances. Furthermore, in cases where their exact academic position within their respective school's top ten academic achiever lists were unknown, the respondents were requested to provide their academic averages based on the last written exam period as another academic achievement comparative tool.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Respondent:	Age:	Academic position in grade/Academic average:	Residing area in Mitchell's Plain
1	18	2nd	Morgan's Village
2	18	3rd	Tafelsig
3	18	8th	Eastridge
4	18	1st	Rocklands
5	17	4th	Tafelsig
6	18	80%	Rondevlei
7	18	75%	Eastridge
8	17	75-80%	Beacon Valley
9	18	9th	Westridge
10	18	70-75%	Westgate
11	18	80%	Eastridge
12	18	4th	Westridge
13	17	75-80%	Lentegeur
14	18	70%	Delft
15	17	75-80%	Lentegeur
16	18	4th	Montrose Park

Involvement in extra-mural activities, along with academic achievement, residence and schooling in Mitchell's Plain, being of adolescent age and in Grade 12 were the criteria for participation in the study. Twelve out of the sixteen respondents have reached the legal age of 18. All respondents barring one, is currently residing and attending a school in Mitchell's Plain. Eleven of the respondents have lived in Mitchell's Plain their entire lives with four of them having moved to Mitchell's Plain while still very young. All of the respondents have attended or completed their primary school education in Mitchell's Plain as well. All of the respondents are current academic achievers at their respective schools. All of the respondents

have made applications to tertiary institutions. Ten of the respondents are regularly involved with extra-mural activities or had been prior to the commencement of their final examination preparation period, which fall into the categories of sport, arts and culture and leisure activity.

Home and family arrangements were identified as possible factors contributing to the development of resilience, thus the researcher felt it noteworthy to add this information. Thirteen of the respondents reside with either one or both of their parents, with three of the respondents residing with other family members who include grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings and family friends. Of the thirteen respondents residing with their parents, eight sets of parents are married and five are children of single mothers. Three of the respondent's parents' are deceased or whereabouts unknown.

Nine of the respondents have older siblings or are middle children and seven of the respondents are the eldest child in their families. Six of these respondents older siblings have passed Grade 12, with five either currently completing or have completed tertiary education. Six other respondents have older siblings who are in current employment. Ten of the sixteen respondents have either one or both parents who are employed with the overwhelming majority of employed parents being mothers. Nine of the respondents have either one or both parents who have completed their high school educations. Two of these respondents have parents who have completed tertiary level education.

Twelve of the respondents reside in homes which are either owned by or leased by their parents.

4.3 Framework of analysis

Below is a table framework for analysis as outlined by Tesch (1990). The broad themes which emerged from the study are divided into categories which are further divided into sub-categories.

Table 2: Framework for analysis

Themes:	Categories:	Subcategories:
<p>Demographic-specific risk factors associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood violence. • Neighbourhood poverty and unemployment. • Classroom dynamics • Safety and influence of community violence • Lack of resources • Personality and adolescent temperament and development. • Family dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug and alcohol abuse • Overcrowding
<p>Demographic-specific protective factors associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality • Parents and family • Teachers and fellow learners. • Goals and aspirations • Extra-mural activities • Community and social influences 	<p>.</p>
<p>Demographic gender-specific risk and protective factors in Mitchell’s Plain:</p>	<p>Risk factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenage pregnancy • Female physical risk • Gender socialization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging and peer pressure • Poverty. • Short-term thinking and impulsivity • Added and unequal responsibility. • Gender stereotype

	Protective factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender socialization and protection of females • Inverse role-modeling • Personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal gender roles and responsibilities • Long-term thinking • Time-management and responsibility
Unique coping strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal choice and prioritization. • Extra-mural activities 	
Unique employed coping strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging supportive resources • Religion • Psychological defenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Peer relationships

The findings will now be discussed according to the themes, identified categories and subcategories.

4.4 Theme 1: Risk factors in Mitchell's Plain`

The respondents identified seven major risk factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain. These factors include neighbourhood violence, which includes the subcategory of drug and alcohol abuse. The second factor is neighbourhood poverty and unemployment which includes overcrowding as a subcategory. The other identified risk factors are classroom dynamics, the issue of safety and community violence, the lack of resources, personality and temperament as well as family dynamics.

4.4.1 Category one: Neighbourhood violence

All of the respondents were significantly aware of high levels of violence and crime in their communities. The majority of them felt physically affected by it or recalled personal experiences of where they were victims of such violence or crime in their neighbourhoods, which are demonstrated in the following quotes:

“... I don’t play outside anymore (giggles), then we could play outside, like till anytime, like 10 o clock or whatever but lately you cannot because there’s like a lot of gangs in the place, and they are forever fighting. When I was one weekend at home, I woke up past 1 the night and I just like heard...it was chaotic outside, the police was up and down and I heard gunshots and I was so afraid yes...it’s really bad...”

- (Respondent 1)

“...I remember this one incident, I think it was like, what, I am in matric now; I think I was grade 9 or something. It was on a Friday afternoon & then they shot in front of my house, during the day”.

- (Respondent 4)

Gizir and Aydin (2009) cited a considerable amount of empirical evidence which indicated the finding that children and adolescents living in poverty and violence suffer adverse life events and persistent strains that are damaging to their positive development which is strongly reflected in the above-mentioned quotes.

4.4.1.1 Sub-category one: Alcohol and drug abuse

The influence of alcohol and drug abuse on social discord in isolation as well its effect on the violence and crime statistics of Mitchell’s Plain was highlighted by fifteen of the sixteen respondents as another major risk factor of life in Mitchell’s Plain.

‘Ya, like a friend of mine, she had to leave home because her brothers were doing drugs and always stealing from her’.

- (Respondent 5)

“Because every second person you meet is on drugs, they break into their own families’ houses and stuff”

- (Respondent 11)

‘...Tik...because that’s like, you don’t know. You can’t smell it, but it’s in the air. And like the dagga, (my brothers) they would do it in the yard and I would like get the smell and it’s like not nice and stuff. And at times when I needed to study, my brothers like just wouldn’t care...and then I can’t concentrate like that’.

- (Respondent 1)

These findings are in strong agreement with the work of Rasmussen et al (2004) which states that both the exposure to violent acts in isolation and as a result of or associated with alcohol and drug abuse have been linked to a number of social and psychological problems amongst youth. These problems could include posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, pronounced grief, aggressive and delinquent behaviour, a decrease in academic results and social withdrawal.

4.4.2 Category two: Neighbourhood poverty and unemployment

Poverty within Mitchell’s Plain was unanimously cited as another one of the major factors associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain and was also centrally linked to the abuse of addictive substances, unemployment and overcrowding within this community. One respondent described the issue of poverty on the Cape Flats in general as being both devoid of fulfillment of basic needs as well as knowledge of better life circumstances. She was quoted as saying:

‘Poverty was staying in the Cape Flats. Poverty was just saying that I stay there.

Poverty was walking barefoot around on the steps; it was sitting on the streets, not having anything to do with yourself, because you do not have any money to do anything, other than just sit there and not do anything to help yourself. Yes, I think poverty was a lack of knowledge that is poverty. If you have knowledge, you are not as poor because you can do something about it...’

- (Respondent 16)

‘Because my mommy couldn’t afford both of us. She didn’t know she was going to have twins. Only when she gave birth did she see there’s two of us so my granny said okay she will take my brother’.

- (Respondent 8)

This finding supports the findings of Murry, Berkel, Gaylord-Harden, Copeland-Liner and Nation (2011) who described neighbourhood poverty as adversity due to a simultaneous absence of social, family and economic resources within a neighbourhood. Furthermore, they listed characteristic features of such neighbourhoods to include unemployment, a proportion of low-income neighbours and lacking opportunities which lead to deviant norms and values as described by the respondent. Thus one is able to contextualize the level of adversity faced by these young women in order to appreciate their capacity for resilience despite it.

As previously stated, the high level of unemployment was viewed to have direct links to the level of poverty and financial struggles of families in Mitchell’s Plain. Nine of the respondents described this neighbourhood challenge in the following quotes:

‘...Because I mean, I am a girl, I need things like monthly things and his not there and my mommy don’t work because she can’t work because she takes tablets and things so she gets a disability grant. Because if she has too much stress then she can get sick again so she doesn’t work. So now the only income is the disability grant because at first it used to also be the money that she got for me but I’m 18 now so now she doesn’t get that money also anymore...’

- (Respondent 1)

‘...Well it’s more like the poverty-stricken side of MP. There are less employed people in that area which is true and then people would say that that means more crime’.

- (Respondent 5)

These quotes corroborate with research evidence stating that the biological, social and emotional challenges characteristic of the developmental stage of adolescence can be exacerbated when youth are reared in situations in which their caregivers are unable to

adequately provide the resources, experiences and services which are critical for them to thrive and grow into productive and healthy adults (Murry et al, 2011).

4.4.2.1 Sub-category one: Overcrowding

The following element of the cyclic link that is poverty and unemployment, ten out of the sixteen respondents felt was the issue of overcrowding in their communities and also acted as another risk factor. The nature of the overcrowding was described in the following quotes:

‘...Like my house, at the moment, at home where my mommy lives, at the moment it’s like my brother, my sister in law, my mommy and me-if I go down, and the baby and my other brother but he’s not living like in the house now, he’s living with his girlfriend and my other brother and his wife and his child, but they’re living in the yard now so...it’s like very crowded right now...’

- (Respondent 1)

‘...The house next door to me is like that. There is like the grandmother, and then there are two households as well. Like the granny’s two daughters and their husbands, then they have like 7 kids each and they all live in that house. Well actually the one has more than the other one but I would say 7 kids each...’

- (Respondent 5)

‘...Yes, so it will be like one generation, like the parents; the mom & the daddy, but then the daughter would have married & the daughter will stay there with her family, so she will have a husband & a child & then the other sibling, that have the same circumstance; they all live in one house...’

- (Respondent 6)

These quotes strongly reflect the findings of research conducted by Cole and Narsoo (2007) which described the suburb of Mitchell’s Plain on the Cape Flats in Cape as one of the most over-populated, impoverished, economically inactive and crime-ridden areas in South Africa. Stressors, limited opportunity and living space as well as social stigma presented by economically disadvantaged and/or dangerous neighbourhoods may hinder the psycho-social

developmental milestone of identity exploration and development during adolescence (Murry et al, 2011).

4.4.3 Category three: Classroom dynamics

Crowd control and its knock-on effects on the teacher's ability to teach the syllabus as well as student motivation were two strongly identified themes amongst all of the respondents. Many felt that the behavior of certain learners and their unwillingness to co-operate with teachers strongly compromised their learning potential and the teacher's ability to teach as demonstrated in the following quotes:

'But in certain classes they do take advantage & it does kind of disrupt us, because the teacher; she wants to bring the message across not to just that group but the rest of the class, as well, because it is important. They will distract her & sometimes it does distract her, when she is trying to speak, because now they are speaking & she cannot hear herself. So, it does cause a disruption'

- (Respondent 2)

'Like back chatting to the teacher, making funny comments, when the teachers says something or some children here does not do their homework or whatever & then teachers ask them why not & then they want to give attitude...They still need to come teach us life lessons whereas the subject, imagine, your maths teachers needs to get this math work over & done, but she still has to explain to you about your manners & your behaviour & things.'

- (Respondent 7)

Nine of the respondents felt that the issue of crowd control within the classroom is often due to classes being overcrowded:

'I think some teachers, because sometimes there are more than thirty of forty kids in class, so I do not think, all the time, the teachers can handle, all the children there, that is being disruptive and it affects how the teacher teaches us, as well, because they are cross because of the children and then it does affect us'

- (Respondent 10)

‘...I think it was a lot. I cannot remember, specific numbers, but I would say that it was much bigger than the classes I have now at school, even the primary schools, they have now, twenty-nine or thirty people, maybe thirty-four, that must have been fifty. .. I think that totally messed up my whole system, which makes it harder for you at school’

- (Respondent 14)

This finding corroborates the findings of research conducted by Cole and Narsoo (2007) with regards to the impact of limited resources and its knock-on effects on the quality of education impoverished children receive. The shortage of classrooms as well as only having nine official government subsidized high schools to cater for a proportion of 48% is under the age of 25 (thus school-going age) is of major educational and social concern in Mitchell’s Plain. Therefore, the occurrence of overcrowding within schools and its effects of classroom dynamics is to be expected. Access to individual attention, maximum possibility of teacher input and a conducive learning environment within classrooms is then not possible or highly compromised. As a result, independent learning and additional efforts need to be made in order to achieve academically.

4.4.4 Category four: Safety and influence of community violence

Apart from the dynamics within the classroom, twelve of the sixteen respondents also felt that the issue of community safety and violence within the surrounding areas of their school, often also impacts their learning. Respondents expressed their views on the impact of community violence on feelings of safety at school in the following quotes:

‘...Apart from the education standard, there is the environment that we need to take in consideration, because you go to school, but you sit in class anxious, because you don’t know what is going to happen, because there is gangster, in our school & in the area.

- (Respondent 6)

‘If there is like gangsters, or smoking at the school, fighting constantly, you cannot give anyone a look, then they are all up in your face. Picking fights with you, threatening you after school, gangsters coming into our school beating up children and then leaving,

during school time. Other rival schools, coming to our school and throwing bricks at the teacher's cars, having to walk down to the station, if train is your transport, having to be walked down by the police and the teachers, so that the rival school does not attack you... I think that is scary and it is very hard'

- (Respondent 14)

'Yes maybe sometimes they were shooting in the night then your mommy or daddy says you must stay at home the next day and not travel to school just in case they aren't finish shooting then you must walk past and just now a bullet comes or something'.

- (Respondent 8)

Learning is also impacted as respondents described how classmates' as well as their own school absenteeism increased when they felt particularly unsafe at school:

'I know I was the type of person that did not want to be at home. I always went to school as a place of safety, to distract me and then having to deal with it at school; that is when you end up doing the wrong things, no one for you to go to for safe haven...Yes, I would say. I think I bunked a lot, because I did not want to be at school'

- (Respondent 6)

'... (I bunked school) because of the violence that has been taking place, like, people come with knives to school, guns, recently. Okay, last week I saw it with my own eyes. This one boy had a gun on him. Recently, I think earlier this year, at Tafelsig High, there were two girls, I think, that got into a fight & the one girl was stabbed about thirteen times in her back'

- (Respondent 9).

This finding is in strong agreement with Rasmussen et al's (2004) description of both the exposure to violent acts as well as direct victimization as a link to a number of social and psychological problems amongst youth. These problems were cited to include aggressive and delinquent behaviour, a decrease in academic performance and social withdrawal (Rasmussen et al, 2004). Furthermore, these findings concurs with the work of Milam et al's (2010) observational assessments reports which state that neighbourhood violence was also

associated with decreased academic achievement as it confirmed a relationship between fear, violence and academic performance.

A third of the respondents also commented on the limited access to alternative academic input from additional sources due to the influence of community violence and issues of safety:

‘Sometimes...it is kind of dangerous, especially for us that live this side to go to the library that is right on top, you walk in a main road & you never know what could happen’

- (Respondent 2)

4.4.5 Category five: Lack of resources

The lack of resources within the community of Mitchell’s Plain and particularly the schools within the neighbourhood was viewed as a major concern and risk factor for the academic potential for the majority of the respondents. They identified this community disadvantage as an underpinning factor to the occurrence of overcrowding and safety concerns within schools. One respondent felt that the limited number of schools per area within Mitchell’s Plain resulted in overcrowding:

‘Primary school I remember the classes were crowded...Eastville is a school in Eastridge and then there is like a lot of people that flock to that school, because they are like the closest school in the community in the area that we stay in, so a lot of children was enrolled in that school, so it was very crowded’

- (Respondent 3)

Schools in Mitchell’s Plain are riddled with resource inadequacies at a basic level (Cole and Narsoo, 2007). One respondent described this social issue in her recollection of her primary school premises:

‘The school I started at was just six massive containers in rows, single file and little passages down and the principal’s office was a separate container, where you climbed up the stairs. They did not have a tuck shop. Our toilets were the transportable toilets, the plastic ones...we did not have a playground or jungle gyms, we sat in the

sand...there was no brick; it was literally containers, pinned to the ground. Not like, those big containers, but they had doors and windows'

- (Respondent 14)

These findings concur with Murry et al (2011) which states that educational institutions in poor areas often lack the resources to provide quality education as is evident in the overall low student achievement, high school dropout rates and increased school failure.

The data supported the view that a lack of resources within the community and at schools in Mitchell's Plain in terms of extra-mural activities, enabled learners to engage in anti-social activity, given the lack of positive alternatives to involvement in anti-social activity. The state of school facilities in Mitchell's Plain were described as follows:

'They don't have much (resources)... if they have a field it is not a field. It is a combination of a patch of grass & then mostly sand'

- (Respondent 6)

'The fields, I think some of the parks and the fields have been neglected, because they started a park here in Westridge and then, I do not know if people broke it down or whatever, like the swings and things and then no one came to repair it again'.

- (Respondent 10)

Access to resources, even if they are available is sometimes too restricted due to the issue of safety and violence as one respondent described:

'Yes, we have a computer lab, but I think most the children would think that it is restricted... I do not think that they teachers will trust most of the children. Because they can break the equipment or steal and stuff, in general, you cannot trust everyone'.

- (Respondent 13)

Family resources such as money, or rather, the lack thereof, were also identified by fourteen of the respondents as factors which have negative effects on an individuals' access to education and achievement potential:

‘Oh like for some people, taxi fare to get to school is sometimes a problem especially if you have a lot of children in the house who must get to school and they all need taxi or bus money. Like I have this one girl who used to be in my class who never used to come to school on a Monday because her daddy and mommy would drink the wages out then she doesn’t have money to come to school on a Monday’

- (Respondent 8)

‘...they would leave school, look for a job, because there is no money in the house’

- (Respondent 9)

These findings concurs with the work of Murry et al (2011) which states that the biological, social and emotional challenges characteristic of the developmental stage of adolescence can be exacerbated when youth are reared in situations in which their caregivers are unable to adequately provide the resources, experiences and services which are critical for them to thrive and grow into productive and healthy adults. These findings also reflect Murry et al’s (2011) view that limited finances within a family can deprive learners of basic access to education such as transport money to get to school, school books, uniforms or other academic essentials.

4.4.6. Category six: Personality and adolescent temperament and development

Nine of the respondents described issues of security and a need for belonging in the face of their challenges as possible risk factors associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain. One respondent described this factor in the following quote:

‘...there are some of them that were in my class; they dropped out...but I think it is a sense of belonging, also, because when you are part of that, you are part of something...and a sense of safety, but not safety, like you know that if you get into trouble you have people, sort of behind your back’.

- (Respondent 6)

This level of vulnerability also results in anti-social behaviour and choices which are strongly linked to peer pressure as respondents stated:

‘Many boys dropped out, if they failed a subject, they did not come back to school and I think that maybe it is peer pressure, they see their friends are doing this and then they also stay away’.

- (Respondent 10)

‘...Because most of the guys at your school would be doing wrong things, so then if you are not going to be part of that, then they will tell you: what are you a girl, or something. You are a sissy or something like that...Some girls would actually try to fit in, like, sometimes you would be seen as popular if you dated this guy in school, if you had a bad time in school & then it would make you popular, yes’.

- (Respondent 4)

This finding supports the work of Becker and Luthar (2002) which states that belonging and support during adolescence has been cited to be of particular importance for academic motivation, engagement and performance of adolescents. If this need is not adequately met in educational environments, students will look for other means of achieving it.

4.4.7 Category seven: Family dynamics

Dynamics within the family in terms of adequate or inadequate support, trauma, access to positive role models and varied levels of dysfunction were identified by all the respondents as key factors in decreased adolescent achievement capacity and potential. All the respondents felt that if their family members were unsupportive of them and their academic endeavours, it significantly compromises their ability to study; work hard and remain focused and motivated as one respondent stated:

‘Yes because if I like wanna study, I can’t study on my own terms because people will be like, making a noise in the house or whatever, then I will just like try and fall asleep and then like wake up at 2..when everyone is sleeping. But then I’ll be like so tired and sad and seeing other’s sleep makes me also wanna sleep’.

- (Respondent 1)

‘Yes, when my dad died, I just did not pay attention in class, because I would get home & then I would have more responsibilities, because our mother did not cook, or clean or

do the mother chores, so I would come home & I would have to do that & then I would just not be interested in school. I sort of took it as this is my life now'.

- (Respondent 6)

Another respondent commented on the negative influence which family dysfunction has on one's general functioning:

'...emotional abuse, verbal abuse and physical abuse, that affected all areas of my life...

Your mind is constantly consumed in what is happening in your living environment, you just do not perform well in any other areas of your life. That affected my schooling, my social behaviour with my friends, my ability to make friends, to trust people, to communicate with any other person and the way that you love people it affects everything'.

- (Respondent 14)

These findings agree with the work of Urdan, Solek and Schoenfelder (2007) which describes unfavourable home domestic conditions and aversive family influences such as negative family role models and parents with low student expectations.

Feeling unsupported by one's family in terms of believing in your success was also identified by the majority of the respondents as negatively impacting one's self-belief and general desire to want to be academically successful.

'...Yes and when you are not at school they take you away, they just put you in school for the sake of being in school. They do not come to your meetings... If you do bring a report, they would say that it is nice, where you probably failed all the subjects, they do not take an interest in your school life'.

- (Respondent 13)

This finding corroborates with the work of (Gizir and Aydin, 2009) which indicated that unlike the opposite grouping, adolescents whose need for recognition is met and who receive consistent praise, support and affirmation from significant sources tend to be more resilient.

One respondent agreed with the viewpoint of the previous respondent and added a description of the negative influence of not feeling as though there are people who have a vested interest in your success has in her life and its effect on her self-motivation:

‘... if you are not motivated you do not do anything at school... because then what is the point if they (your parents) are not interested in your achievements?’

- (Respondent 14)

The same respondent also commented on the negative influence which familial lowered expectation of one’s ability for success has on personal motivation:

Yah, it’s like they expect you to fail or to make bad decisions. Like they think ok yes you can make it to Matric, or pass it, then you have it, but then you’re just going to fall pregnant the year after or something. I have seen it happen, but that is just also what people expect.

- (Respondent 11)

These findings corroborate the research conducted by Gizir and Aydin (2009) which found that high expectations stemming from parental and family life was considered to be amongst the most important external protective factors in predicting and fostering academic resilience. Thus the opposite experience can be viewed as another risk factor within the category of family dynamics.

In terms of family dynamics as a risk factor to the development of resilience, ten respondents also cited lack of positive role models in their communities and families as a hindrance to their ability to achieve academic success or to have a positive outlook on life and relations with others as exemplified in these quotes:

‘... you kind of model yourself around your parents, so whatever they do, you do, so if they swear you will end up also swearing, so I think what they do, kind of have an impact on what you do...’

- (Respondent 2)

‘My parents did not finish school themselves, so it was never a priority. I know some people will want you to finish, because of the fact that they did not do it, but it is not a priority’.

- (Respondent 15)

This finding supports the work of Bhana and Bachoo (2011) which states that the familial belief system represent a collective set of attitudes, standards, values and a manner of thinking that results in positive family outcomes. The individual's relationship with their parents, the parental modeling of what behavior is deemed acceptable and what is not is too of major importance in terms of a risk element in adolescent development of resilience.

4.5 Theme two: Protective factors in Mitchell's Plain

All the respondents identified six protective factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain. The influence of one's individual personality is the first identified category. The second category is the influence of parents and family. The third identified protective factor is that of the role of teachers and fellow learners while the fourth category is the factor of goals and aspirations. The last two identified protective factors is the influence of extra-mural activities and the general community. The researcher will now present her findings under the above-mentioned headings.

4.5.1. Category one: Personality

The respondents unanimously identified personality as a key protective factor against the risks which life in Mitchell's Plain presents. Of all the identified individual protective factors, the respondents felt that one's personality played the most influential role.

'I think personally... like the person that you are if you know you're the type that that just want to have fun & party, you are going to get yourself into trouble, but if you're that person that is reserved you know when to say this is right & this is wrong. If you know the difference you can stay clear & you can keep yourself away from things'.

- (Respondent 2)

'...because there are girls that go through a lot & they still manage to pass with good results, for me, it is up to the person, personally. It is their own mind-set, their own decision'

- (Respondent 9)

One respondent recalled a personal experience where her personality factors enabled her to withstand peer pressures:

‘...because I went to Cedar; there was a lot of peer pressure and I know some of my friends, they did the wrong things, but it did not bother me. You could tell me that I am stuck up or I think that I am better than all the rest, but I would not concern myself with those things. I would just do my thing & then I would go home’

- (Respondent 4)

These findings concur with the work of Theron and Theron (2010) which states that individual personality traits is what enables some to succumb to the negative forces of risk while others are able to withstand that same level of risk.

4.5.2 Category two: Parents and family

While the respondents noted the risk factors which family dynamics can present, they too noted that inversely, parents, home life and the environment are equally influential in terms of being protective factors as well. All the respondents made reference to factors within one’s home, specifically their relationships with their parent and their family dynamics which facilitates the development of coping skills and academic achievement. Nine of the respondents noted the role their siblings play in terms of being protective factors while the other’s viewpoints were interpreted as a protective factor by way of inverting what the respondents felt were negative influences. A high expectation for their academic potential was also identified by twelve of the respondents as another protective factor within the home family environment. The respondents also stated that parents and family play an equally important role to that of personality in terms of motivation, one’s personal views of achievement, the ability to academically excel and for the development of a sense of security and positive self-image. Parental care and influence in terms of support, role modeling and stability was viewed amongst the respondents as a major contributing factor to their ability to be successful academically.

‘I think it is because of them that I am the person that I am now or whatever, because I could have also been, probably pregnant or taking drugs or becoming a real alcoholic or whatever, but because of the way that they are & the way they raise me, I am not like that’

- (Respondent 7)

‘Well they push me because they know I am very into my school work. Like they don’t understand the Maths or the Physics but like they will help me and always ask how it’s going and what my marks are like. Yes, like maybe if I’m studying late, my mommy or my granny will like come make me a cup of coffee or bring me a blanket because I study in the kitchen and its cold there so they do what they can’.

- (Respondent 8)

This finding corroborates the work of Schoon (2006) who described the characteristics of parents who present as a protective factor in the face of risk as being actively involved in the lives of their children by taking a keen interest in the education and development of their offspring.

Stability within the home and family life has also been placed under the banner of parental input with regards to identifying factors enabling academic and personal success amongst these nine respondents.

‘Personally for me, I would say now, because I have the average family life...because my circumstances were better than a lot of people in my area so that is why I think I wasn’t that affected by it. Like I don’t have an overcrowded house and my parents weren’t drinking or my brother on drugs and that so I think my life was easier than others I would say’

- (Respondent 5)

This finding further echoes the work of Schoon (2006) which listed a stable and supportive family environment as another key protective factor in the development of resilience.

4.5.3 Category three: Teachers and fellow learners

Academic resilience or the capacity to overcome life challenges and excel academically was cited by all the respondents as often being owed to the influential role of teachers and fellow learners as well as their parents. The personal contact they had with their teachers, the feeling of being cared for and motivated both in a teacher-student relationship as well as in a

personal capacity was described as being a strong protective factor to learners in Mitchell's Plain.

'They, they like aren't working just to get done with their work. They are working to make us pass. They care about us they really do. Yes I would say it does because it makes us feel like it's not only us that wants this. They also want it for us. Like I would call most of my teachers like 'that's my daddy or that's my mommy'... Yes I call them that because whenever I need something, I can just like go to my teachers... Like one day if I don't have bread or if I didn't bring money then I can just like come, to even the Deputy'

- (Respondent 1)

Yes they (teachers) will guide you and advise you or tell you if you doing something wrong. They will always ask things like 'How are things going or how are things at home?' even like the deputy principal. Because they take an interest. I mean they can see if something is wrong. If your marks go down then it's obvious to them.

- (Respondent 3)

This finding concurs with existing research on the role of teachers as a protective factor in the development of resistance such as the work of Tiets, Huizinga and Byrnes (2010). Their research states that youth who have stronger bonds with teachers are more likely to talk to them in times of difficulty and therefore these youths may be more likely to learn interpersonal and coping skills as well as internalize values learnt from teachers.

Peer groups who are motivated, similarly goal-oriented and committed to academic achievement were viewed by eleven of the respondents as having an equally positive impact on their sense of self and personal direction as parents and teachers do.

'...I think it is also the friends that you associate yourself with. Like if you are with a group that is very vulgar & things like that, you would not have that attached to you, so you are going to grow up like something like that, but I have associated myself with decent people & I have enjoyed myself, like I don't get into trouble & things like that. I keep away from that.

- (Respondent 2)

‘I have been lucky enough to have good friends who are not involved in those things. None of them are into drugs or partying every weekend, stuff like that. It’s not like I have to feel bad because I must study for this maths test while all of you are out partying because they are studying with me. My friends are definitely my biggest motivators’.

- (Respondent 5)

These findings supports the work of Ladd & Troop- Gordon (2003) which states that positive peer relational experiences promote social competence, motivation, a positive self-image as well as protection from internalizing problems.

4.5.4 Category four: Goals and aspirations

Personal goals and aspiring to different forms of success in life was identified by twelve of the respondents as another individual protective factor associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain. Respondents felt that having life goals allowed them to remain motivated and focused on their academics, avoid anti-social behavior and strive for success.

‘There is not a word to describe it; you cannot say it is a mission, because it is not a mission. It is not where you will concentrate your determination, because it is not determination, it is much more than that. I do not think the word has been invented yet. I think, if I had to tell you, I could only tell you how it feels to want to get those things, you want to know what is out there, that is all that drives you. You want to see what is beyond the place that you are stuck in. You feel that you are stuck in a place, you want to learn, that is the only key to get out from where you are. You want to get out, that is all I that I see’.

- (Respondent 16)

‘Me, personally, I would say it’s the goals that I have for myself. Like I told myself that I am going to do this at a certain time and I expect myself to do it at that time. I told myself that I am going to matriculate’.

- (Respondent 1)

These findings confirm the work of (Schoon, 2006) which identifies personal, educational and career goals and aspirations as having a significant, life-long influence on occupational attainment. Having clear plans for one's life has major impact on the direction of one's life course and helps to maintain individual adjustment in different environments and situations.

4.5.5 Category five: Extra-mural activity

Outlets for stress relief, opportunities to be distracted from the daily worry about examinations and other academic commitments and feeling detached from life's general struggles by engaging in enjoyable or physical activity was identified by nine of the respondents as another key protective factor. Though the remaining seven respondents have experienced the benefits of partaking in extra-mural activity in the past, they now no longer have the time to dedicate to leisure activity due to academic demands. These extra-mural activities ranged from sport, arts and culture to religious committee engagements. One respondent described the nature and benefit of engaging in extra-mural activity in the following quote:

'...It's like my stress release. When I like had a hard day or I'm angry or frustrated or something I can just take it out on the soccer field. And with choir, singing makes me happy and it's same like soccer. When I didn't have such a nice day, then I go to choir and sing, then I automatically feel better'.

- (Respondent 1)

'I like reading and swimming...it distracts you from things and situations'.

- (Respondent 14)

This finding strongly supports resilience research evidence of extra-mural activity which states that involvement in extra-curricular activity is related to academic achievement, lower rates of substance abuse and better psychological adjustment (Tiets et al, 2010). The finding is also in support of studies by Wasonga et al (2003) which found that children who experienced positive involvement with others were more likely to exhibit inherent motivation and acceptance authority, established a stronger sense of autonomy, identity and responsibility to regulate their behavior.

4.5.6 Category six: Community and social influences

Despite the many risk factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain, thirteen of the sixteen respondents felt that the support and input from members of the community could too in fact act as a protective factor. Concern and involvement in one's upbringing by neighbours and other community members acted as a source of protection from anti-social behavior and made one feel cared for.

'Sometimes if I am late and there are old people that are still in their houses, they will say that I am late for school and that I must walk faster or they would give you lectures. They will give me the speech about that I must go to school, because I must get out of this area and you must make something of yourself, because people did not have those opportunities in their time that is also cool about Mitchells Plain. If you are walking with your boyfriend and people will be like peeping and telling you that they are watching. That is also cool, the community bond'.

- (Respondent 12)

'Mitchells Plain is a very nice place to live in, the people are friendly, they know one another, they like to help one another and here are gangsters here, but if they know you from that area, they will not, how can I say? The people are very nice people, they are very helpful and they care about one another, sometimes they will fight and argue, but they really care about each other'.

- (Respondent 15)

These findings concur with the work of Wasonga (2002) and Siquera and Diaz (2004) which identified community bonds as a protective factor in the development of resilience. Their findings states that adolescents will successfully overcome developmental hurdles though social connectedness which helps children to internalize social values and become committed to social institutions such as school.

4.6 Theme three: Gender-specific risk and protective factors

All the respondents were aware of and identified risk factors which were specific to the young women living in Mitchell's Plain. These identified risks resulted in an increased

degree and more complicated nature of challenges faced by young girls in comparison to their male counterparts.

4.6.1 Risk factors

All the respondents identified teenage pregnancy as well as the factors which make young females susceptible to it as the main gender-specific risk factors associated with life in Mitchell' Plain. A need for belonging, peer pressure and factors which are characteristic of the stage of adolescence such as short-term thinking and impulsivity were once again also noted by these respondents as factors contributing to the teenage pregnancy phenomenon. The repercussions of teenage unplanned pregnancy were also discussed as a sub-category of risk factors association with this social phenomenon.

Another identified risk factor by twelve of the respondents was that of the risk of physical harm young women in Mitchell's Plain face followed by the last identified category of risk factors which explores the nature and effects of gender socialization. The sub-categories thereof include stereotype and social status and the difference in the roles and responsibilities of boys versus girls.

4.6.1.1 Category one: Teenage pregnancy

The social phenomenon of teenage pregnancy was unanimously identified as the main risk factor of life in Mitchell's Plain which are specific to young females. The respondents felt that the statistic of this occurrence was rapidly growing and has proven to have a significantly negative impact on the academic careers of these young girls.

'In MP it is (a problem). Every second girl you see is pregnant'.

- (Respondent 11)

'Most of the friends that I were here with in Grade 8, the majority of them dropped out, because they have children. The one is pregnant now. There are almost five girls, just in matric that is pregnant now, also. At this school from Grade 8 until matric there is a class where there is someone who is pregnant'.

- (Respondent 15)

A number of factors, mainly associated with the psycho-social developmental tasks of adolescence were identified as possible causes of teenage pregnancy. According to the data analyzed, these factors also act as individual risk factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain which are specific to young women in its' presentation and the manner in which it gets acted out (McKinnell, 2012).

4.6.1.1.1 Sub-category one: Sense of belonging and peer pressure

Ten of the respondents identified the need for belonging and the pressure from peers to engage in sexual activity in order to feel socially connected or to receive male attention as possible risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy.

'Yes or to fit in the group, because, like, sex in general has become a normal thing now days; it has not become a sacred thing that you have when you are married, but now it has become more normal. It has become a norm now; that you have to do it, for me'.

- (Respondent 3)

I do not know, maybe they want somebody to love them, maybe is they think, then I would have my child and my child must love me, but they do not feel loved by their parents or maybe they had sex with their boyfriend without a condom, because their boyfriend said so. They are not confident in themselves, many things'.

- (Respondent 12)

'I do not think that they think it is such a serious thing. They go after the satisfaction and the pleasures and their needs and things, so they think maybe if they have sex now, it is just for having sex or just for pleasing the guy. They do not want to lose they guy, they are going to say no and he is going to leave them and he is going to say that they are going to be a nun or whatever. She does it to please the guy and that is why, at the end of the day, it is not actually worth it'

- (Respondent 14)

These findings agree with the findings of research conducted by Furstenberg (1991) who listed despair for future plans or opportunities, school failure or academic challenges or a

desire to solidify a relationship with a male partner as some of the possible predisposing factors of teenage pregnancy.

4.6.1.1.2 Sub-category two: Poverty

Twelve of the respondents linked poverty to teenage pregnancy both at a planned and unplanned level as well. Poverty has been extensively cited in social research as being associated with teenage pregnancy as a predisposing factor. Purposefully falling pregnant in order to gain financial assistance often from the government was strongly highlighted by these respondents.

‘This one friend of mine, they live by their uncle, people have many children, because some of them go for the grants that they get for the children, because they do not work and that is their only way of getting money. Yes, to get money’

- (Respondent 11)

‘I know someone who got involved with a taxi driver because they weren’t so well off but she was pretty and he bought her like clothes and shoes and stuff and we all think that she just went with him because he could like give her stuff that her parents couldn’t’.

- (Respondent 8)

These findings are also in agreement with the work of Furstenberg (1991) which states that teenage mothers were found to have more likely grown up in poverty. Child bearing and rearing often provides a tangible psychological and economic asset to a young woman whose future prospects could look very bleak. It also concurs with the work of Geronimus (1987) which states that childbearing is an adaptive response to extreme levels of poverty and restricted life options which results in early childbearing being viewed as a benefit to these young mothers.

4.6.1.1.3 Sub-category three: Short-term thinking and impulsivity

Pregnancy as a result of short-term thinking, impulsivity and failure to plan accordingly was also identified by twelve respondents as major possible causal factors in the rising statistic of teenage pregnancies in Mitchell’s Plain.

‘I think that they think that they will not get pregnant or they are just trying things. Yes and that it might not happen to them or their boyfriends brainwash them; their judgement are so clouded because of their feelings for boys, even though you might think you are in love, you still need to respect yourself that much and think about your future. I do not think that many girls here think of their futures and the consequences of their choices’.

- (Respondent 13)

‘Yes, it is just having fun for that moment & then finding out that you are pregnant’.

- (Respondent 3)

These findings concur with Furstenberg (1991) who highlights typified adolescent recklessness, short-term thinking and impulsivity as well as unsuccessful and irregular attempts at contraception which are often the factors resulting in pregnancy as an unintended result of having sex.

4.6.1.1.4 Sub-category four: Added and unequal responsibility

Twelve of the respondents were clear in their experiential opinions of the inequality that exists in the responsibility or consequences of an unplanned teenage pregnancy. Of these twelve who highlighted teenage pregnancy as a major risk factor in Mitchell’s Plain, all of them described the sacrifices and major life changes on the part of the mother of the baby in comparison to the father. Thus, the added responsibility associated to teenage pregnancy was viewed to be primarily a gender-specific challenge for the young women of Mitchell’s Plain.

‘Not like the girls do, it is not like the girls do, because the child stays with the mother. So, when you are dating & you have an argument, you sort of, you can log out of Mxit & you can leave, it is the same thing’.

- (Respondent 6)

‘...so like one of the girls in my class, I know she had a baby recently and I know she has more responsibilities now, because she has a baby. She has to look after the baby, she has to clean, do her chores, that has not changed, but she has more duties now, because she is a mother. Where the boys, like a regular boy in my class, that is still the

same, they just come to school, they go home. I feel bad for her; it took both of them, now she is the one sitting with the responsibility’.

- (Respondent 3)

‘The boy is not there at night, the girl goes home with the baby and the guys are at home, at their own house, they do not hear the baby cry at night. They are not there when the baby is sick, because maybe they do not think it is their responsibility. I do not know, they think they do not have to be responsible for the baby’.

- (Respondent 16)

These findings strongly corroborate the work of both Mott (1990) and Furstenberg (1991) who make reference to the ramifications of teenage pregnancy by stating that unplanned pregnancy results in unanticipated family responsibilities limiting the teenagers access to opportunities and their family resources. Furthermore, these researchers have too found that the amount of support the young mother receives both emotionally and financially from the biological father of the baby is generally unstable and inconsistent, starting out as the opposite in the early stages of the child’s life but dwindles with time.

4.6.1.2 Category two: Female physical risk

The risk of physical danger and harm to young women in Mitchell’s Plain was identified by fourteen of the sixteen respondents. The respondents made mention of their constant fear of harm and always feeling like targets for male maltreatment.

‘...when we dress nicely and we wear our shorts and our short skirts and the men think, their mentally are just sex, when they are raped or something, that is why it is not always safe. The men want to use the young girls, maybe the girls are virgins and then the men think, because of the sangomas, that if you have sex with a virgin, you will not have AIDS anymore. Stuff like that also puts the young girls at risks and it makes them targets’.

- (Respondent 16)

‘... you feel like a target, I am not going to go and walk around by myself, because I always feel like someone is going to come after me, just because I am a girl. It is scary,

you do not want to be a girl on the Cape Flats, you do not want to walk around there with men everywhere around you and you can never really trust anyone. You cannot trust your uncle, you cannot even trust your father these days and you cannot trust your mother, because she wants to sell you. I think to be a girl, there are many challenges that you face’.

- (Respondent 8)

‘... like guys will be like: “meisie, meisie” like that & if you backchat to that, then they will get rude or they could get physical. So I just walk looking down if I go to the shop or home’.

- (Respondent 6)

These findings concur with the work of Abrams (2002) who strongly acknowledged the staggering and increasing statistic of violence against girls and women as a major contemporary risk factor for young women. This particular factor has major negative knock-on effects on a young woman’s confidence, self-esteem and self-worth making it only that more difficult to overcome additional life challenges.

4.6.1.3 Category three: Gender socialization

Fourteen of the sixteen respondents made reference to and elaborated on the influence of the gender stereotype and socialization process as a risk factor for academic achievement, increase of employment opportunities and social roles outside of the home. The general social advantage of boys over girls and the difference in domestic responsibilities place boys at an advantage to achieve academically and overcome other life challenges as they have less responsibilities and expectations than their female counterparts.

4.6.1.3.1 Sub-category one: Gender stereotype

Eight respondents commented on the negative influence of the stereotype of being a coloured female in terms of self-image, confidence and belief:

‘We are not good enough, compared to the girls that do not come from the Cape Flats. People think that you are just this rebellious teenagers, because of the Cape Flats title,

you are rebellious, you are not ambitious, you do not want to get anywhere in life, to you is just have a baby on the Cape Flats and do not do anything with yourself. That is the stigma that is attached to us and I do not like that. Also, when you are around other people that are not as challenged as you are, in your circumstances, it makes it harder to fit in. It is very hard to fit in, especially if you are amongst people who come from very good backgrounds’.

- (Respondent 14)

Twelve respondents commented on the influence of the traditional role and stereotype of women.

‘Because I think the stereotype for many years has been that men must go further in their studies and careers and women must just stay at home in the kitchen, pregnant... dependant on your husband for something’

- (Respondent 11)

A respondent used a personal example to describe the pressure she feels as a young woman within her home environment:

‘You need to clean; you need to help with the food. If there are younger children in the house then you must help get them done and stuff also because sometimes the bigger or older people in the house who are working, can’t always do all the stuff on their own so you must help where it’s needed. And it’s really a lot on your plate’.

- (Respondent 1)

This finding supports Abrams’ (2002) research stating that despite the many significant cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic differences in young women’s life experiences, all adolescent females grow up in a society that privileges their male counterparts in the labor market, as well as their traditionally cultural lives. Furthermore, the influence of culturally varying forms of gender socialization is oft rooted in the contemporary adolescent girl’s presenting challenges. The way that female adolescents respond to norms and stereotypes about their gender role is what shapes their responses to distress and adversity.

4.6.1.3.2 Sub-category two: Unequal gender roles and responsibilities

The stark contrast in the domestic roles and responsibilities of young boys and girls, despite the ever-evolving role of women in society and the workplace was mentioned by twelve of the respondents as another major risk factor specific to the female gender.

‘There is a big difference. Boys are never minded, household worries is not part of their thing, they just come out of work, sit there, have no worries. The girl has to clean and help cook food and everything; the boy just sits there. The people have the perception that boys are supposed to do nothing, they are just supposed to go out there, go work and come back. They are just supposed to support for their family, whereas the woman has to clean the house and all of that...but women are also working these days’.

- (Respondent 15)

‘Well in my family for example, my brother from small already was treated like a king. He is the same age as me but to like my granny, I must just fend for myself because I’m a girl and he must be taken care of because that’s what women are supposed to do for men’.

- (Respondent 8)

These findings corroborate the work of Abrams (2000) who acknowledged the prevalence of a society that still favours the male. Thus, women appear to have the added disadvantage of a limited opportunity or access to it in comparison to their male counterparts. The ability to achieve success despite psycho-social and economic challenged is a greater challenge for women than men.

4.6.2 Protective factors

The respondents had both similar and contrasting views on what they felt were gender-specific protective factors associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain. Categories such as gender socialization, role-modeling and personality which were highlighted as risk factors were identified by the respondents as possible protective factors too.

4.6.2.1 Category four: Gender socialization and protection of females

Half of the respondents identified features of the socialization process which could in fact be viewed as protective elements although their gendered socialization process often poses

difficulties with added responsibilities and feelings of being poorly treated in comparison to males. The effects of the socialization process with regards to the ‘protection’ of females based on the general view of them being the ‘weaker sex’ and the reality of responsibility of teenage pregnancy has influenced the manner in which families, communities and society has positively affected their lives.

“Boys tend to do stupid things and they are just impulsive, if girls had that same amount of freedom, there would be so much more girls pregnant”.

- (Respondent 13)

‘...my parents they are, like, so strict and whatever (in comparison to my brother) and they do restrict me from doing things I could have done with my friends, like go out, have fun... I think it is because of them that I am the person that I am now or whatever, because I could have also been, probably pregnant or taking drugs or becoming a real alcoholic or whatever, but because of the way that they are & the way they raise me, I am not like that’.

- (Respondent 7)

These findings concur with the work of Focal Point (1997) who highlights the differences in the raising of boy versus girl children with girls usually at a disadvantage. Parents are said to have stricter and clearer boundaries in terms of the behaviour and expectations of their daughters with harsher consequences for girls than boys as well.

4.6.2.2 Category five: Inverse role modeling

Being exposed to others who have made unfavorable life choices, those who are suffering financially and socially and being surrounded by crime and a lack of hope has been interpreted by twelve of the respondents as a protective factor. This is so, as it has provided the females in Mitchell’s Plain with a sense of motivation and the drive to seek regular positive input from others to make better choices and strive for better life conditions.

‘They just wanted to be care free. And now they are living like and I do not want to live like that so I will rather go to school and do what I have to so that I don’t have to live like that one day’.

- (Respondent 1)

‘Things other children take for granted I appreciate more. I think that is the case with many children from the Cape Flats, who end up coming to good schools. We see things differently and I think that helps us and it empowers us for the future’.

- (Respondent 14)

‘For me, I think as a girl I realise that there are a many people struggling and I do not want to be like those people, I do not want to end up struggling. I did grow up struggling with a single parent. I do not want to be a part of that or be a statistic that is why I have the right mentality to know that I must, at least work hard to achieve what I want to achieve and not be in the lower class or struggling and things like that’.

- (Respondent 16)

These findings agree with the position of Hurd, Zimmerman and Xue (2009) stating that adolescents often look to adults in order to ascertain which behaviours are acceptable, which are not, as well as to identify models of who they want to be like as well as who they wish not to be like.

4.6.2.3 Category six: Personality

All the respondents agreed that the influence of gender socialization and inverse role modeling has positively influenced the personality development of certain young females. Long-term thinking capacity, effective time-management, a sense of responsibility, internal motivation and a hard-working nature are some of the personality elements identified to have been borne from growing up as a young woman in Mitchell’s Plain. These personality elements were cited as having been strong contributors to their features of resilience both personally and academically.

4.6.2.3.1 Sub-category one: Long-term thinking

Thirteen of the respondents identified the capacity to think long-term as a key difference in the effects of gender socialization between girls and boys. This factor is what the respondents felt enabled them to avoid at-risk situations or life-altering behavior repercussions.

Boys think for next week, girls think for next year. Like in terms of applications for example. We will be doing it now, getting it done so that we know it is out of the way then you can study knowing that everything is finished. Whereas they will be like “Ag, we will figure it out whenever. We will deal with that when the times comes’.

- (Respondent 5)

‘Well I would say...it’s because boys, they live for the moment. They think to themselves’ Okay I’m going to do this now, whatever consequences come, I will deal with it later’. Like for example they will think ‘okay I’m going to have sex now and if the girl falls pregnant, I will deal with it later’. But the girl is like ‘Listen here dude, condom, birth control tablets or whatever’. That’s how girls are, because boys are like, they know they don’t have to worry or sit with the problems at the end of the day’.

- (Respondent 1)

These findings corroborate the research evidence of Seccombe (2002) who listed problem-solving skills, a reasonable level of self-esteem and rational thinking as three of the many individual characteristics which foster the general development of resilience amongst women.

4.6.2.3.2 Sub-category two: Time management and responsibility

Another distinct resultant difference in the socialization processes of boys versus girls was that of the concept of time management and sense of responsibility. Eleven of the sixteen respondents felt that girls were raised to have better time management skills and a greater sense of responsibility due to their roles and obligations within the home.

‘The girls will be the more responsible ones-the ones who must take care of the family...It’s because we can multi-task. We have to learn to be responsible at a much younger age than boys. So we learn to prioritise and use our time better than boys do’.

- (Respondent 5)

The respondents felt that one’s individual personality characteristics like strong-mindedness, good self-esteem and confidence, motivation and positivity enables one to overcome life difficulties or not succumb to the psycho-social and economic challenges of life in Mitchell’s

Plain. One respondent used a close friend's experience of falling pregnant in Grade twelve and remaining committed to her academics as an example of personality influences in the capacity to overcome life challenges:

'She is super woman, because physically it is abnormal to see something like this on school, but she copes really. Yes, some days when she had to go in for check-ups & stuff like that. She is going to come write exams & then while she is, for a time off now for the birth & that; we actually worked out a plan for her, so we will be taking work to her & tutoring her, just tutoring her, but while we are tutoring her; we will learn more. We actually have a plan for her, because she wants to be at school. She wants to learn & she wants to pass matric.'

- (Respondent 3)

These findings strongly support the personality theory basis of resilience. Bandura (1994) refers to self-efficacy as a strong mental basis for personal belief and drive to overcome. This finding also concurs with the work of Theron and Theron (2010) who identified personality protective factors to include optimism, assertiveness and flexibility.

4.7 Theme four: Demographic-specific strategies in response to risk

Fifteen respondents identified two main forms of responses to the risks they face as coloured females living in Mitchell's Plain. These were personal choice and prioritization and extra-mural activities.

4.7.1. Category one: Personal choice and prioritization

Fifteen of the sixteen respondents made reference to prioritizing their life goals and aspirations as one of their main responses to the influence and temptation of the risk factors they are exposed to while living in Mitchell's Plain. When asked how she has managed to escape the negative outcomes of life in Mitchell's plain, one respondent was quoted as saying:

'I think there will always be challenges, but it is probably, how you deal with them or the choices that you make that determine whatever the outcome will be'.

- (Respondent 10)

Another respondent described her view on how other's managed to succumb to peer pressure:

'There is a lot of temptation to get involved with the wrong people maybe, or do the wrong things but it's up to you. If you want to go down that route or not'

- (Respondent 3)

Another respondent made a similar comment but also included the influence of her personal choice in her response:

'... I refuse to form my life any other way. I refuse for it to turn out any other way. If you refuse for yourself to become a flop, you will not become a flop, because you just will not accept it. I do not want to live on the street; I do not want to become a nothing. I want something to show for myself, I do not want to die and not have done anything significant for this world.'

- (Respondent 8)

These findings support the work of Morales (2010) who highlighted personal choice as supplementary factors to personal goals and aspirations as protective factors in the development of both resilience and academic resilience.

4.7.2 Category two: Extra-mural activities

Nine of the respondents identified involvement in extra-mural activity as a strategy employed to cope with the risk factors of Mitchell's Plain. These activities included sports, leisure activity and arts and culture projects and programmes. However, all the respondents were quite clear in their overall view that both their schools and Mitchell's Plain in general, offer very few extra-mural activities as well as specifically for girls. This they felt limits the likelihood that the young women of Mitchell's Plain will access or use this possible coping strategy. Also, due to the academic pressure of Grade twelve, all the respondents stated that involvement in extra-mural activity was not always a possibility.

'Soccer... It's like my stress release. When I like had a hard day or I'm angry or frustrated or something I can just take it out on the soccer field. And with choir, singing

makes me happy and its same like soccer. When I didn't have such a nice day, then I go to choir and sing, then I automatically feel better'.

- (Respondent 1)

'I like acting; I enjoyed it that was my space. For creativity, to enjoy myself and to express myself. I used to like playing piano also, but that is also a used to, because now I am so busy with school, I do not get so much time, to do that'.

- (Respondent 12)

This finding supports the work of Tiets, Huizinga and Byrnes (2010) who reported conclusions in their evidence that involvement in extra-curricular activities predicted resilience in youth who resided in high-risk neighbourhoods. Furthermore, their studies have also shown that involvement in extra-curricular activity is related to academic achievement, lower rates of substance abuse and better psychological adjustment.

4.8 Theme five: Unique coping strategies in operationalizing protective factors

The respondents had varied means which they employed to operationalize their identified protective factors. The common employed strategies identified were engaging supportive resources, which included teachers and peers, religion, psychological defenses and distractions.

4.8.1 Category one: Engaging supportive resources

All the respondents felt that while protective factors existed within relationships around them, accessing these relationships in a manner which facilitates support and fosters resilience was a key factor in what enabled them to be academically successful. Furthermore, they felt that engaging these supportive resources is also what enabled them to withstand peer pressure and temptation.

4.8.1.1 Sub-category one: Teachers

The sixteen respondents were unanimous in their opinion that engaging their teacher's was one of the main factors which enabled them to operationalize other means of support as well. Relationships with teachers is what they felt allowed them to be as academically successful as they are.

'I always interact with my teachers, because you have to have a good relationship with your teachers, so that when you ask them questions, you feel confident. I have a really good relationship with this teacher, so I can ask the teacher questions, I can ask the teacher to do me a favour, like get me another text book or something like that or can I come for another lesson at interval, because I do not understand this'.

- (Respondent 12)

'I like all my teachers and if I like don't understand something then I will go to them and ask them. I'm like open with my teachers'.

- (Respondent 11)

These findings agree with the work of Morales (2010) who sees the role of the teachers as principally to help the learners become competent in the student's home, surrounding and broader environmental cultures. It also corroborates other findings of Tiets, Huizinga and Byrnes (2010) which states that youth who have stronger bonds with teachers are more likely to talk to them in times of difficulty and therefore these youths may be more likely to learn interpersonal and coping skills as well as internalize values learnt from teachers.

Some respondents highlighted the gender differences in the capacity to engage with teachers and develop a relationship with them as a source of support.

'...girls, we like to talk and share our problems and that whereas boys, they keep more to themselves. They won't talk to anyone, not even their friends. Now girls again, we speak to anyone we can trust and ask for advice and so on and that's also what makes us closer to our teachers, because they can help us with our problems and give us advice'.

- (Respondent 10)

‘Girls I think are more open, more willing to ask a question if there are things that we want to know. And there are always a particular group of people that will ask the questions in class per subject and they usually are the girls’.

- (Respondent 4)

This finding concurs with existing evidence that girls more than boys, are likely to forge closer ties with teachers and staff. This is possibly as a result of their greater tendency to ask questions and work to meet and exceed school rules and expectations. Social relationships amongst girls are also forged on the basis of assistance, encouragement, motivation and support (Riegle-Crumb, 2010)

4.8.1.2 Sub-category two: Peer relationships

Along with teachers, twelve of the sixteen respondents identified their peer relations as another means of operationalizing their protective factors. Investments in positive friendships gave them the ability to be goal-oriented, motivation, to work hard and develop a strong-willed attitude.

‘I have been lucky enough to have good friends who are not involved in those things. None of them are into drugs or partying every weekend, stuff like that. It’s not like I have to feel bad because I must study for this maths test while all of you are out partying because they are studying with me.

- (Respondent 9)

My friends are definitely my biggest motivators. We push each other to do better. Like all the girls in the top ten, we all live in MP, but we don’t live near each other so we won’t just walk to each other. So that’s why we don’t become part of the neighbourhood we live in’.

- (Respondent 5)

This finding supports the conclusions of the work conducted by Riegle-Crumb (2010). Girls for example typically have personal relationships with friends who involve noteworthy amounts of discussion and information sharing, not only about social matters but also relating to academic and school issues (Felmlee, 1999) which acts as a resilience building factor.

4.8.2 Category two: Religion

Religion and a relationship with God was the most strongly noted means of operationalizing protective factors identified by the respondents.

All the responses made reference to religion as a strategy but only five identified religion as the biggest if not the only strategy. These religious beliefs were felt to be responsible for overcoming the challenges or risk factors of life in Mitchell's Plain.

'It eases you, like, you pray before you like study or you are having a problem, it just pray or whatever & then you will be able to focus. It motivates you, because you know that God is the one who is going to decide if you going to get that mark, you are going to get it, so if you pray to God & ask Him, nothing will, you will prepare. Yes, we are always say a prayer before we leave home & so I think that kind of shields you from all the elements that are outside & if you just stay clear you won't get into trouble'.

- (Respondent 2)

Religion, yes definitely. I believe my mommy is also, she is saved. She says that everything you do, you need to pray first & whatever. There is a scripture that says, Jeremiah 29:11, it says that God has a plan to prosper us & not to harm us. So if you, that is God's Word, if you believe in God's Word, it is not about not going through all these struggles & complications, you can go through whatever, you can go through all these bad temptations, like whatever, but you know that one day, or somewhere it is going to get better. You are going to get somewhere.

- (Respondent 9)

This finding corroborates the work of both Oman and Thoresen (2005) and Pargament (1997) who found that global religious variables are consistent with lower rates of teenage delinquency, smoking, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug use in addition to more positive psycho-social functioning. Furthermore, connection to faith has proven to provide a host of positive coping skills. The researcher found that a commitment to religious and moral principles were ultimately the reasons why respondents did not succumb to the risk factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain.

4.8.3 Category three: Psychological defenses

Eleven of the respondents highlighted psychological defenses, employed at both unconscious and often conscious levels as strategies employed in operationalizing protective factors. Being strong willed and possessing other personal traits which enabled the respondents to remain committed to their life goals and aspirations were found to be strongly aided by the use of defenses as well.

Just under half of the respondents identified other forms of distraction as often being consciously employed when faced with the pressure of the risk factors.

‘Blocking everything out, it is a thing that I have done since young, sort of, once I realised the importance of school; it is a matter prioritising & if it is trivial stuff; block it out, just focus on where you want to go’

- (Respondent 6)

‘... I don’t have a specific method of coping, I just, I have not gone to that point where it is boiling point & I can’t or I have a breakdown or anything, but speaking about it, it does help. Maybe if you watch TV, it takes your mind away of things.

- (Respondent 2)

These findings support the work of Cyulrick (2006) who stated that some defence mechanisms, such as blocking are also strong coping skills aiding the development of resilience.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the variety of psycho-social challenges faced by young coloured women both living and being educated in Mitchell’s Plain. The chapter also explored the protective factors associated with life in Mitchell’s Plain. Gender-specific risk and protective factors were then identified followed by a discussion on the unique coping strategies as well as the strategies employed as a means to overcome the risks faced by this population group. The final chapter presents the main conclusions of this study and proposed recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the risk and protective factors associated with not only life and education in Mitchell's Plain but specific to the young women of this community. The purpose thereof was to understand the factors contributing to the development of resilience of young women who are faced with enormous psycho-social challenges but in spite of this, are able to excel academically. This chapter will highlight the main conclusions drawn from the findings of the research, guided by the research objectives. The chapter will also include recommendations for future researchers, social workers, the National Departments of Education, Sport and Recreation and Social Development and tertiary education bursary and scholarship funders.

5.2 Conclusions

Despite the historical difference in the purpose and nature of the development of the community of Mitchell's Plain and the primarily statistical basis of local research and documentation of the social challenges of this community, comparative research conducted on similar communities across the globe proved to draw significant commonalities with the findings of this research. The conclusions of the research will be discussed using the research objectives as headings.

5.2.1 To identify the specific risk factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.

The respondent's viewpoints on the significant amount of violence they are exposed to within their communities, corroborated with local research on the staggering statistics of petty and violent crime within Mitchell's Plain. It was found that both personal and known exposure and experiences of crime resulted in fear of safety and limited time spent outside of their homes. Shootings, gangsterism and gang-related violence were amongst the main violence-related risk factors identified by the respondents. Alcohol and drug abuse was found to be causally linked to the violence and crime statistics of Mitchell's Plain. Respondents felt that substance abuse had a significant effect on the occurrence, fear and anticipation of violence

and crime in their communities. It was also clear that access to and the exposure to substance abuse was on the increase in Mitchell's Plain and acted as another barrier in academic success for many young people in this community as the effects of substance abuse is not only prevalent in their homes but seemingly at their schools as well. Tik, dagga and alcohol were the most strongly identified abused substances due to the respondent's regular exposure to it in their communities. Drug merchants, drug selling and drug houses were also pinpointed as the central point from which violence often occurs in Mitchell's Plain. A debilitating fear and a simultaneous acceptance of this phenomenon as the 'norm' and unchangeable due to its long-standing history of occurrence in Mitchell's Plain were also evident from the findings.

The findings of this research revealed that poverty was the main risk factor associated with life and education in Mitchell's Plain, though the researcher found minimal other existing empirical evidence on the effects of poverty in Mitchell's Plain. Financial deprivation and limited access to basic resources was viewed to not only be an independent source of struggle for community members but also the causal factor of the violence, crime and substance abuse in addition to the social challenges of unemployment and overcrowding within the communities and schools of Mitchell's Plain. Access to basic needs such as food, a home, clothing, school fees, transport money and female hygiene necessities was viewed to be a constant struggle for many Mitchell's Plain residents and women. Poverty related to unemployment was also found to have a major impact on the issue of overcrowding, which appears to be a common concern amongst the respondents. Unemployment was also strongly identified as often being a choice rather than a lack of availability of jobs. Unemployment was also linked to a lack of skills and qualifications enabling residents to qualify for employment as well as due to a debilitating substance addiction. Overcrowding was linked to poverty due to family members not being able to afford homes of their own and choosing to live together in order to save money and afford other life essentials. This often resulted in more than one family sharing a two or three bedroomed home. Informal constructions would be erected on land on a property to accommodate more residents.

Poverty, unemployment and overcrowding act as risk factors to the development and academic achievement of young people in Mitchell's Plain in that it negatively impacts the family dynamics as a result of an unmanageable amount of individuals under one roof as well as in terms of the ability to study due to higher noise levels and limited space. Poverty, unemployment and overcrowding also compromises privacy and access to domestic

resources, additionally compromising study environments at home. This then too acts as academic and personal development barriers for young people in these areas. These factors too affect general community resources such as open land for community development, recreational space and amenities. This is so as recreational space then becomes land for the building of informal dwellings causing an increase in exposure to the risk factors of neighbourhood violence, crime and substance increases. Furthermore, the quality of the recreational space could also decrease or be severely compromised.

The identified risk factors from the findings associated with life in Mitchell's Plain in general were found to have spill-over effects on the nature and quality of education young people in Mitchell's Plain have access to. Violence and issues of safety of the community were found to also impact learning, access to additional educational support, learners' school attendance and their ability to concentrate. Teachers were unwilling or unable to offer after-school academic support due to the risk of physical harm or threat. Access to computers for example were limited or denied due to the possibility or result of theft or threat thereof. Experiences of violence at schools between learners and towards staff were highlighted as some of the main elements of school violence under the category of risk factors. Classroom dynamics such as the issue of crowd control was cited as being largely due to the classrooms being overcrowded. The issue of overcrowding in schools in Mitchell's Plain was found to be most likely due to the limited number of schools in the Mitchell's Plain area. Large numbers of learners per teacher were described as being a hindrance in the ability of teachers to teach the syllabus and provide extra input to learners in need, putting academic strain on learners' ability to achieve the best results possible.

Apart from the lack of resources in terms of available schools and classrooms, extra-mural activity resources and general learning resources such as libraries and computer facilities or comparatively poor quality thereof was also viewed as a risk factor in terms of education quality in Mitchell's Plain. The findings reveal that the quality of their resources at school such as the school grounds, learning materials and facilities were of a lesser quality in comparison to more affluent schools due to a lack of available finance to improve this or due to neighbourhood vandalism. The findings also reveal that access to or improving the quality of these resources could act as a promoting factor in academic achievement.

Family dynamics in terms of adequate support, motivation, security, access to positive role models and levels of family dysfunction were found to be subjective factors which could place young people at risk. Feeling unsupported in terms of emotional input or efforts to support academic or personal endeavours were found to result in feeling de-motivated, discouraged and lowered in self-belief. Insecurity within the home due to risk of harm, abuse or deprivation negatively impacted the ability to concentrate and be focused, hindering academic and personal development with severe psychological consequences. A lack of exposure to positive role models symbolized a decreased belief in the likelihood of success. Findings also revealed that uneducated parents, siblings and family members or exposure to those who engaged in anti-social activity without desire to alter their lives acted as another personal risk factor as it also lowers ones' personal expectations and belief that a more functional, stable life is possible.

Impulsivity and short-term thinking strongly associated with adolescent development was found to be another major risk factor. The findings of this research was that these characteristics act as a major risk factor during adolescence as it makes one susceptible to temptation and negative influence. Coupled with these developmental features is the need for belonging and affirmation when if absent, makes young people vulnerable to the influence of peer pressure. Dropping out of school, failing, sexual promiscuity and experimentation with drugs and alcohol were some of the outcomes revealed in the findings as being associated with the period of adolescence as a risk factor.

5.2.2 To explore the specific protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.

Protective factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain with regards to young females were found to exist within five broad categories: individual influences, home influences, academic influences, involvement in extra-mural activity and the influence of the community and society. Findings revealed that while one's personality make-up could present as a risk factor, it does and can too act as a protective factor. In fact, of the five identified protective factors, the research findings suggest that the influence of personality traits bears the most significance in terms of protective factors. Being independently motivated, strong-minded, strong-willed and in tune with one's weaknesses acts as a shield against negative influences such as peer pressure.

The influence of parental and sibling roles of support and motivation, favourable domestic circumstances in terms of levels of conflict or stress as well as access to and the provision of necessary resources and basic needs were found to be a strong protective factor after the influence of personality. Feeling secure and stable in one's home environment due to the absence of feelings of deprivation, fear of conflict or abuse was cited as enabling the respondents to be able to concentrate and focus on their academics. Moreover, feeling as though family members have a vested interest and belief in your capacity to achieve and be successful, positively influences your own self-belief and acts as a motivator to overcome life challenges and strive for academic success, was felt by the respondents to be another major home influence. Positive-role models were highlighted as the final protective factor under the category of home influence. Parents who symbolise and display responsibility, commitment, a hard-working nature, adherence to the law and dissatisfaction at irresponsible or below-par academic performance and unfavourable life choices was found to be significantly influential as a protective factor.

The role of teachers and peers and having personal goals and aspirations were mentioned as other strong protective factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain in the category of academic influences. Along with personality influences and the role of parents and home circumstances, the input from teachers was unanimously stated by the respondents as a major contributing factor in their ability to be successful academically in spite of the many life difficulties they face. Teachers were found to represent a source of genuine care, belief and motivation. The willingness to offer not only academic but personal support and involvement beyond the call of duty had a positive psychological effect on them in that it made them feel as though they had someone to feel proud of them, often when they felt like there was no one else. Teachers were seen as a consistent and oft the first people to identify when they were struggling which resulted in feelings of being cared for, acknowledged and affirmed. These feelings fuelled their motivation and commitment to achieving good academic results.

Positively influential peers who shared similar values, goals and aspirations as opposed to peer groups which present sources of peer pressure, engagement in anti-social activity and did not value academic success were cited as a protective factor in terms of its academic influence. Supportive peers, particularly amongst girls were viewed as a source of personal support and an outlet for discussion and exploration of emotions relating to trying circumstances. Feeling understood and having one's emotions affirmed was viewed as a

factor which protected the respondents from internalizing their struggles, losing academic focus or succumbing to the negative effects of life in Mitchell's Plain.

Though strongly based on the influence of personality, having personal goals and aspirations was highlighted as a protective factor relating to the influence of academics. The findings of this research showed that having goals and aspirations for one's life enabled young people to develop the necessary plans or strategies to achieve these goals which allowed them to not feel the need to engage in activities that may compromise them achieving those goals. The desire to complete high school, go to university, develop promising careers, be financially independent, care for their loved ones and more importantly, to not be faced with the same life truth and challenges as those around them was another major protective factor. Being driven to succeed enabled them to make the necessary personal sacrifices such as leisure time and not being too fixated on the hardships they currently face as they were focused and driven by the goals they had set for themselves.

Involvement in and commitment to an extra-mural activity acted as a source of stress-relief, a socializing opportunity, a balance to the demands of high school and a deterrent from anti-social behaviour and was thus highlighted as another protective factor. These activities ranged from sport, leisure and artistic and cultural activity though it was found that time and energy to remain committed to these activities were hindered by the academic pressure of grade twelve. Furthermore, the availability of extra-mural activities suited for young women were far less in comparison to those available for young men.

Paradoxically, the influence of the community, though specifically found to be a major risk factor in Mitchell's Plain, was also found to play a protective role for the respondents in terms of living and being educated in Mitchell's Plain. The close bonds created by living in an overcrowded community where members are united by their common social challenges results in feelings of being akin to family. This was found to act as a source of protection and support and additional care and input. Family support coupled with support from additional community members aided in the development of resilience in that respondents felt that they often have multiple care and support bases as well as the fact that it often met the need for belonging, inherent in adolescent development.

5.2.3 To investigate the gender-specific risk and protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.

The predisposing factors and consequences of unplanned or planned teenage pregnancy was found to be the most cited gender-specific risk factor in Mitchell's Plain. Factors such as an unmet need for belonging, peer pressure and typified adolescent characteristics such as impulsivity and short-term thinking were highlighted as factors which results in lowered self-esteem, vulnerability and becoming susceptible to negative influences and making unfavourable choices. Other than the psychological causes of teenage pregnancy, it was too found that poverty is an increasing cause of teenage pregnancy in Mitchell's Plain. Young women are choosing to fall pregnant for the purpose of gaining financial support from the government in terms of a child support grant. Additionally, young woman are choosing to be impregnated by older, seemingly more financially stable men who could offer them financial security and act as a rescuer from their poverty-stricken homes. While teenage pregnancy was viewed to occasionally be intentional, this research found that teenage pregnancy is often a consequence of short-term thinking, instant gratification, failure to plan and a result of unprotected sex. The consequences of teenage pregnancy, whether planned or unplanned was viewed as a gender-specific risk factor as it was unanimously viewed as a responsibility falling mainly on the shoulders of the young women. The impact it has on the education of the young woman as she has to leave school in order to give birth, the added financial pressure as most often she is abandoned by the father of the child and an increase in responsibilities in terms of caring for the child was found to be the major consequential risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy in Mitchell's Plain.

The fear and occurrence of physical harm against females were found to be a risk factor specific to women in Mitchell's Plain. Feeling unsafe in one's community and even one's home due to fear of being harmed resulted in all men being viewed as possible predators and young women developing social aversion as a safety measure. The stereotype of women in Mitchell's Plain as unambitious and sexually promiscuous were said to have a negative impact on their self-belief, worth and confidence as it made them question their and other's opinions of their capacities and created an internal conflict with their goals and aspirations. The socialization of women, viewed to still be strongly based on the traditional roles and responsibilities of women were seen as another gender-specific risk factor as it exposed the respondents to added responsibilities and expectations which their male counterparts were

felt to be freed from. Managing academic and domestic responsibilities often compromised the amount of time and energy they had available to focus on their school work. Not only was this viewed to be unfair but also contradictory to modern social shifts and the progression in the equalized role of the sexes in the workforce.

The gender-specific protective factors associated with life and education in Mitchell's Plain in terms of its' contribution to the development of resilience was found to be positive aspects of the socialization and protection of women, the effect of inverse role modelling and once again, personality factors. The traditional view of women being the weaker sex coupled with the knowledge of the physical responsibility of pregnancy lying solely on the female has resulted in parents instilling stricter boundaries in terms of discipline and socialization with their daughters in comparison to their sons. This difference has been viewed to protect young women from the traps of society as they are thus not as exposed to temptation as boys appear to be. Being surrounded by community members who are struggling financially, are facing major deprivation and have failed to make positive life choices, on another personality level, influenced their mind-set to develop and work towards goals of success as opposed to follow the life paths of such individuals in their community. Thus, being exposed to young women who have fallen pregnant and are facing the consequences thereof acts as a protective factor for some young women from Mitchell's Plain.

The effects of the gender socialization process and inverse role modelling was found to have an influence on the personality development of young women and therefore personality as a consequence of these two factors is another gender-specific protective factor. The effects of the added responsibility within the home, exposure to deprivation and crime as well as the knowledge of the effects of teenage pregnancy was stated as having positively influenced the development of long-term thinking, responsibility and accountability, effective time management skills, goal orientation, internal motivation and a hard-working nature. These personality factors are in combination resilience building factors said to be specific to the young women of Mitchell's Plain.

5.2.4 To examine the unique strategies employed by coloured adolescent females in responding to their risk factors.

Two main strategies were identified as a response to the risk factors associated with life in Mitchell's Plain. Firstly, the findings of this research showed that individual responses in the forms of personal choices and prioritization were the most strongly identified strategy. Making the personal choice to have an education, personal success, different life circumstances and a commitment to personal morals and ethics as a priority were found to be the most cited response strategy. The prioritization of these goals fosters commitment, level-headedness, motivation and personal drive which are major contributing factors to the development of resilience. Extra-mural activities and the benefits thereof in terms of the earlier discussed psycho-social benefits thereof was found to be a consciously made choice as a response to the risk factors in Mitchell's Plain.

5.2.5 To examine the unique strategies employed in operationalizing their protective factors.

Engaging supportive resources in the form of teachers and peers, commitment to religious and moral principles and psychological defences were found to be the most significant strategies employed by these respondents in operationalizing their protective factors. Accessing and making use of support and intervention efforts available from teachers were found to be the most effective and valuable resilience fostering factor. As females, a noticeable difference was stated in the level and quality of interaction between male and female students and teachers as an influence in the amount of input girls receive from their teacher as opposed to boys. Additionally, since the respondents too mentioned that as young women, they felt themselves to be typically more open to emotional expression, requesting assistance and engaging with teachers on a supportive level than boys are, presented as a gender-specific element in this protective factor. These inter-personal skills is what was felt to also be what fosters closeness, support and bonding with peers as a strategy which maximizes the benefits of this protective factor.

The boundaries stipulated in religion and the moral, ethical and expected standard of behaviour outlined by it was another means of operationalizing the identified protective factors. The findings of this research were that a connection to moral code or a religious

framework of behaviour was used to support and assist the other protective factors. Personality, goals, personal choice and interaction with others were said to be guided by religious principles which are against or condemn the anti-social behaviour which places young people in Mitchell's Plain at risk. Coupled with this is the final identified operationalizing strategy of employing psychological defences. Defences such as avoidance and blocking were cited as the main coping mechanisms, which enables the respondents to maintain and increase the protective factor benefits.

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher will now present her recommendations based on the discussion of her findings.

5.3.1 Recommendations for future research

The researcher discovered in the process of gathering existing literature, that there was a great shortage of research on the issue of resilience, specific to the local context of not only Cape Town but South Africa relevant to this contemporary period. It is thus a suggestion of the researcher that more research on the factors promoting resilience within the South African context, amongst different age and racial groupings as well as the factors placing it at risk be conducted.

5.3.2 Recommendations for social workers

Collective findings revealed that apart from the services social workers could offer the teachers and learners at school if they were employed as full-time staff members on the school property, offering broader intervention and education programmes would be hugely beneficial to this community. Offering parenting classes where parents could be educated on the influence of communication styles, as well as what effects the exposure to risk and general family dynamics have on their children. The programmes or workshops could also educate parents on the development of their children in modern day society and teach them appropriate disciplinary measures for the developmental stage of adolescence. This will

enable stronger and more functional relationships to develop within the homes of Mitchell's Plain, thus offering a stronger support base to enable young people to achieve.

5.3.3 Recommendations for the National Departments of Education

Extra-mural activity and additional after-school input from teachers were strongly identified as major contributing factors in the academic success of these respondents. Thus, it is the researcher's recommendation that the Department of Education develop programmes incorporating individuals with teaching qualifications to work in areas within Mitchell's Plain offering the service of additional or after-school academic input particularly during the final year of high school. This will decrease the workload of teachers and also make the service more accessible to other learners or other schools and communities as well.

5.3.4 Recommendations for the National Department of Sport and Recreation

As most of the schools in Mitchell's Plain lack the resources and funding to implement a stronger extra-mural activity component to the education services they offer their youth it is a suggestion to the Department of Sport to develop sporting and cultural programmes at high schools which cater for both boys and girls.

5.3.5 Recommendations for the National Department of Social Development

It was also discovered by the researcher that often teachers and other academic staff are expected to address the psycho-social challenges and the negative impact it has on the emotional state and functioning of their learners. It would perhaps serve both the schools and the community at large well if more social workers were employed at the schools in Mitchell's Plain to assist the learners and staff. This could have significantly positive knock-on effects on the functioning of the school, its' learners and their academic results.

5.3.6 Recommendations to tertiary education bursary and scholarships funders

It is apparent to the researcher that a number of both secondary and tertiary education scholarships and bursaries are offered to young males, mainly on the basis of sport. Due to a dismal, though developing support of female sports in the country of South Africa, access to

this type of opportunity and financial assistance is not as common for young women. Identifying the fact that the majority of the academically excelling students in Mitchell's Plain were young women should present as grounds for an increased investment in the education and future of these young women who have displayed their capacities to achieve against the odds.

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**APPENDIX ONE: RESEARCH APPLICATION LETTER TO THE
WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**



DIRECTORATE: RESEARCH

Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za

tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: +27 086 590 2282

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
wced.wcape.gov.za

**APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN THE WESTERN CAPE**

Applicant Details:

Title: Ms

Surname: Petersen

First Name (s): Jawaahier

Gender: Female

Name of organisation (directorate if WCED): Private (Research Student)

Telephone Number:

Cellphone Number: 0731852290

Fax Number: 0217642250

E-mail address: jpetersen@wynghs.co.za

Name of Institution: University of Cape Town

Student Number: PTRJAW001

Degree/Diploma: Master's in Clinical Social Work

Supervisor's Name: Ronald Addinall

Telephone number of Supervisor: 0216503475

Year of Registration: 2011

Year of Completion: 2013

Specialisation: Clinical Practice

Faculty: Social Development

Research Details:

Title of Research:

An explorative study of the coloured adolescent females facing psycho-social challenges living in Mitchell's Plain who demonstrate resilience through academic excellence.

Research Questions:

1. What are the specific risk factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?
2. What are the specific protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?
3. What are the gender-specific risk and protective factors experienced by coloured adolescent females living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.
4. What are the unique strategies employed by coloured adolescent females in responding to their risk factors?
5. What are the unique strategies employed in operationalizing their protective factors?

Respondents:

Academically excelling Grade 12 females residing and attending school in Mitchell's Plain.

Name of Education Institution (s):

- Lentegeur High School
- Spine Road High School
- Oval North High School
- Westridge High School
- Cedar High School

Research Period in Education Institution (s):

Start Date: July 2012

End Date: 01 September 2012

Signed:

Date: 29 May 2012

APPENDIX TWO: RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER TO THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za

tel: +27 021 476 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

Dear Mr Sir/Madam

Before research can be approved the following must be provided:

1. Concise description of the research project/proposal.
2. If questionnaires/interviews/tests are to be used in the investigation, copies of such questionnaires/structured questions/test questions to be provided.
3. A letter from your supervisor/project head must accompany the application stating that you are registered at a tertiary institution (for students only).
4. The names of the departmental institutions (schools) where the research will be conducted.
5. Who are the Respondents (i.e. learners, parents, educators, etc.)?
6. The period during which the research will be conducted.
7. **No research can be conducted during the fourth term (October – December) as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations.**
8. Approval for projects should be confirmed by the District Director of the schools where the project will be conducted.
9. Complete the Research Application Form (attached with letter).

The above information can be faxed or e-mailed. If further assistance is needed, please contact Dr Audrey Wyngaard, telephone number 021 467 9272, e-mail audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za

Yours in Education

Signed: A. T WYNGAARD
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 17th January 2012

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9350 fax: +27 21 425 7445
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92
www.westerncape.gov.za

APPENDIX THREE: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER TO MITCHELL'S PLAIN HIGH SCHOOLS:

June 2012

For the Attention of the Principal and Governing Body:

I am currently completing my Master's Research towards my specializing degree in Clinical Social Work at the University of Cape Town. I have been employed as a High School social worker at a girls' high school in the southern suburbs for the past five years. In addition, I have been actively involved in a mentorship programme which identifies and offers personal and academic support to young female high school learners from Mitchell's Plain who are excelling in Mathematics and Physical Science.

As a result, I have been drawn to and particularly interested in the capacity of a certain number of young women who excel academically despite the many personal, social and economic challenges they face. My personal view has always been that there is a significant lack of opportunity and support for women from disadvantaged communities to access the necessary means to further their personal and academic paths despite displaying clear potential. Thus, my research topic was borne.

I have decided to explore the phenomenon of resilience amongst coloured Grade 12 female learners from schools across Mitchell's Plain. Mitchell's Plain possesses a rich socio-political history with current unique circumstances varying in nature and degree. Understanding these young women's everyday challenges and ability to achieve academic excellence in spite of their many disadvantages will hopefully give rise to the development of school, community and potentially broader interventions which could foster similar resilience amongst equally disadvantaged youth experiencing like or other psycho-social difficulties hindering academic performance.

Your school was identified by the Western Cape Education Department as one of the top-achieving schools in Matric results across Mitchell's Plain at the end of the academic year of 2012. I thus request your school's assistance in the completion of my dissertation. I wish to interview 2-3 Grade 12 female learners who meet the following criteria as set out in the parameters of my respondent profiles:

- Achieved an overall academic average of 75% and above at the end of the First Term of Grade 12.
- Have no biological child/ren.
- Has no significant history of drug or substance abuse.
- Has no significant history of criminal or delinquent behaviour.
- Has a history of involvement in extra-mural or after-school activity (optional)

Upon the identification of these learners, I shall forward letters of consent for each respondent which will highlight that the participation in this research is entirely anonymous, voluntary and will ensure in all possible aspects the physical and emotional safety of the respondents. It will also highlight the significant role their contributions will play in what has been viewed as an imperative body of work for an evolving South Africa.

Once the respondents from all the identified schools have been noted and consent has been granted, I shall make contact with the schools and request their co-operation in arranging a suitable meeting time and venue on the premises to avoid time clashes or transportation hassles.

As pointed out in the attached permission letter from the WCED, my interviews are to take place between the 1st of July and the 1st of September 2012 therefore hopefully not disrupting teaching or examination preparation time. Consideration for the facilitation of learning and achievement will be of utmost importance. As the start date of the research falls within the mid-year holiday period, I hope to begin interviews at the start of the Third Term.

Should you have any questions regarding any aspect of my research, please do not hesitate to ask.

I thank you in advance and sincerely request your assistance and much appreciated co-operation in completing a piece of research I am passionate about and that I foresee great beneficial potential in.

Jawaahier Petersen

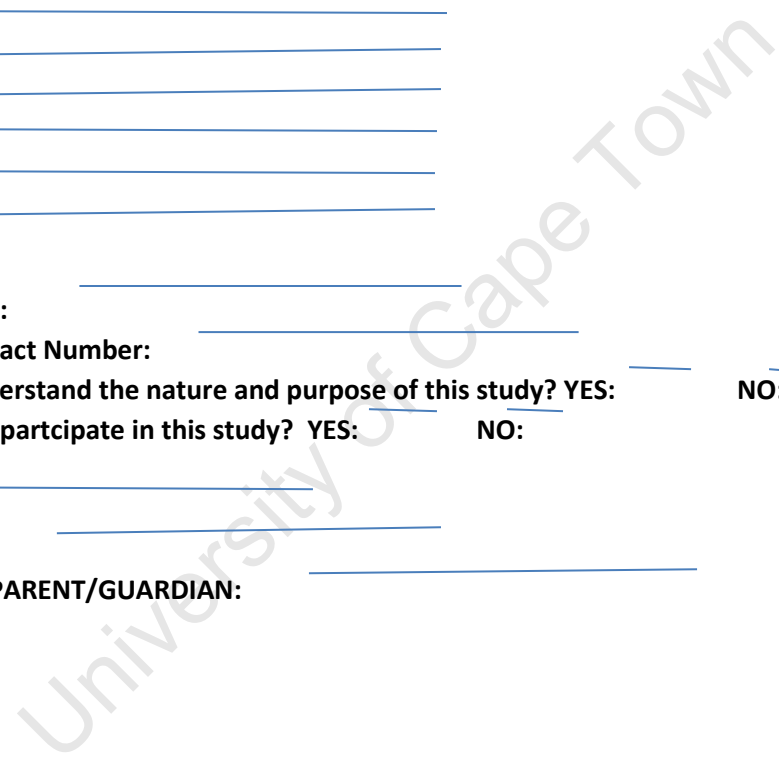
APPENDIX FOUR: RESPONDENT INDEMNITY FORM:

**Jawaahier Petersen: UCT Master's Research Participation
Indemnity Form**

Surname: _____
Name (s): _____
D.O.B: _____
School: _____
Subjects: _____

Contact Number: _____
Alternative Contact Number: _____
Do you fully understand the nature and purpose of this study? YES: _____ NO: _____
Do you agree to participate in this study? YES: _____ NO: _____

DATE: _____
SIGNATURE: _____
SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN: _____



APPENDIX FIVE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

-Introduce myself

-UCT Clinical Masters student

-Give them a little background to study (Girl Power, work as social worker at girl's high school, previous resident of MP)

-Purpose of research

-Their role in research

-Mention that I have been given permission by the governing body and principal.

-Explain confidentiality and anonymity (explain anonymity and confidentiality towards each other in focus group setting).

-Inform them that answering questions is not compulsory. They have the right to stop at any point.

Section A: Profile of Respondent

- Tell me about yourself...i.e.:
 - What is your name?
 - How old are you?
 - Which school do you attend?
 - What are your subjects at school?
 - Who do you live with?

General Note: Respondents are allowed to expand or elaborate

(Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of coloured adolescent females of the psycho-social challenges experienced in general living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?)

Section B: Perception of Psycho-Social Challenges

Social risk factors: Poverty, Violence, Substance Abuse, Access to Resources:

1. Where in Mitchells Plain do you live?
2. How long have you lived in MP?
3. What is it like living in MP?
(explore experiences with lack of resources, violence, overcrowding etc.
Could also link to Question 1 Section C)
4. What is school-life like in MP?

(quality of education, resources, safety)

5. Describe the relationship you have with your teachers
(probe quality of relationship, teachers past and present, role modeling)
-

(Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of coloured adolescent females of the gender-specific psycho-social challenges experienced living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?)

Section C: Gender-Specific Challenges

1. What is it like to be a young adult living and going to school in MP?
(clarify each identified issue and allow for elaboration)
 2. What is it like to be a young adult woman living and going to school in MP?
(clarify each identified issue and allow for elaboration)
 3. Do you notice any differences between coloured girls and boys in terms of family life?
 4. Do you notice any differences between boys and girls within a classroom/school setting?
 5. Do you notice any difference between boys and girls in social settings?
(Use socializing, parties etc as examples)
 6. How many boys versus girls are in your classes?
 7. Who gets the higher academic results in your grade? Girls or boys?
 8. Why do you think that is?
-

(Research Question 3: How do the psycho-social challenges experienced by coloured adolescent females impact on living and managing school in Mitchell's Plain?)

Section D: Impact of Psycho-Social Challenges:

1. Have any of these challenges mentioned affected you or your life personally?
(explore emotional,academic, physical and financial effects)
2. If not, has it affected anyone you know?
3. If so, how?
4. Have any of these challenges mentioned affected your education?
(marks, ability to attend school etc)
5. If not, has it affected anyone you know?
6. If so, how?
7. How does your family feel about education?
(parental expectation, drop outs in family)

(Research Question 4: How have coloured adolescent females responded to the psycho-social challenges living and attending school in Mitchell's Plain?)

Section E: Individual Responses to Challenges

Many girls have not been able to reach the milestone of Matric and achieve the results you have...

1. Why do you think that is?
(explore personality function, religious influences, family input)
-

(Research Question 5: Which responses to their psycho-social challenges have contributed to their ability to excel academically in the face of these challenges?)

E: Individual Ability to Excel in spite of Challenges:

1. How do you think you have managed to escape the dangers/temptations and challenges that a large number of teenage girls in MP have faced?
(could be answered in previous question)
2. How do you think you have managed to escape the dangers/temptations and challenges that a large number of teenage girls in MP have faced?
3. Are you involved in any extra-curricular or after-school activities? If so,
4. What role do you think those activities have played in your ability to overcome your life challenges?
5. Where so you see yourself in 10 years' time?

-Debriefing: Summarize, highlight main points, explore possible difficult material or issues that evoked emotional reactions from respondents.

-Remind them once again of the nature and purpose of study as well as their role.

-Thank You's