

# **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU- NATAL**

College of Humanities  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Discipline of Social Sciences



**Understanding Needs and Wants in Context:  
The Lived Experiences of Adolescents from Low  
Income Households in Newlands West, Durban.**

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (SOCIAL WORK)

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## DECLARATION

**I, Pumla Nofemele (216039036) declare that,**

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Dr Dorothee Hölscher

## DEDICATION

### TO MY PARENTS:

*This thesis is dedicated to my Mum and Dad*

*You always support me through the good and the bad*

*What an amazing honour it is to be your daughter, your kid*

*Always pushing me to grow, to learn, to be better*

*Which is exactly what I did*

*I love you for believing in me always*

*And through this dedication, I show my appreciation*

*Thank you.*

---

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To all my friends; I thank you for your beautiful messages of encouragement throughout this journey; for your patience and never losing faith in me.

My family members I love you all. Mum and Dad once again I thank you for raising me to be a disciplined young woman. You have done a great job. My nephew Yazini, also known as Andy, I thank you for being a kind hearted soul and for being my chauffeur. Last but not least, my sister Lumka, my biggest fan. I love being your big sister [by the way]. I appreciated the sacrifice that you made for me [you know which one] and even though you left Durban during the course of my study, I never doubted your love and support.

Finally, I thank you God.

## **ABSTRACT**

The starkly contrasting socio-economic classes embedded in South African communities imply that whilst some can be considered good consumers others will be excluded. As a result, pressures mount on adolescents to consume-not only to fit in with peer groups, but also to establish their identities. The environment informs adolescents on how they should shape their identities, values, goals and inconspicuously, their needs and wants. This interrelationship between the adolescent and the environment was demonstrated throughout the study.

The main purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of adolescents from low-income households in Newlands West, Durban. The study was designed as a qualitative, descriptive study. The sample consisted of twenty adolescents, twelve female and eight male participants aged sixteen to eighteen years. Of the twenty participants, six were involved in recreational activities. All participants were living in what is categorised as low-income households in Newlands West. In order to access this sample, I applied a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, and data was collected using focus group and semi-structured individual interviews. The data analysis was conducted through thematic content analysis and guided by the ecosystems theory which provided the study's interpretive framework. The study followed the University of KZN's ethical standards, and care was taken to adhere to the principles of autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. For trustworthiness, I took into account the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

Five main themes emerged from the data analysis namely; socio cultural factors affecting participant's needs and wants; home circumstances; the demands of society; the inability to participate in consumption activities: responses of adolescents; and the blurred boundaries between needs and wants in the lives of research participants. The study's findings point to the difficulties facing any society in the face of powerful global economic and cultural forces, with consumer values having been internalised by adolescents regardless of socio-economic status. The pressure to be good consumers led participants to engage in behaviours that were both socially acceptable and in behaviours that were harmful to themselves and others, and attracted moral judgement. Moreover, due to a lack of meso level activities

research participants were exposed to negative influences of the social environment. As a result of a manipulative consumer culture that emphasises consumption activities for self expression, the majority of participants in this study experienced the distinction between needs and wants as blurred. Framed by the ecosystems theory, this study demonstrated the nature of relationships between participants and their environment, including their peer groups, the role of the community activities, employment of caregivers, the cultures found in society, and the influences of processes such as globalisation. On the basis of these findings recommendations were made to address the challenges created by inequalities and a capitalistic consumer culture. These interventions speak to policy makers, town planners, social work, child and youth care, and teaching professions, and include recommendations towards social work education and further research.

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*Objective one:* To better understand the socio-economic backgrounds of participants

*Objective two:* To better understand how participants perceive their personal needs and wants

*Objective three:* To better understand the extent to which participants are able to meet their perceived needs and wants

*Objective four:* To better understand how participants go about meeting their needs and wants

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Economic inequalities in South Africa are considered to be a result of the Apartheid regime. The majority of people live in poverty which is a common characteristic of a society plagued with unemployment. According to Graham, Selipsky, Moodley, Maina and Rowland (2010:22), 'people are poor because they are unemployed, cannot read or write and lack health care - not possessing assets in the form of housing or land is a further fact as well as non-availability of services such as water, electricity and transport'. This has created divides in societies, where some people enjoy more affluent lifestyles whilst others remain marginalized and trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. To remedy the situation government initiated several programmes to uplift the economy however due to their capitalistic nature they created an even deeper divide. Furthermore the impact of globalisation has resulted in a culture that values and demands consumption. The implications of these standards influence individual's conceptualisations of how they should present themselves; and more so when it comes to adolescents who face the task of developing an identity. More specifically, perceptions of needs and wants emerge from adolescents' environments which provide information about functioning in society.

This study, *Understanding needs and wants in context: The lived experiences of adolescents from low income households in Newlands West*; has succeeded in capturing and interpreting the perspectives of participants as set out in the topic and in the aim of the study. This chapter commences with an introduction and is followed with a discussion on the background and rationale of the study, outline of the research problem, research aim, objectives of the study, research questions and the underlying assumptions of the study. Thereafter, the theoretical framework of the study and the value of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes by providing the structure of the dissertation.

## 1.1. Background and Rationale

In this section, I will discuss the background and rationale of the study. Once the two have been established, my motivation for embarking on this research should become clear. I am a child and youth care worker and a social worker, who has grown up in Newlands West,

Durban. Newlands West is a semi-urban community with a significant poverty rate. Because of the apartheid era's Group Areas Act, historically, Indian residents occupied Newlands West. Since 1994, this has changed as there have been major transformations with democracy, economic policies and urbanization. According to census 2011, the population of Newlands West is structured as follows: Blacks 66.3%, Indians 31.1%, Coloreds 1.7%, Whites 0.3% and others 0.6% (Statistics SA 2012). The community is multicultural and comprises differing socio economic classes. This implies that whilst some people are able to participate in South Africa's consumer markets, others are not, and therefore may be considered marginalized and stigmatized. Bauman (1998) postulates that the poor who are unable to respond to the temptations of the marketplace have been marginalized from mainstream society and described as 'unwanted', 'abnormal', 'non consumers' and 'flawed consumers'. Such a divide has both psychological and behavioural ramifications among the affected.

Growing up in Newlands West, I have witnessed that as a result of economic difficulties, people often have met their needs and wants in ways that attract moral judgment, as well as causing harm to themselves or others. This kind of observation has motivated me to embark on this research. For example, I have observed young girls enter into relationships with older men often referred to as 'sugar daddies' and, most recently, as 'blessers', in order to meet their needs and to lead a comfortable lifestyle. According to Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre and Harlow (2004:2), 'transactional sex is the exchange of sex for material benefits undertaken in the general population'. One of the most concerning consequences of transactional sex is HIV infection. According to UNAIDS (2015) the number of people living with HIV is estimated to be between 6.7 million and 7.4 million in South Africa. The report highlights that, from the adolescent age of 15 to age 49, 19.2% are HIV infected (UNAIDS 2015).

As a child and youth care worker, I have engaged with young people who are in trouble with the law. Chakravarti (2006:370), postulates that 'deprivation, in combination with low need for achievement, may stimulate search for low effort routes to high returns, e.g. gambling or illicit trade, consigning the poor to extraordinary risk-seeking behaviours without commensurate consideration of the downside such as imprisonment, physical injury or even untimely death'. Many young people I met through my work revealed that their actions

were motivated by the fact that they could not afford to acquire products such as Nike sneakers, cell-phones and jewelry as they were living in income-poor households.

Indeed, Brooks - Gunn and Duncan (1997) and Treanor (2012) asserts that poor families are more likely to be headed by a parent who is single, lacks an education, has poor physical or mental health, is unemployed and has low earning potential. Sawhill and Karpilow (2013:2), reiterates that 'low income households are disproportionately female, are minority, have minor children, and are mostly headed by single parents whose low incomes are partly due to their low wages, but even more to a lack of employment.' South Africa has a high rate of unemployment with Durban reaching 30,2% as of Census 2011 (Statistics SA 2012).

I have witnessed adolescents from Newlands West struggle to perform academically because they were unable to concentrate due to their circumstances at home. The literature confirms that such learners are more likely to repeat a grade, get expelled or suspended or even drop out of high school (Brooks - Gunn and Duncan 1997). Rademeyer (2014) claims that in 2012, the high school dropout rate in Durban was an estimated 33.4% of all grade 11 and grade 12 learners. To this Heystek (cited in Rademeyer 2014) adds that a lack of adult supervision and shortage of money are the main reasons why pupils drop out of school. Young people who are not in school have been observed to tend to engage in risky behaviours. Crime has been identified as a priority issue in South Africa, and of concern is that young people are more likely than adults to be either victims of crime or offenders (Leoschut and Burton 2009). Furthermore, research conducted by these authors reveals that the ages between 12 and 21 are most likely to be involved in crime. Therefore, adolescents from low income households are considered to be at a greater risk of becoming juvenile offenders. These kind of outcomes are likely to cement adolescents' low socio-economic positioning, rather than enabling to move out of deprivation and poverty.

The South African governments' response to poverty and related issues has been to administer social grants and launch various educational HIV campaigns targeting young women and adolescent girls. Although these efforts assist many low income families materially, they are not concerned with psychological, emotional and social aspects of development.

Adolescence is a stage of development that is characterized by the task of finding an identity, as well as common displays of risky behaviour, search for love, physiological and emotional changes associated with puberty, and the social expectation of making a career choice (Meyer, Moore and Viljoen 2008). There is a great amount of pressure placed on adolescents to conform, emanating from the direct daily interactions among peers to global influence, communicated via mass and social media. Many contemporary societies in which adolescents perform the tasks and experience the challenges associated with their developmental stage, have been described as characterized by fast-paced consumer trends and a culture of 'living in the future' (Beck 1992:11; also see Bauman 2004). Because of adolescents' vulnerabilities to peer group pressure and the influences of different forms of media exercise to encourage consumption, many youth will feel compelled to keep up with consumer trends in order to 'fit in'. 'Fitting in' with consumer trends, therefore, appears to be required for social integration.

According to Charles (2010:4), 'needs are states of felt deprivation'. Therefore *needs* are required for survival. Contrary to this are 'wants', which Turner (2010) describes as desires that can be satisfied by consuming a good, service or leisure activity. Livingston (2012) concurs that 'needs' are indispensable and required by everybody while 'wants' are desirable items that are expensive or difficult to obtain. A broad range of consumer goods are necessary for social integration, health, well-being, and even survival. Others, even though the adolescents who desire them regard them as necessities, actually function as status symbols. The sense of urgency adolescents experience in relation to these goods, has actually been created through media influences and peer group pressures (see Beck 1992, Bauman 2004). Thus, in the context of the dominance of consumer culture, it might well be that the lived experience of adolescents is one in which the boundary between needs and wants is blurred.

In the adolescent stage of development, peers rather than parents influence the young person's behavior, identity formation and consumption choices. Chaplin and John (cited in Jabbar and Zaman 2014:55), postulates that in consumer-driven societies, 'adolescents demand popular branded products, which usually include expensive clothing and accessories that are used to socially integrate with peer groups'. Importantly, Jabbar and Zaman (2014) observe that it is individuals who are deprived that are considered as having a

greater desire for material possessions because they have a keener sense of their relative deprivation.

In sum, a body of literature exists on the specific challenges faced by low income youth in negotiating the developmental tasks of adolescence (see for example, Chakravarti (2006), Gunn and Duncan (1997), and Isaksen and Roper (2008)). These articles are based on international studies, and I have used them to understand experiences of international respondents and to expand my knowledge on the topic. However, the perspectives of youth from low income households in South Africa remain largely unknown. Furthermore global markets which dominate youth subcultures deepen existing inequalities. It is important to learn the extent and impact of these subcultures and how they are received in less affluent households. In addition, it appears that there is limited research representing the perspectives of adolescents under the age of 18. Yet these are imperative if there are to be successful interventions in this field.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Adolescents from low income households have been described in the literature as struggling to fit in and maintain standards prescribed by peer groups, and to meet the apparent demands on consumers in modern societies. These challenges have been observed to persist in Newlands West youth from low-income households, and contextualized with reference to available statistics of high levels of unemployment, school dropout and juvenile crime in South Africa. While the available literature points to the challenges faced by adolescents from low income households, there appears to be limited research representing the perspectives of South African adolescents under the age of 18. Yet, these perspectives are important if social work interventions are to succeed. This study intends to contribute to closing this knowledge gap.

## **1.3. Research Aim**

The overarching aim of the research study was to understand the needs and wants of adolescents from low income households in Newlands West

#### **1.4. Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to better understand:

- The socio economic backgrounds of participants;
- How participants perceived their personal needs and wants;
- The extent to which participants were able to meet their perceived needs and wants;
- How participants went about meeting their perceived needs and wants;
- In what ways participation in meso level structures and activities such as schooling, church and sport supported participants' strategies of meeting their perceived needs and wants.

#### **1.5. Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- What were the socio-economic backgrounds of the participants?
- What did participants perceive as their personal needs and wants?
- To what extent were participants able to meet their perceived needs and wants?
- How did participants go about meeting their perceived needs and wants?
- In what ways did participation in meso level structures and activities such as schooling, church and sports support participants' strategies of meeting their perceived needs and wants?

#### **1.6. Underlying Assumptions**

The following were the assumptions underlying the study:

- The participants' poor socio economic background limits their performance in consumer markets;
- Participants' perceived needs and wants are impacted by the latest global and local trends;

- Participants are prepared to use means that attract moral judgement and may be harmful to themselves and others in order to meet their perceived needs and wants, for as long as they do not get caught. These means include committing crimes and engaging in transactional sex;
- Meso level structures and activities lack creative interventions from social workers to help young people develop their goals and express their talent, leaving adolescents exposed to the negative impacts of the consumer culture that surrounds them.

### **1.7. Theoretical Framework**

This study is informed by the ecosystems theory. The ecosystems theory views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships that are affected by multiple levels of their surrounding environments (Berk 2000; Harkonen 2007). Germain and Gitterman (1980) concur that from this perspective, human beings are viewed as adaptive and in constant interchange with all elements of their environment. In this study, the ecosystems theory enabled me to demonstrate the relationship between individuals, that is, adolescents from low income households and their surrounding socio-economic and cultural structures and processes of society and relationships. There are four systems that need to be considered in an ecosystems analysis: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Berk 2000; Germain and Gitterman 1980; Bronfenbrenner 1994). To this, one may add the global system.

The microsystem represents any system that involves face-to-face interaction, such as a person's family and peer groups (Bronfenbrenner 1994; Harkonen 2007). In the context of this study, the microsystem consisted of the adolescent participants in the study, their families and peer group. At this level, economic difficulties could be shown, for example, to affect family relations.

The term mesosystem refers to the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. According to Berk (2000:28), it encompasses connections between different microsystems, such as schools and neighbourhoods. An ineffective mesosystem lacks recreational activities for children and youth, and with that, also lacks opportunities for productive activities and forms of

engagement, and the development of constructive responses to frustrations, difficulties and challenges.

According to Berk (2000:26), 'the third level is the exosystem which refers to social settings that do not contain the developing person but nevertheless affect experiences in the immediate settings'. This includes settings such as local government, and parents' workplaces (Bronfenbrenner 1994; Harkonen 2007). In this study, the exosystem affected the socio-economic status of the adolescents from low income households.

According to the ecosystems theory, the outermost layer in an individual's environment is the macrosystem, which consists of a society's values, laws, customs, cultural contexts, subcultures, lifestyles and patterns of interchange (Berk 2000; Harkonen 2007). The adolescents' relationship with these systems is noticeable at the microsystem level where there is a conceptualization of needs and wants.

The systems represented in the ecosystem theory are embedded in a global system. Globalization reduces barriers, thereby allowing transworld processes such as the importing and exporting of goods and the spread of messages via mass media (Scholte, 2005). This system interconnects countries and influences policies that govern local government. Scholte (2005) adds that globalization has consequences for the different sectors of the economy such as agriculture, finance, information and manufacturing. In this way, the global system impacts processes on the macro-, exo-, meso-, and microlevels of peoples' lives.

Another dimension within the ecosystems theory that helps in understanding the individual and his environment is the concept of 'goodness of fit'. Rothery (1999:129), defines the 'goodness of fit' as a link to the social and physical environment. This concept may be used to understand the extent to which people's needs are matched to available resources, that is, the demand and resource factors (Rothery 1999). The environment places demands on people and constantly presents itself with stressors that require us to adapt however, support is not always obtainable.

The ecosystems perspective is not without criticism. For example, it proposes that a nurturing environment will have a positive effect on the development of a child (Paquette and Ryan, cited in Harkonen 2007), but the South African context is one that is marred by

inequalities and uneven distribution of resources. The ecosystems theory also assumes that the environment is supportive to human beings (Paquette and Ryan, cited in Harkonen 2007), but social realities are much more complex than that as often, people are forced to adapt to negative environments. Notwithstanding these criticisms, I believe that the ecosystems theory has appropriately framed the study and put into perspective how adolescents from low income households interact with, and are affected by, for example, their economic, social, and cultural environment. This in turn allowed me to reach conclusions and make recommendations towards the development of appropriate social work interventions.

### **1.8. Value of the study**

Through this study I sought to provide the communities of Newlands West with valuable insights through the documented accounts of their own residents about the challenges that adolescents from low-income households are faced with. The study demonstrated that there was a strong link between a dominant consumer culture and adolescents found themselves vulnerable to consumption messages as they negotiated the central task of adolescence which is identity formation. They used these messages to inform their identities regardless of their low socio-economic background. On the basis of these findings recommendations were made to address the challenges created by a pervasive consumer culture. These findings are useful to policy makers, town planners, social work, child and youth care, and teaching professions, and include recommendations towards social work education and further research.

### **1.9. Structure of the dissertation**

This study is organised into five chapters:

**CHAPTER ONE** provides an overview of the study. This includes an explication of its background and rationale. Thereafter, the research problem, the study's aim, objectives and the research questions underpinning the study were set out. It further provides a discussion on the ecosystems theory which is the theoretical framework that guided the study. Finally, the value of the study was discussed.

**CHAPTER TWO** consists of the literature review. This is divided into three sections. Section 2.1 is concerned with the processes of globalization, neoliberalism and contemporary forms of consumer culture. Section 2.2 focuses on post-apartheid South Africa's social and economic policy context and socio-economic conditions in Newlands West. Section 2.3, finally considers studies of the responses of youth from low income households to the demands of consumer culture. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the behaviour brought on by a demanding consumer culture and the extent adolescents will go to in order to meet these demands regardless of the consequences.

**CHAPTER THREE** contains the study's methodology. It describes the qualitative research paradigm, the descriptive research design and the sampling strategies. It also illuminates the processes of data collection, and data analysis. It further discusses the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness throughout the research, ethical considerations which guarded the study and limitations of the study.

**CHAPTER FOUR** presents and discusses the findings of the study. This includes presenting the voices of the participants within thick descriptions of the contexts in which they were placed, and discussing them in relation to the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework that guided this study. These discussions are organised along five themes, which are; socio-cultural factors affecting participant's needs and wants, home circumstances, the demands of society, the inability to participate in consumption activities: responses of adolescents and the blurred boundaries between needs and wants in the lives of research participants. The chapter concludes that adolescents' exposure to consumer culture manipulates conceptualisations of needs and wants, and also creates standards which are considered to be the norm by adolescents and peer groups despite their low-income status.

**CHAPTER FIVE** is the final chapter of the research report. It starts by summarising the study's findings in relation to the research objectives and revisits its underlying assumptions. Thereafter, it returns to the initial problem statement and aim by presenting its major conclusions which focus on the implications of a pervasive consumer culture on adolescents who are in the process of establishing an identity. Moreover it examines the relationship between adolescents and their ecosystem. The chapter ends with recommendations towards policy makers, town planners, teachers, child and youth care workers, social workers, social work education and training, parents, youth and further research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the review of literature related to the research topic, understanding needs and wants in context: the lived experiences of adolescents from low income households in Newlands West, Durban. The theoretical framework informing this study is the ecosystems theory which views the adolescent as part of a larger system. The literature presented in this chapter demonstrates how the different systems in society work to impact adolescents. This literature review is intended to present around a range of available studies, theoretical arguments and discourses around adolescents' needs and wants, with a view to situating the study within its broader socio-economic and cultural contexts. In the process, gaps within the existing literature will become evident, indicating the areas in which this study can make a meaningful contribution to the field.

I begin the chapter by examining the processes of globalization, neoliberalism and contemporary forms of consumer culture. The latter includes effects of advertisements, television, social media and brands. I continue with a discussion of the South African social and economic policy context and the socio-economic conditions in Newlands West. The social conditions that I explore begin with poverty, low-income neighbourhoods, issues surrounding school, parenting styles, family dysfunction and unemployment. The economic policy context includes a discussion on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The section ends with a description of the community of Newlands West. Finally I explore the responses of youth from low income households to the demands of consumer culture which include social comparisons, adopting materialistic values, transactional relationships, symbolic consumption, and crime.

I conclude the literature review by pointing to the gaps in current research, which are the perspectives of adolescents. These include a discussion on the impact of the economic difficulties on adolescents from low-income households and the kinds of behaviour they subject themselves to in order to meet their needs and wants. It further demonstrates how consumption affects identity development and social integration. Whilst research concerning adolescents and low-income exists, their perspectives in the South African context are missing. If social workers are to intervene, this gap should be closed. Hence, the

present study focuses on the lived experiences of adolescents so that their voices will be heard.

The following section explores the processes of globalization, neoliberalism and contemporary forms of consumer culture. The latter includes effects of advertisements, television, social media and brands.

## **2.1. Globalization, neoliberalism and contemporary forms of consumer culture**

Present processes of globalization and the ideology of neoliberalism are closely interlinked, and they both have implications for the political and economic circumstances for adolescents whose lived experiences this study sought to understand. According to Scholte (2005:11), 'globalization is a trend and process, namely, the growth of transplanetary connections between people'. This implies that the world as a whole is able to engage and share information with little barriers between them. Scholte (2005) contends that globalization has caused shifts, among others, in patterns of knowledge, governance, identity and the ways people relate to nature. In addition, globalization has had considerable consequences for the economy. Validating the above, Kotz (2000:13), highlights that 'globalization tends to turn big business into small business because of the competitive pressure faced by large corporations and banks, as competition has become a worldwide relationship'. This reiterates the relationship between globalization and neoliberalism as the latter encourages competition.

Neoliberalism has influenced the way states operate by promoting market-based economies that value competition and efficiency (Smith 2012). According to Scholte (2005:7), 'neoliberalism is a policy framework that prescribes that the contemporary growth of global relations should be approached with laissez-faire market economics through privatization, liberalization and deregulation'. Scholte (2005) reiterates that contemporary globalization processes appear to be managed through policy interventions including the following: marketization of social spheres that previously functioned outside of economic considerations, privatization of public institutions; liberalization of economic policies; and the deregulation of economic activities that previously had been subjected to greater levels of state intervention. However, these interventions, and the neoliberal ideologies used to

justify them, have been criticized as 'overstating the gains and underplaying the costs' of globalisation and as a 'political project aimed to restore capitalist class power' (Flew 2012:16; see also Scholte 2005). Neoliberal ideologies are said to have propelled globalization processes forward, and in the process, considerably influenced both human and economic development.

The impact of neoliberalism and globalization on human and economic development has led to shifts in consumer attitudes, in line with shifts in the conditions under which consumption takes place. It is because inequalities have heightened and intensified practices of social comparisons, which are encouraged by capitalism, that contemporary forms of consumer culture can be considered to be a direct consequence of neoliberalism and globalization. According to Thompson (2009:2), 'consumer culture is a form of capitalism in which the economy is focused on the selling of consumer goods and the spending of consumer money'. Arnould and Thompson (2005) reiterate that consumers have a desire to keep up with their peers, and that by purchasing new merchandise, they are improving their social status and asserting particular identities. One of the dominant discourses underlying consumer culture is that 'material goods equate to happiness' (Thompson 2009). As a result, people consider these purchases as needs, with many who cannot afford them acquiring them anyway, consequently ending up indebted. Consumer culture, therefore, can be considered as the exploitation of consumers in that to drive the economy, it entices people to spend money on material goods many of which they don't need (Thompson, 2009).

The excessive spending by consumers benefits businesses and they capitalize on this by focusing their marketing on this culture (Thompson, 2009). In addition, to reach their audience they employ marketing strategies such as advertising. According to Arens (2005:4), 'advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products by identified sponsors through various media'. These strategies encourage a culture where access to certain brand names is portrayed as a necessary part of growing up (Daly and Leonard 2002). There is a distinct gap between 'real life' and 'life in advertisements' as the latter emphasize, for example, the 'right' clothes, or the 'right' cell-phone, with complete disregard to socio-

economic status. Furthermore children and adolescents are especially susceptible to advertisements and learn from the media what is available within the larger material world.

Perhaps paradoxically, studies have found that low-income consumers have more computers, use them more often, but also that they watch more television than those who are more affluent (Mayo and Nairn 2009). Infact, because television is often used as a cheap form of entertainment, Huston and Wright (cited in Isaksen and Roper 2008) claim that adolescents from low income families have a higher exposure to TV advertising. This means that adolescents from low-income households are more exposed to advertisements and materialist values, which they promote (see below). Shrum, Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2005:44), asserts that consumers 'use information from the television to construct their perceptions of social realities'. Consequently advertisements can induce a sense of inadequacy in those to whom they are directed (Mayo and Nairn 2009). Advertisements can therefore reinforce consumerism by manipulating people's desires and convincing them to purchase products.

Television viewing not only influences consumption patterns but values held by adolescents. Television programmes often associate 'rich' lifestyles and the accumulation of material possessions with being successful and powerful. Some television shows highlight both 'poor' and 'rich' lifestyles where the poor children aspire to fit in to live a luxurious life. In the process, these programmes shape what children want to eat and drink, what they want to look like, who they want to emulate and thus, what they think and worry about (Halpern 2003). However due to socio-economic inequalities, it becomes difficult to conform to television messages which are significant to adolescents in making real life decisions, such as decisions regarding clothing. Furthermore, Peirce (2010) asserts that the interplay between what is happening on [adolescents'] television screens and what is happening in [their] reality makes adolescents vulnerable to the advertising industry as they search for an identity.

Jabbar and Zaman (2014) confirms that marketers recruit influential opinion leaders in the adolescent age group, the 'cool kids' for marketing campaigns. By choosing popular children to promote their products, the product gains 'street cred' (Isaksen and Roper 2008). According to Mishra, Dhar and Raotiwala (2001), celebrities represent an idealization of life that most people imagine that they would love to live. In other words, the product gains

acceptance as adolescent celebrities are well liked by their peers and their apparent values as depicted in advertising campaigns end up shaping and being shared by those targeted by the product's marketers. Furthermore, the manner in which social problems are managed in a television programme influences how viewers will respond to similar problems they may face in their own lives (Reese cited in Peirce 2010). Viewers are most likely to be influenced by the protagonist of the show, which is the main character.

Music videos, much like television programmes also play a role in the development of an adolescent's individual and group identity. Englis (1991:111), asserts that 'music television has the potential to influence consumers via its power to shape consumer culture and also through its influence on advertisements'. The content of these types of media will appeal to adolescents as they search for an identity and try to find common ground to socially integrate with the peer group regardless of their own socio-economic status.

Advertising has evolved and uses social networks to communicate directly with potential consumers. According to Mariella (2014:2), 'social networking is the use of internet-based social media programs to make connections with friends, family, classmates, customers and clients for; social purposes, business or both'. Several social media platforms exist, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. These services allow for photo and video sharing, both publically and privately. When 'rich kids' showcase their commodities, it strengthens the experience of socio-economic division that already exists between socio-economic classes (Mariella 2014). Although the extremely wealthy do exist and post their riches on social media, the images this creates are also filled with half-truths and optimizations of life (Mariella 2014). In fact, these processes and dynamics breed a culture in which people are not only fascinated with looking, but are also permanently aware that they are being looked at. As a consequence, social media creates additional faceless audiences that are quite capable of damaging children's self-esteem if they fail to conform. The flaunting of wealth encourages what Barber (2007) refers to as 'hyper-consumerism'. 'Hyper-consumerism' refers to a state of excessive consumption of 'created needs' by a capitalist society, with the consumer purchasing those goods often used to shape identities (Barber 2007). Barber (2007) goes on to claim that, that 'for many, shopping [has] changed from chore to leisure pursuit'. In other words, under conditions of neoliberalism, the line between needs and wants in the experience of consumers has become difficult to

distinguish.

Social media, television programmes, and advertising have contributed significantly to the global occurrence of hyper-consumerism. This not only pressurizes adults to consume excessively, but also children and adolescents (Jabbar and Zaman 2014). This development operates through what has come to be known as the 'brand culture' (Jabbar and Zaman 2014). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the focus of branding was on giving people information about goods and services (Jabbar and Zaman 2014). Increasingly however, branding provides less information about the product, instead staying more focused on the lives of prospective consumers (Kilbourne cited in Jabbar and Zaman 2014). Adolescents use brands and products to shape their identities. Infact, studies have found that adolescents who lack the latest fashion brands are often perceived by their peers as 'poor quality people' (Isaksen and Roper 2008). This puts further pressure on adolescents and on their parents to perform in the consumer markets. Jabbar and Zaman (2014:53), confirms that 'adolescents have a yearning to make an impression, make themselves stand out from the masses, to be powerful, which is exactly what brands appear to facilitate when selling ego-gratification and reassurance of self-worth.' As a result, adolescents start to associate brands with social status, peer group affiliation, and personality traits, and use them as a tool to transition to adulthood (Piacentini and Mailer 2004). And as adolescents form deep emotional bonds with their brands, they allow these brands to start determining who they are, and how they are perceived (Kasser and Kanner cited in Jabbar and Zaman 2014). However, due to the cost of branded items, adolescents from low income households are bound to experience restricted consumer roles, and with that, a sense of social exclusion.

To conclude, to perform well as consumers within the dominant context of globalisation and neoliberalism, including contemporary practices of advertising, television programmes, branding and uses of social media, people are driven to spend money on material goods. This has long-term benefits for business but leaves many consumers financially unstable, yet never able to keep up with apparent standards. Thus, messages of persuasion found in advertisements, television messages and social media play an important part in shaping consumer identities. These messages target vulnerable age groups, in particular adolescents, who feel the pressure to be good consumers.

## **2.2. The South African social and economic policy context and socio-economic conditions in Newlands West**

The question arises as to the extent to which members of low-income households are able to perform their roles as consumers. Neoliberalism and processes of globalization have considerably impacted the South African economy, and according to many authors increased, rather than decreased unemployment and underemployment, which continue to mar the country (Desai 2003; Habib and Padayachee 2000).

The South African economy is one that is plagued with inequalities brought on by the apartheid regime. According to Census 2011 KwaZulu Natal had the highest poverty line in 2011 (26.3%) (Stats SA 2012). Recent statistics yield that poverty is still a social challenge in South Africa. According to Stats SA (2016), approximately 13.3% (2.2) million South African households indicated that they had skipped meals frequently in the 12 months before a survey conducted between 07 March and 22 April 2016. Based on these and similar statistics, many people in South Africa can be considered as disadvantaged and trapped in poverty. This is referred to as the vicious 'cycle of poverty', which can be described as a phenomenon where poor families become trapped in poverty for generations in that they have limited or no access to significant resources therefore they cannot improve their poverty and this often means that they remain in poverty throughout their lives (Bradshaw 2006). Graham *et al.* (2010:22), adds that 'social exclusion from political and economic processes also contributes to the cycle of poverty and to this, must be added the psychological aspects of poverty; humiliation, inhumane treatment and the emotional strain of being poor as well as deprivation factors'. It is against this background that Barki and Parente (2010) described disadvantaged consumers as those found at the base of the consumer pyramid. These consumers lack the resources necessary to participate in consumer markets thus making them a liability to society. For these reasons Beck (1992:35), asserts in this context that 'wealth accumulates at the top and risks at the bottom.' In the process, those found at the top come to be considered model citizens who have sufficient resources to survive and ample means to consume, and those at the bottom are considered worthless as they struggle to survive and fail to consume.

A large number of low-income families reside in neighbourhoods that, on the whole, have low socio-economic backgrounds. These neighbourhoods are often considered dangerous.

In both low-income families and low-income neighbourhoods, the impacts of poverty have been found to have harmful effects on child well-being in terms of school achievement, behaviour, and health (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997). They further add that low-income neighbourhoods are usually characterized by crime, unemployment and a lack of resources for child development (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997). This draws attention to the 'nature vs nurture' argument (Papalia, Olds and Feldman 2008). According to the authors, the term 'nature' refers in this context to a person's inborn traits or characteristics inherited from the biological parents whilst 'nurture' refers to influences from the environment and experience. It is the idea of nurture that has greater significance for this study.

Children from low-income families often attend disadvantaged schools. Engle and Black (2008:5), reiterates that 'such schools are often under-funded, beset by disciplinary problems, staffed by poorly equipped teachers and confronted with difficulties meeting their educational mandates'. The conditions of such schools impacts the behaviour of its learners. However, not all children from low-income families attend schools in low-income neighbourhoods. In order to break the cycle of poverty in their family, many parents try to send their children to more costly schools in more affluent neighbourhoods, and this often involves commuting in the early hours of the morning, the afternoon, and long working days for children and adolescents.

Learners from low income families are four times more likely to drop out of school than high income learners (Papalia *et al.* 2008). Studies have found that this is because of low teacher expectations, less teacher support than at the lower grades, traditional family role expectations and problems related to the perceived irrelevance of the school curriculum (Papalia *et al.* 2008; Porteus, Clacherty, Mdiya, Pelo, Matsai, Qwabe and Donald 2000). Papalia *et al.* (2008) asserts that 'dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or to have low incomes, to end up on welfare, and to become involved with drugs, crime and delinquency. Consequently, it is society as a whole that suffers when young people drop out of school.

Neighbourhood residence also influences parenting styles (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997). McLoyd (1990:312), suggests that 'poverty and economic hardship diminish the capacity for supportive, consistent and involved parenting, with parents adopting an authoritarian style'. Authoritarian parents are overly strict, and this may lead to adolescents rejecting parental influence and seeking peer approval at all costs (Papalia *et al.* 2008). Thus, a number of

empirical studies have found poor mothers from low-income households to be less supportive of their children, use less reasoning, use more physical punishment, issue commands rather than explanations and are less likely to consult the child about his/her wishes (see for example, Engle and Black 2008, McLoyd 1990). Such lack of affection at home can drive adolescents to seek alternative modes of acceptance and acknowledgment of personal achievements in peer groups and in material goods.

The challenges faced by families raising children in low-income neighbourhoods such as low socio-economic areas in Newlands West are linked to South Africa's apartheid history. Apartheid laws saw the confinement of people of different racial groups to specific areas, and with the end of apartheid, South Africa underwent large-scale urbanisation, with people moving to the cities in search of better jobs. This development has been characterised by the growth of informal settlements in South Africa's urban centres, which in turn are often characterised by poor living conditions (Edmonds 2013). In these contexts, children and adolescents gravitate towards the streets in hope of a better life away from the family devastation. Omboto, Ondiek, Odera and Ayugi (2013), contends that homes where children and adolescents find themselves orphaned, with abusive parents, or parents or guardians who are alcoholics may lack adequate role models, which in turn can affect their moral development. Papalia *et al.* (2008), suggests that it is a result of this lack of role models that adolescents may develop habits and dispositions that the authors describe as an insufficient ability to control their impulses, and a desire to compensate for an experience of lack in other spheres of their lives. The outcomes of such developments include juvenile crime such as theft, sexual assault and drug related offences.

Another significant outcome of South Africa's apartheid history and the conditions under which post-apartheid South Africa re-joined the global economy (see Section 2.1 above and discussion of major economic policies below) is the country's unemployment rate, which is among the highest in the world. According to Stats SA (2012), South Africa's official unemployment rate is currently at 26.7% and the expanded unemployment figure is 36,3%. Unemployment can be understood in two terms, narrow (standard) unemployment and expanded (broad) unemployment. The narrow definition counts as unemployed all jobless persons who have searched for work in the recent past, usually four weeks prior to the interview, while the broad definition counts as unemployed, all jobless persons who

reported that they wanted to work even if they did not search in the reference period (Kingdon and Knight 2005). According to Wilkinson (2014:3), 'the broad definition is more useful if one is thinking about the scale of the social problem while the narrow definition is more appropriate when conducting international comparisons.' The expanded definition of unemployment includes discouraged job seekers, those who have lost hope searching for a job, those who want to work but could not find work in the area and those who were unable to find work that required their skills (Kingdon and Knight 2005). Despite the expanded definition presenting a more accurate reflection of joblessness than the narrow measure, the narrow concept was declared the official definition of unemployment in 1998 (Kingdon and Knight 2005).

Since the 1994 democratic elections, South Africa has initiated various strategies to alleviate poverty. These included the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR), and the National Development Plan (NDP), respectively. The White Paper on reconstruction and development (1994:7), defines the RDP as 'a policy framework for integrated and coherent socio-economic progress'. The key goals stipulated in the RDP policy included providing citizens with basic services such as housing, water supply, social security and social welfare, health care and job creation through public works (Knight 2001; White Paper on Reconstruction and Development 1994). However, the RDP did not meet its goals as government lacked the capacity to implement it, there were huge backlogs in providing access to basic services and it was criticised for being a wish list for too many people (Heymans 1995, Meyer 2000, Terre Blanche 2003 and Visser 2009). Despite government initiatives to reduce poverty in the form of social grants, the number of low-income households remain a sizable quantity in most South African communities.

The Ministry of the RDP was closed down in March 1996 (Visser 2009). In order to remedy the economic problems that still faced the country the GEAR policy was introduced in June 1996 (Knight 2001). According to Knight (2001), GEAR 'is a macroeconomic strategy adopted by the Department of Finance in June 1996 as a five year plan aimed at strengthening economic development, broadening employment and redistribution of income and socio-economic opportunities in favour of the poor'. However, Visser (2009) described it as a conservative macro-economic strategy embraced by the government in order to appease

domestic capital and foreign currency markets. GEAR is based on the premises of individualism, corporate competitiveness and profit making, a far cry from the country's values of social justice and a developmental welfare approach (Sewpaul 2005). As such, GEAR signalled the government's acceptance of a neo-liberal framework. Visser (2009:232), highlighted the main differences between RDP and GEAR by describing the RDP as 'expecting the state to conduct a people-oriented developmental policy whilst GEAR saw South Africa's economic 'salvation' in a high economic growth rate that would result from a sharp increase in private capital accumulation in an unbridled capitalistic system'. Rogerson (2000:397), asserts that 'the GEAR document was specifically designed to guide South Africa's re-entry into the global economy after two decades (1970-1990) of relative isolation, by adapting to globalisation trends'. Although GEAR remains a part of government policy, its success has been stagnant. Critics of GEAR such as the Congress of South Africa's Trade Unions (COSATU) pointed out that GEAR embraced neo-liberal market policies, which conflicts with the goals of the RDP of growth based on job creation, meeting people's needs, poverty reduction, and a more equitable distribution of wealth (Knight 2001; South African History online 2014). Furthermore employment shrank by 3% instead of growing, so that instead of the additional 1,3 million jobs that were supposed to have been created by 2001, more than 1 million jobs were destroyed, with the result that poverty and inequality have increased (Carter and May 2001; Sewpaul and Holscher 2004; Sewpaul 2005; Terre Blanche 2002, Visser 2009).

The National Development Plan (NDP) is South Africa's most recent strategy for reducing unemployment, inequality, and poverty (South African Government 2016). According to the South African Government (2016) The NDP aims 'to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030'. The NDP plans to address challenges faced by the economy such as improving on health care, education, and creating employment opportunities. In order for the NDP to succeed, it requires a joint collaborative approach of all stakeholder, public private and non-governmental sectors, together with citizen participation and involvement (Parsons 2014). The NDP is divided into thirteen chapters that address the most pressing challenges in the form of proposals and actions (National Planning Commission 2016). Although this may indicate thoroughness the NDP document has been accused of deliberately being cumbersome so as to tire readers to overlook critical details, highly inaccessible,

inconsistent and filled with errors (COSATU 2013). Although the NDP promises economic growth and strengthened international relations there are suggestions that the plan is an attempt by capitalists to undermine the working class (COSATU 2013, National Planning Commission 2016).

In sum, it has been twenty two years since the democratic elections took place yet South Africa is still one of the most unequal societies in the world. The policies implemented to rectify the injustices produced by the apartheid era have not lived up to expectations, instead having strengthened the divide between the rich and poor in South Africa. These outcomes are observable, too, in Newlands West, a semi-urban community that is affected by the socio-economic challenges emanating from unemployment and poverty. As of Census 2011, the total population in Newlands West is 50,627 (Stats SA 2012). According to Stats SA (2012), households receiving 4,800 rand per annum or less make up 15, 5% of the population. Households earning between 1 and 19,600 rand per annum have all been categorised by Sawhill and Karpilow (2013) as low-income households. To further subdivide the number of low-income households in Newlands West, 2.6% of households earn between R1 and R4,800 , 4.1% earn between R4,801 and R9,600, and 9.1% earn between R9,601 and R19,600 per annum (Stats SA 2012). According to Census 2011, these figures refer to households that have a size above the level of three people (4.1) (Stats SA 2012).

In short, Newlands West is somewhat typical of low-income communities in South Africa which after 22 years of democracy, are still struggling to rectify the economic inequalities and socio-economic hardships created by the apartheid regime. Over the past two decades, responses have included the development of different strategies, all of which, in Newlands West as elsewhere, appear to have lacked success. According to authors reviewed in this section, it is because of South Africa's economic policy alignment within the neoliberal global policy framework that poverty and inequalities persist. Yet, the pressures of an increasingly globalised world place income at the forefront of people's efforts to meet their various needs and wants. Consequently, adolescents from Newlands West's low income households may find it essential, yet difficult to perform their roles as consumers.

### **2.3. Responses of youth from low income households to the demands of consumer culture**

The difficulties adolescents from low income households experience as a result of their limited ability to perform their consumer roles are influenced by their interactions with their environment. However, their maturity also impacts their decisions in relation to their consumer roles. Thus, in order to understand adolescent intellectual processes it is imperative to discuss the adolescent life stage. According to Papalia *et al.* (2008:419), ‘adolescence is a developmental transition that involves physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes and takes varying forms in different social, cultural, and economic settings’. The physical changes include a growth spurt that results in an increase in weight and in height. This is referred to as puberty. Puberty also involves biological changes that lead to sexual maturity, or fertility (Papalia *et al.* 2008). During this time, many adolescents feel uncertain and uncomfortable about their bodies, which has a strong impact on their self-esteem. Cognitive developments include adolescents’ growing ability to engage in abstract reasoning, to make moral judgements, and their acquisition of new ways of processing information (Papalia *et al.* 2008). As adolescents’ ability to think abstractly and reason logically expands, they also develop greater self-awareness, exploring in turn a range of possible identities.

As adolescent’s identities become more complex their social relationships become more complex as well. At this stage, peers become significant for, and can benefit adolescent development of social skills, and a sense of identity and belonging (Papalia *et al.* 2008). According to Erikson (cited in Papalia *et al.* 2008:421), ‘the task in this stage is to confront the crisis of identity versus role confusion so as to become a unique adult with a coherent sense of self and a valued role in society’. Failure to establish a coherent identity results in role confusion, which accounts for the chaotic nature of much of the adolescent behaviour (Papalia *et al.* 2008). A key virtue associated with this stage is fidelity, which is described as the ability to commit one’s self to others on the basis of accepting them even if there may be ideological differences (Papalia *et al.* 2008).

In the context of this study, it is important that according to Fuligni *et al.* (2001:1), adolescents ‘increasingly spend unsupervised time with their friends and other age-mates

both in and out of school'. This further contributes to adolescents becoming increasingly concerned with peer acceptance and popularity (Fuligni *et al.* 2001). Papalia *et al.* (2008) postulates that it is the peer group that helps adolescents learn how to get along in society, how to adjust their needs and desires to those of others, when to yield and when to stand firm. Furthermore the peer group offers support, guidance, understanding, belonging and a safe place for experimentation which fosters a unified culture. This consequently results in adolescents demanding consumer goods to integrate with the peer group. One such way of unifying and integrating amongst adolescents is through faddism. The Oxford Dictionary (2005:525), defines faddism as 'showing interest in something for a short period of time'. Isaksen and Roper (2008) adds that material possessions play a central role in processes of identity formation and experiences of identity crisis, which are both marked by enhanced importance of social comparison.

Because adolescents are concerned with how they appear to others, social integration becomes very important, not only in terms of appearance but also in establishing a self-identity. Social comparisons are central to this stage of development as teenagers are setting benchmarks for themselves and for one another, and form their self-concepts based on the opinions and behaviours of their peers (Isaksen and Roper 2008). Possessions are seen as extensions of the self, and identity is expressed through buying patterns. Brownlie and Horne (1999) suggest that in consumer cultures, constrained access to consumption activities results in the restriction of identity formation. Furthermore, to the extent that identities are constructed through consumption and possessions, low-income consumers are denied this opportunity as they lack the resources to 'buy their identities' (Brownlie and Horne 1999). This can result in adolescents from low-income households establishing distorted views of the self, while holding onto the idea that consumption is necessary to express their identity and to integrate with others.

Adolescent self-esteem relies heavily on peer evaluation and acceptance. According to Papalia *et al.* (2008:298), 'self-esteem is the judgement children make about their overall self-worth'. The same argument can be applied to adolescents. Furthermore it is based on adolescents' growing cognitive ability to describe and define themselves (Papalia *et al.* 2008). Self-esteem can further be described as being confident in one's abilities and accepting of the self. Rejection from the peer group is associated with negative effects on

the self-esteem and acceptance by the peer group is associated with a positive self-esteem (Chaplin and John 2007). Hence, adolescents who are accepted by peer groups feel safe, competent and are less likely to look to material goods to compensate for feelings of low self-worth (Chaplin and John 2007). In contrast to their affluent peers, adolescents from low income households are unable to afford expensive and branded products which may lead to a low self-esteem. Whilst this suggests that materialism is a coping response for insecure teenagers, Kasser (2002) maintains that in fact, high levels of materialism are what lowers self-esteem because external rewards are valued and given more attention rather than personal achievements.

Adolescents with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to marketing strategies and are more likely to have materialistic values. Materialism can be described as the importance humans attach to tangible possessions (Belk, cited in Isaksen and Roper 2008). Kasser (2002:109), adds that 'materialism is considered a manifestation of an underlying insecurity and a coping strategy used to alleviate problems and satisfy one's needs.' Therefore low self-esteem often results in having materialistic tendencies (see above), material goods are often used as an instrument to cope with doubts about safety, competence and self-worth (Kasser 2002). Infact, individuals who feel uncertain, rely on appropriate products such as sports cars, branded clothing and cologne to boost their self-esteem (Chaplin and John 2007). Adolescents use products to establish an identity and develop relationships with their peer group. Therefore peers play a significant role in establishing materialistic behaviour as they try to stand out and relate to one another. Rose and DeJesus (2007) confirm that materialism is associated with a strong need to belong. Belk (cited in Piacentini and Mailer (2004:253), asserts that 'young people gather material possessions to establish their identity and gain much-needed prestige, especially at this time of identity crisis.' Adolescents from low income households are unable to afford these products, but are pressured regardless to be 'good consumers' to gain social acceptance. In addition, they find themselves bullied and potentially excluded from their peers, this contributes to a lowered self-esteem (Kasser2002). Isaksen and Roper (2008) found that those who pursue materialistic ambitions may find temporary improvement of mood but later struggle with heightened distress, depression and social anxiety.

Over and above these general links between the adolescent stage of development and the omnipresence of consumption messages deepens the vulnerability of adolescents from low income households to consumer culture. Gender is another factor that needs consideration when seeking to understand the relationship between needs and wants in the experience of adolescents from low-income households. According to Bakshi (2009:4), gender refers to 'the social relationships/roles and responsibilities of men and women, the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity) that are learned over time and vary within and between cultures'. This notwithstanding, Papalia *et al.* (2008), observes that from early childhood, boys' and girls' are directed towards engaging in differing activities. Boys tend to be encouraged to play with well-defined leadership hierarchies, more competitive and rough and tumble play whilst girls have more opportunities to engage in intimate conversations, characterized by prosocial interactions and shared confidences. Furthermore, Bhana (2005:101), asserts that 'femininity is usually associated with gentleness and a lack of power whilst masculinity, on the other hand, is associated with power and strength and being in control'. Concerning consumption, men are considered to be more analytical and logical whilst women are considered to be more subjective and intuitive (Bakshi 2009). These role expectations are usually accepted and continue to be regarded as normative in large sections of South African society. This is important because studies have revealed that products are sex-typed in that their marketing takes on 'masculine' or 'feminine' characteristics (Solomon cited in Bakshi 2009). Such products include colour coded pink baby toys, barbie dolls and princess play houses which are considered feminine and therefore will not usually appeal to men (Bakshi 2009). While considering the influence peers have over each other it is unsurprising that they communicate about consumption choices, Churchill and Moschis, (cited in Bakshi 2009) asserts that nonetheless, females consult more before making a purchase than males who appear to be more independent from their peers.

The compulsion to consume amongst adolescents in order to fit in can lead to behaviors that is at odds with a number of traditional values upheld by mainstream society. An example of such behaviour are age-disparate relationships which are characterized by young girls having sexual relationships with older men, and which often are based on expectations

of material gain (Lerclerc-Madlala 2008). Dunkle *et al.* (2004) refer to these type of relationships as transactional sexual relationships and maintain that they are always initiated and sustained on the basis of material exchange. Research studies including that of Dunkle *et al.* (2004) have found that this form of transactional sex is most prevalent amongst poverty stricken women and girls between the ages fifteen and twenty-four. And while according to Leclerc-Madlala (2008:17), 'relationships with older men provide a readily available and to a large degree socially tolerated ways to meet a growing list of needs and wants ranging from bread and school fees to designer handbags and glamorous outings', Dunkle *et al.* (2004) disagree, claiming that society regards this behaviour as an alternate form of prostitution. Hunter (2002) argued that transactional sex differs from prostitution in that similarities such as the multiple partners and the gifts or cash giving in return notwithstanding, one difference that stands out, which is that the participants are considered 'girlfriends' and 'boyfriends'. Transactional sex contributes to the increasing spread of HIV/AIDS as the partner involved is older, has power and may not want to use a condom during intercourse (Hallman 2009).

Authors often characterize adolescence as a turbulent and impulsive stage (Papalia *et.al.* 2008), and the pressures from peers, global and social media to consume to fit in can result in reckless behaviours, with some adolescents from low-income households turning to crime as a result. Leoschut and Burton (2009) postulate that adolescent criminality 'is generally viewed as a consequence of the interaction of a range of factors stemming [among other factors] from the different social contexts in which he or she lives', suggesting that most youth become involved in crime because of poverty, and they commit crimes to survive. Moreover the omnipresence of advertisements emphasize consumption as an important aspect of self-expression and forming social relations with others (Brownlie and Horne 1999). Having a limited role in consumption practices can result in consequences that see adolescents being excluded from peer groups and seeking acceptance in negative sub-cultures. However, against the background of the debates reviewed in this section, the extent to which criminal offences committed by adolescents are linked to consumption needs and wants beyond mere survival, are well worth exploring.

A final phenomenon of interest to this study is 'symbolic consumption' (Isaksen and Roper 2008), which denotes an adolescent response to what may be considered excessive

demands of consumer culture. According to Isaksen and Roper (2008:1066), the term 'refers to the use of brands and products to develop and communicate identity as well as to symbolise social distinctions'. Thus, in late 2012, the practice of *Izikhothane* or *Skhothane* emerged on the South African scene, causing much controversy. Jones (cited in Ungerer 2014) defined the *Izikhothane* as originating in the townships of Johannesburg and consisting of groups of young people who engage in dance battles in front of large crowds while burning designer clothes, shoes and money to determine which 'crew' is wealthier. Wende (2013) describes practices of pouring custard on their clothes and rubbing them into the ground to show off their apparent wealth. This sub-culture contrasts with the actual circumstances of many of the young people involved, who, in fact, come from impoverished backgrounds, it appears that many of their parents are factory workers and supermarket staff (Wende 2013). Before this background, it may seem surprising that participants in the *Izikhothane* believe that by damaging their valuables, they can attain respect, fame and a distinguished social status. To explain this paradox, Wende (2013) considers this trend as an escape from poverty and discrimination, albeit temporary.

The contradiction between the pressure and the inability of adolescents from low-income households to perform according to the demands of a consumer culture can lead to destructive and risky behaviour. These behaviours, in turn, are linked to the expected life tasks and challenges pertaining to adolescence as a developmental stage. The behaviours discussed in this section include trends which adolescents engage in, in order to escape their realities, and which include engaging in criminal activity, symbolic consumption and transactional relationships. Adolescents do what they consider to be necessary to meet their perceived needs and wants, regardless of their potentially harmful consequences. These strategies also highlight the impact of consumer culture on the moral development of adolescents, thereby raising additional questions regarding their implications for social work.

## **2.4. CONCLUSION**

This chapter explored a number of issues that are relevant to understanding adolescents' needs and wants in a context of low-income families and communities. I began with the

processes of globalization, neoliberalism and contemporary forms of consumer culture. I discussed their implications on adolescents, focusing on different aspects of consumer culture, such as advertisements, television, marketing strategies, social media, and brands. I then moved on to discuss the South African social and economic policy context, and socio-economic conditions in Newlands West, a semi-urban community with a considerable number of low-income households and a high rate of unemployment. I centred my discussion on how these contextual conditions can affect neighbourhoods, schools, parenting styles, and family dysfunction. Finally, I considered the limited effects of major post-apartheid economic policies, that is, the RDP, GEAR and NDP, on combating poverty.

The final section in this chapter reviewed literature that would help with interpreting the responses of youth from low-income households to the demands of consumer culture. I discussed the tasks and challenges associated with adolescence as a stage of human development; and the role of peer groups in shaping adolescent responses to the prevailing consumer culture. Such responses include social comparisons, the adoption of materialistic values; engagement in transactional relationships; crime; and symbolic consumption. These challenges, derived from the background and rationale of this study and are often faced by adolescents from low-income households are discussed extensively in the literature. Furthermore the problems brought on by economic difficulties can lead to both psychological and physical harm which often require social work interventions. The following chapter focuses on the research methods and tools used to conduct the research, before presenting the study's findings.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

**Table 3.1: An outline of the research strategy which guided this study**

Sub-Headings	Methodology	References
<b>Research Paradigm</b>	-Qualitative/interpretive research paradigm	Terre Blanche, Durheim and Painter (2006) Babbie & Mouton (2001)
<b>Research Design</b>	-Descriptive design	Terre Blanche <i>et al.</i> (2006)
<b>Sampling strategies</b>	-Purposive and Snowball sampling	Terre Blanche <i>et al.</i> (2006)
<b>Data collection</b>	-Focus groups -Semi-structured interviews	Litosseliti (2003) Babbie & Mouton (2001)
<b>Data analysis</b>	-Thematic content analysis	Terre Blanche <i>et al.</i> (2006) Babbie & Mouton (2001)
<b>Trustworthiness of the study</b>	Methods to ensure credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability: -Purposive sampling -Triangulation of data collection methods -Transcripts -Persistent observation -Reflexive diary notes -Member checks -Thick descriptions -Peer review -Audit trail	Babbie & Mouton (2001)
<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	-Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons -Nonmaleficence -Beneficence justice	Wassenaar (2006)

Research methodology plays an important role in influencing knowledge, policy development and social change. This chapter discusses the study's research paradigm, research design and sampling methods. It also explains data collection procedures, methods of data analysis and a discussion of the study's trustworthiness, followed by a presentation of my ethical considerations. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the study's limitations. Table 3.1 as illustrated above depicts the methodological choices, which are detailed in the remainder of the chapter.

### **3.1. Research Paradigm**

A qualitative research paradigm was employed for this research. According to Durrheim (2006:40), 'paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation'. For this study, I utilized the interpretive, or qualitative paradigm. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) 'qualitative research focuses on studying human action in its natural context and through the perspectives of the actors themselves'. Furthermore, the qualitative paradigm aims to describe and understand human behaviour rather than explaining it (Babbie and Mouton 2001). In this research study I actively sought participants who could provide me with firsthand information of their lived experiences. Qualitative research is concerned with the émic perspective which aims to explore the ideas and perceptions of the participants (Babbie and Mouton 2001). As I interviewed the participants, I was most interested in their point of view. The qualitative paradigm enabled me to understand adolescent's perspectives, experiences and emotions. Finally, Burns and Grove (2003) note that qualitative research is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life events and give them meaning. Hence in this research study the perspectives of participants were captured using thick descriptions.

### **3.2. Research Design**

According to Durrheim (2006:34), 'a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research'. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) specify that the research design guides the

researcher on how to obtain data about the research phenomenon from the research participants. In this study I employed a descriptive design. In qualitative research, descriptive studies aim to describe situations and events within the context in which they occur with the aim of deepening existing understandings of the circumstances, processes, and dynamics that give rise to the phenomena at the heart of a study (see Babbie and Mouton 2001). Because of the careful and deliberate nature of scientific observation, scientific descriptions are typically more accurate and precise than casual ones. To achieve their ends, descriptive studies rely on small, purposively selected samples, on data collection methods that enable participants to provide detailed accounts of their perspectives on the phenomena at the heart of a study, and on data analysis methods that require an empathetic reading and interpretation of the data and presentation of the researcher's findings (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Since the overarching aim of this study was to understand the needs and wants of adolescents from low income households in Newlands West, a descriptive design was most suitable as it enabled participants to share their personal stories from their lived experiences, their emotions and subjective viewpoints.

### **3.3. Sampling Strategies**

In order to access my sample, I used purposive and snowball sampling. According to Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:49) 'sampling is the selection of research participants from an entire population and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and or social processes to observe'. Marlow (1998) describes a population as the sum of all possible cases that the researcher is interested in studying. It is impossible to include everybody, which is why there is a need for sampling. The characteristics of the required sample included: participants who resided in lower socio-economic areas of Newlands West; participants who were between the ages of 16 and 18; an even number of male and female participants, a sample half of which consisted of participants who were not involved in meso level structures and activities such as schooling, church or sports, with the other half consisting of participants who were involved in meso- level structures and activities; and participants who were members of low-income households. The purpose of including both participants who were involved in meso-level structures and activities, and participants who

were not, was to develop an understanding of the perspectives and responses of adolescents holding different interpretive frames and moral reference points developed both inside and outside of meso-level structures and activities. However, even though two participants did not come strictly from low-income households they lived in the areas and made valuable contributions.

For this study, I recruited a sample of twenty participants (see Appendix 5).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:166), 'purposive sampling involves the researcher selecting the sample on the basis of their own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims'. To identify participants with first-hand experience concerning the study's topic, the following sampling criteria were applied. The participants, both male and female, were between the ages of 16 and 18. The reasons for including adolescents of 16 to 18 years of age in the study have been set out in Chapters 1.1: Background and Rationale, and 2.3: (Responses of youth from low income households to the demands of consumer culture). The reason for including both male and female participants in the study was that the study intended to understand perspectives and responses of both genders, which may contrast or vary in degree and intensity. For the purpose of this study, meso-level structures and activities were taken to include schooling, church and sports.

I began the recruitment process on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 using purposive sampling and snowball sampling. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:167), 'snowball sampling is appropriate to implement when members of a specific population are difficult to locate'. Additionally, snowball sampling reaches samples that can be hard to access because they exhibit some kind of social stigma, illicit or illegal behaviors, or other traits that make them atypical and socially marginalized (Faugier and Sargeant 1997). Snowball sampling allowed me access to those who were knowledgeable of others who were in a similar situation. Babbie and Mouton (2001) postulate that snowball sampling refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects. The primary method of data collection for this study was the focus group technique (see Section 3.4: Data collection). I had intended to recruit a sample of between sixteen and 24 participants and ultimately, I recruited 20 participants. This resulted in combined perspectives on the topic which provided important insights into the issues discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3. I approached participants informally in the neighbourhood by making personal, face to face contact as I

had lived in the community for many years. As the participants were unknown to me, it was necessary to present the topic to them, as well as introducing myself and giving a general background about myself and purpose of the research. Initially I met with two participants who suggested other potential participants. They demonstrated a keen interest in the topic and agreed to be a part of the study. This process of participants recommending others to me continued until I had a suitable number to commence the study.

The first group consisted of twelve girls. Two girls were involved in meso level activities (church) other than school, eight girls were schooling only, and two girls were not involved in either activity (refer to Appendix 5). In total, ten girls were not involved in any recreational activities. The girls were between the ages of seventeen and eighteen. The second group consisted of eight boys and of the eight, four boys were involved in meso level activities which consisted of exercising and soccer and five of the boys were in school. In total four boys were not involved in any recreational activities. The boys were between the ages sixteen and eighteen. In the second sessions six girls and four boys were present in their respective groups.

After collecting data from the focus groups, I realised there was a need to conduct semi-structured interviews (see 3.4.2: Individual interviews). To this end, I interviewed four participants based on my second sample criteria. This criteria included a sample that consisted of both genders and it was also based on my observations of low disclosure of sensitive information. Also, these participants were out of school and only one of them was involved in meso-level activities. I used an interview guide in order to gather rich descriptions from participants. (refer to Section 3.4.2).

### **3.4. Data Collection**

Qualitative research methods are concerned with seeking participants who are able to provide rich information about their natural environments, allowing results to be more descriptive rather than calculated (Babbie and Mouton 2001). The qualitative research process allows the researcher to not only hear the perspectives of the participants but to also observe and interpret non- verbal communication. Participants' lived realities can include controversial or sensitive information which needs the researcher to be equipped

with the appropriate skills (Babbie and Mouton 2001). This study made use of focus group techniques and semi-structured interviews. The discussions were audio taped and transcribed, with the exception of one participant in the semi-structured interview (see Section 3.7: Ethical Considerations).

#### *3.4.1. Focus groups*

The data was collected, firstly, through the use of focus group discussions. According to Litosseliti (2003:1), 'a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment'. In other words, focus groups present an environment where the sharing of ideas and perceptions plays a central role. The focus group technique appeared to be the most appropriate choice because according to Litosseliti (2003), it facilitates the discovery of new information, obtaining of new perspectives, explorations of controversial issues and the development of insights' into participants' shared understandings of everyday life. The first focus group session with the girls took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 from 14:45 to 15:30, and the second session with the girls took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 from 14:45 to 15:15. The first session with the boys took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 from 14:45 to 15:40 and the second session with the boys took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 from 14:45 to 15:25. The focus group allows the researcher to obtain multiple spontaneous responses from participants, makes more economical use of time, produce a fairly high level of participant involvement and experience shared by a community of people (Litosseliti 2003 ; Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). This was appropriate for a study that was concerned with an age group where peers and relationships with peers are centrally important to their development. Prior the focus group discussions, I met with the participants individually and in groups to finalise our plans and to make sure that they understood their role and rights as part of the research study. I had to hold the focus group discussion according to the availability of the participants. Since the majority of participants were schooling, it had to be held after school and during the week. It could not be held during the weekend because that would involve additional transport costs. I also had to consider the needs of those who were not in school such as their transport costs. Initially I planned on conducting the focus group interviews at the Newlands West ground but it was not feasible, therefore the

participants and I decided to find an alternative venue which was a classroom in a local school. I held four focus group sessions; two with the group of girls and two with the group of boys. The intention was to have the same people in both sessions. The second sessions were a follow up from the first sessions (refer to Appendix 6). All sessions were guided by focus group prompts (see Appendix 6). The focus group discussions were in English and IsiZulu allowing participants to code switch between both languages, as this is what the participants preferred. This was translated in the transcripts. During member checks, I also had another opportunity to make further clarifications (see Section 3.6.1 Credibility and see Appendix 12). During these discussions I used several social work communication skills such as open ended questioning and asking for clarification (Appendix 6 contains an example).

### *3.4.2. Individual interviews*

Upon completion of the focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews were held with two male and two female participants, and of the four, one was involved in meso level activities with the other three participants not included in any, that is neither school, nor recreational activities. According to Nieuwenhuis cited in Maree (2007:87) semi-structured interviews entail a set of open ended questions in a particular order (see Appendix 8). The semi structured interviews were held on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2016 and lasted roughly 45 minutes. I conducted these individual interviews as a result of my observations that combining those who were involved and those who were not involved in meso level activities resulted in low disclosure of important data. They were also conducted in a classroom at a local school. The semi structured interviews allowed me to probe into issues which appeared to be sensitive in the group interviews. During this point participants spoke freely and shared their perspectives on issues they would not readily share in the group. Some of the issues that were discussed in the individual interviews and were 'not owned' in the focus group (with girls) were those pertaining to transactional sex relationships. During the focus group with boys the issues that were 'not owned' were those pertaining to the participation in criminal activities and during the discussion about brands some members felt intimidated by others and could not express themselves. However, in the individual interviews members were forthcoming with sensitive information of the kind that would not

be shared in a group (To demonstrate this I have included an excerpt from the interview as Appendix 9 in the audit trail).

During both the focus group sessions and semi structured interviews I used social work communication skills which allowed me to gain descriptive perspectives from participants. The discussions were held in both English and IsiZulu as preferred by participants and this was translated in the transcripts. The discussions were audio taped and transcribed verbatim with the exception of one interview (See Section 3.7). After both the focus group sessions and semi structured interviews I provided refreshments which were well received by participants.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport (2005:333), data analysis is the 'process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data'. Thus, Babbie (2007) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) postulate that qualitative data analysis is a non-numerical process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. According to Babbie and Mouton (2004:492), 'thematic content analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that is used to make inferences from the text in an objective and systematic manner in order to identify specific characteristics of a message. The reason why I have chosen thematic content analysis is that it is a clear process which has allowed me to make sense of the data and it was suitable for a descriptive design.

#### *3.5.1. Familiarization and immersion*

Data analysis begins before, continues during, but culminates after the data collection process (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). According to Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006), in this stage it is critical that the researcher immerses himself/herself in the data and pays attention to field notes and interview transcripts. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) adds that the first step in analysis is to become familiar with the topic and to become immersed in the data. This process began when I listened to the audio recordings so that I could transcribe the data

which also included translating some of the audio. Transcribing and translation also form part of familiarisation because they involve listening to the audio recordings repeatedly. I continued with immersion by reading and re-reading the transcripts of the focus group discussion and each interview with the intention to listen to cues that I may have missed and to identify various topics embedded in the data. I brainstormed ideas as I went over the transcripts and notes and made notes of the themes that emerged with the intention to categorize them at a later stage (presentation of findings stage). This made it easier for me as I was able to find information faster as I knew what to find and where to find it.

### *3.5.2. Inducing themes*

Once I had familiarised and immersed myself with the data I began developing themes and sub themes. This required me to look for recurring content that emerged from reading the transcripts which I grouped together. These were further grouped into sub themes. The themes were arranged in a fashion that is similar to storytelling, in that it flows and links from one theme to the next. Table 3.5 presents the themes and the subthemes which developed after I had familiarised myself with the data. This consisted of grouping similar, recurring data and placing it under an umbrella theme. Data which did not fit under any of the themes was not included.

### *3.5.3. Coding*

After the theme inducing phase, I proceeded with the data coding process. However this process had already begun during theme induction. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) confirm that 'during the activity of developing themes, you should also be coding your data'. According to Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006), coding involves marking different sections of data as being instances of, or relevant to, one or more of your themes. I highlighted all the similar responses or textual 'bits' in different colours and used abbreviated capital letters for the themes identified by virtue of their containing material that pertains to the themes under consideration (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). An example of coding in my analysis was the theme, The demands of society which I labelled D/S. Appendix 7 includes an example of a coded transcript.

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Socio cultural factors affecting participant's needs and wants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Neighbourhood characteristics of low income households</li> <li>b) The role of community in meeting participants needs and wants</li> </ul>
2. Home circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Implications of employment on the family structure</li> <li>b) Relationships with siblings</li> <li>c) The relationship with caregivers: the generation gap</li> </ul>
3. The demands of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Self image and consumer culture</li> <li>b) Social comparisons</li> <li>c) The power of brands</li> <li>d) The effects of the media</li> </ul>
4. The inability to participate in consumption activities: responses of adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Responses and coping strategies in the home</li> <li>b) Adolescents and part time work</li> <li>c) The participation in criminal activities</li> <li>d) Transactional relationships: blessers</li> </ul>
5. The blurred boundaries between needs and wants in the lives of research participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The theoretical argument :needs versus wants</li> <li>b) The link between needs, wants and identity</li> <li>c) The need and want for education</li> </ul>

**Table. 3.5. Demonstrates themes and sub-themes**

#### *3.5.4. Elaboration*

During this part of the process, themes are explored more closely to capture the finer nuances of meaning that may have been missed during the initial coding phase (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). This is done by re-reading data and comparing sections of text to gain a sense of whether they are sufficiently similar or too different to be grouped together. Elaboration required me to further immerse myself with the data with an openness to identify any contradictions or unexpected findings. For example, in the semi-structured interview a male participant stated that he was not influenced by brands and did not care about them whereas in the focus group with boys they all agreed that brands even though they were unaffordable, interested them. I did not judge such contradictions but rather allowed participants to explain their choices in order to gain thick descriptions.

#### *3.5.5. Interpretation and checking*

This final step in the analysis process refers to the reviewing and fine-tuning of the gathered information into appropriate and justified interpretations (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). This step required me to go back to the data and check if I had missed any important information or themes. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:144) suggest that ‘the researcher should go through the interpretation with a fine-tooth comb and try and fix weak points’. I went back to the data to see if I had missed any important information and I was able to make the required adjustments. Re-reading of the data assured me that indeed, I had given the voices of the participants as much space as possible, which is important in a qualitative descriptive study. Furthermore during this phase I also looked for any gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions. This was done through my own reflections, peer review and member checks (see Section 3.6).

### **3.6. Trustworthiness**

Assuring the trustworthiness of a study is an integral part of qualitative research. Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) contend that trustworthiness is determined by asking how ‘an inquirer [can] persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to or worth taking account of’. Drawing on Guba and Lincoln, Babbie and Mouton

(2001) describe a trustworthy study as one that is credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable, and stress that these four dimensions are interlinked. I ensured the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study as follows.

### *3.6.1. Credibility*

Credibility seeks to find compatibility between the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the participants in a given study and those that are attributed to them (Babbie and Mouton 2001). In other words, the findings provided by the researcher must match the participants' experiences and what they shared during data collection. Credibility can be achieved through a number of procedures and in this study I have employed; triangulation, member checks, peer review and persistent observation.

*Triangulation* refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena in order to confirm the validity of research findings (Patton 1999, Denzin 1978). Using multiple methods can help provide a deeper understanding of the study. In this study, triangulation entailed the use of both focus group and semi-structured individual interviews.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:275); *member checks* 'take place when we take our transcripts and analysed texts back to our respondents and check with them whether what we have constructed from our data is actually what they have said.' To ensure credibility of my research, I engaged in member checks with the participants from whom I had collected data from. This was done with two members of the focus group with girls and three members from the focus group with boys. These were conducted after the second session. During this process, I checked with participants if my transcriptions and interpretations were accurate, by reading inserts from our discussion, quoting them verbatim (refer to Appendix 12). Furthermore when I made observations during the focus group interviews, I checked with members by asking them about the non verbal gestures they would make such as folding their arms or making hand signals. This allowed me to make correct interpretations rather than assume I understood. It also gave me an opportunity to summarize preliminary findings.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) contend that *peer review* is done with a colleague who is outside the context of the study but has a general understanding of the nature of the study, and with whom you can review perceptions, insights and analysis'. My peer review focused on theme three, the demands of society. The comments addressed three sections; content, clarity and technical issues. The peer reviewer's feedback is included in the study's audit trail as Appendix 13. The peer reviewer was Thomas Gumbo, a student from the cohort who had completed his masters using the same research paradigm as mine (qualitative research), and who is now a PHD candidate.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) describe *persistent observation* as 'pursuing interpretations in different ways, engaging in constant and tentative analysis, looking for multiple influencers and searching for what counts and what doesn't count'. In this study, I ensured this by not only being observant during the focus group sessions and interviews but also by exploring the data further and focusing on the relevant aspects. During both the focus group discussions and individual interviews, I was aware of non-verbal communication. I noted this down immediately after the sessions so as not to interrupt or make my participants anxious. The observations assisted me in making connections between what the participants were saying and what the participants were feeling (see Appendix 10). This enabled me to be aware of any contradictions, inconsistencies and incongruencies. For example in the first session with the boys some participants were more relaxed, confident and more open than others but during the second session the quieter members communicated more. In the second session there were less members therefore members felt they could relay their opinions to the group. I noticed some subgroups in the first session and that was because some members were friends. The girls did not form sub groups and they were always attentive. However, there were some members who were more dominant than others. These observations provided additional understanding and provided insights that were not expressed verbally. This added credibility to the study as in depth descriptions were generated from the observations (see Appendix 10).

### *3.6.2. Transferability*

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:277), the term ‘transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents.’ They further elaborate that qualitative researchers are ‘not primarily interested in (statistical) generalisations and believes that all observations are defined by the specific context in which they occur’ (Babbie and Mouton 2001:277). Thus, qualitative researchers do not claim that knowledge gained from one context will necessarily have relevance for another context or the same context in another time frame. In order to achieve transferability, qualitative researchers, use the strategies of purposive sampling and thick descriptions (Babbie and Mouton 2001). This is to enable the readers of a given research report to form an informed opinion about the applicability of its findings to a different context that they maybe interested in.

In this study I employed both strategies. As discussed in Section 3.4, this study’s sample was purposely selected based on prospective participants’ abilities to provide rich information in relation to the topic under investigation. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:277), thick descriptions occur when researchers provide ‘sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and [report] them with sufficient detail and precision to allow judgments about transferability to be made by the reader’. The readers of this dissertation will be able to make this judgement after reading my presentation and discussion of findings in Chapter 4.

### *3.6.3. Dependability and Confirmability*

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) an inquiry must provide its audience with evidence that if it were to be repeated with the same or similar respondents in the same or similar context, its findings would be similar. To this end, Guba and Lincoln (cited in Babbie and Mouton 2001) assert that an inquiry audit should be employed. Similarly, confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher (Babbie and Mouton 2001). They go on to describe an inquiry audit or audit trail as a process which involves an auditor examining documentation of critical incidents (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Confirmability is achieved through the upfront statement of a researcher’s assumptions and potential biases. In order to ensure confirmability and dependability, I kept an audit trail. Other than the audio

recordings and ethical documents, this also included, observation notes, a reflexive journal, member checks, peer review and transcripts, which are all attached as Appendixes. Throughout this study I kept a reflexive journal where I entered my personal feelings and bias. This helped me become more critical as I am also a resident of Newlands West and it helped me to remember information that could not be captured on audio tape. To demonstrate this I have included an excerpt from the reflexive diary notes as Appendix 11 in the audit trail.

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

Ethics ensure that the research is conducted responsibly and that researchers have complied with the appropriate standards. Thus, a research proposal describing the study and its methodology was presented to a colloquium which was approved by the University of KZN's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee; data collection did not commence until ethical clearance was provided by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (refer to Appendix 1) and the moral principles of autonomy and respect, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice proposed by Wassenaar (2006) were taken into account prior and during the research.

The autonomy of all people involved in a given study and the researcher's respect for the dignity of persons should never be compromised. In order to assure the autonomy of, and demonstrate my respect for the dignity of the participants in my study, I requested their informed consent (see Appendix 2). In the cases where participants were younger than 18, I requested informed consent from their legal guardians, for which I used a separate form (see Appendix 3). I informed both parties about the purpose and aims of the research and that the adolescents' participation was voluntary (which included their right to withdraw from the study at any time), that no payment would be offered, as well as requesting from participants and their guardians their consent to audiotape the sessions. Finally, I informed participants and their guardians of the available debriefing support.

In this study only one participant during the semi-structured interview did not wish to be recorded, so I amended the consent form and respected her decision. In this instance therefore, I had to rely on my notes and memory. Debriefing services were offered to one

participant in the focus group with girls. Using my social work skills I counselled the participant and offered her emotional support. I further emphasised to her the available resources should she seek further support. These included my colleague from the Department of Social Development, and I provided her with her details (refer to Appendix 2, 3 and 4).

Wassenaar (2006) contends that no harm should befall research participants, as a direct or indirect consequence of the research. To this effect I emphasized confidentiality in the group by including a confidentiality clause in the informed consent form (see Appendix 2, 3 and 4). Furthermore, I also reiterated this point verbally during the group sessions. In this dissertation, confidentiality of research participants is maintained by my use of pseudonyms. I also used pseudonyms for names of places.

According to Wassenaar (2006:67), 'the researcher should attempt to maximize the benefits that the research will afford to the participants in the research study. Potential risks and benefits to participants and their communities have to be weighed up. Similarly, the research should be of social value to the community, and be based on a need arising from the community. I believe that this research will benefit not only the participants but will be valuable to stakeholders involved in youth interventions in the community (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8).

Finally, Wassenaar (2006:68), contends that, 'justice requires that researchers treat research participants with fairness and equity during all stages of research'. This includes fair selection of participants, provision of support to participants who may become distressed during the study and meaningful benefits to the community. I selected participants fairly through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. I also took care to treat all participants with fairness and equity during the interviews. Furthermore, Wassenaar (2006) suggests, that research in the social sciences should benefit participants and change their circumstances. Therefore, the value of this study, discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.8. informed this study of effective methods that could develop communities and provide proper interventions.

### **3.8. Limitations of the study**

In this section, I highlight the limitations that I encountered whilst conducting this research. This is an honest exercise done with the intention to make readers aware of the limitations and how they could be prevented in the future. The main limitations of this study were as follows:

The focus groups were held after school and could not be held during the weekends because this would mean additional costs for participants. This led to participants becoming restless towards the end of the sessions, even though I had informed them of the times and had sought permission from their caregivers. I dealt with this by using non-verbal messages to indicate to participants that the session was not yet over.

The sample in this study included only Black African participants, even though race was not one of the sampling criteria. This is because in South Africa, it is Black African people who are dominant residents of low-income areas (Stats SA 2012). Thus the findings are not reflective of all racial and ethnic groups who reside in low-income households. Therefore the study was not representative of all population groups. I return to this concern in Chapter 5, Section 5.3: Recommendations.

The study combined purposive and snowball sampling. The limitations associated with snowball sampling (Babbie and Mouton 2001) were observable in this study, too, in that the sample included similar types of adolescents and adolescents from similar peer groups. The study focused on the Newlands West area, therefore the findings could not be generalised to other areas. Being a qualitative researcher, however, generalisation was not what I aspired to. This concern, too, will be revisited in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.

Having provided a detailed overview of the research methodology employed in this research, as well as discussions of the study's trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations, I present and discuss the study's findings in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings of the study, Understanding needs and wants in context: The lived experiences of adolescents from low income households, Newlands West. A total of four focus group sessions and four semi structured interviews were held with a total of 20 adolescents. Thematic content analysis was employed to analyse the data and to develop themes, which provide the structure of this chapter. The presentation and discussion of findings begin with a profile of participants which aims to provide a context for the findings. The discussion unfolds along the following themes: Socio-cultural Factors Affecting Participant's Needs and Wants; Home Circumstances; the Demands of Society on the Self; the Inability to Participate in Consumption Activities: Responses of Adolescents; and the Blurred Boundaries between Needs and Wants in the Lives of Research Participants. As this study is framed by the ecosystems theory, each theme will be discussed with reference to the relevant systems, that is, the microsystem, exosystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and the global system. The ecosystems theory provides a framework for thinking about networks and connections in the individual's environment and with that a platform for understanding how adolescents from low-income households are affected by, and affect their environments.

A total of twenty participants were accessed through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling (refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.3). There were a total of twelve girls and eight boys. Eight of the boys and twelve of the girls participated in the focus group sessions. In addition, four participants were interviewed in the semi structured interviews. The age range of participants was sixteen to eighteen. Thirteen participants were in school whilst seven of the participants were not involved in schooling but rather searching for employment, engaged in community activities or not involved with anything. In total six participants, two girls and four boys were involved in meso level activities other than school. These included church, soccer, poetry and gym. These recreational activities involved both those participants who were in school and those who were not in school. Those who were in school were in grades 10 to 12.

Although a total of twenty participants were accessed, only sixteen participants are quoted in this study. However during member checks and persistent observation as discussed in Chapter 3 [Trustworthiness], the quiet members are acknowledged as their non-verbal communication is explored ensuring that they are not excluded.

#### **4.1. Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Participant's Needs and Wants**

Individuals are in reciprocal relationships with their environments, where environmental factors, attitudes and behaviours affect their behaviour. This section examines the neighbourhood characteristics of low-income households and community structures. The social environment determines the dominant values and rules which members of a society are expected to abide by making socialisation a process that occurs to a significant extent in a community. According to Elkin and Handel (1978:2), socialisation is defined as 'the process by which we learn the ways of a given society or social group so that we can function within it.' One of the objectives of this study was to understand how meso-level structures support participants' strategies of meeting their needs and wants. Noticeably from the data collected, a majority of participants expressed negative attitudes towards the neighbourhood and the structures, or lack of thereof, in the community. Their experiences have been grouped into two sub-themes: *4.1.1. Neighbourhood characteristics of low income households* *4.1.2. The role of community in meeting participants needs and wants.* These structures fall under the mesosystem where adolescents are actively able to engage and socialise with others.

##### *4.1.1. Neighbourhood characteristics of low-income households*

Living in a low-income household presents many challenges for many families. These challenges included building an identity in a society that has adopted a global and a consumer culture that values material goods as discussed in the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2. 1). Ten participants gave descriptions of their neighbourhoods and the type of behaviour they are exposed to. For example in his semi structured interview, Kris shared the following:

I live in Nlace. My neighbourhood is bad because there are a lot of drugs, there is one road called Tacc that is the road most infamous for drugs. There is another road most infamous for prostitutes. The neighbourhood is run by drug lords. If you are a snitch, then your life is in danger. It's hard, you know, your parent is going to work in the morning and there's somebody at the bus-stop smoking whoonga, and across the road, there is a prostitute for R20.

Also in a semi structured interview Swazy echoed the above account:

Nlace is a place where there is a lot of poverty and crime, the houses are RDP houses so it's that kind of place, lots of people there are unemployed. There's crime and lots of whoonga boys who will steal from you, maybe stab you. Especially if you are a girl, you can't just be on the streets, so you can't go to the park because it's not safe.

Leey during the focus group with the boys, in the first session echoed similar experiences:

It's a place where you have to be aware of your surroundings and be careful.

What is most noticeable from the above quotations is that participants from low-income households described living in neighbourhoods which are marred by violence and crime. Common traits of low income neighbourhoods often include a high crime rate, poor quality housing, lack of resources such as lack of reliable transport, delinquency and high unemployment rates (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). The finding above is consistent with the descriptions of these authors and with the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). Furthermore, all participants who resided in this area, indicated that drug trade was a feature in the neighbourhood and was a common form of employment for those who desperately needed income. In fact, drug trade and trafficking is often the result of a vicious cycle of poverty propelled by economic inequalities (Whitehead, Peterson and Kaljee 1994). Moreover Whitehead, Peterson and Kaljee (1994:1051 ) found that studies conducted in the United States demonstrated that 'inadequate employment opportunities amongst lower economic African American teenage boys contributed to the social marginality of this group and as a consequence of such have perceived 'hustling' as a viable path towards achieving economic needs, social respectability and a sense of self as a man.' Hustling is defined as engaging in money making activities some of which may be regarded as illegal by the wider society (Whitehead *et al.* 2004). Similarly, South African youth from low-income backgrounds often resort to drug trafficking in order to meet their needs and wants. In addition, their access to drugs often leads to drug intake as a means of dealing with their difficult life circumstances. Kalichman, Simbayi, Kagee, Toefy, Cain and Cherry (2006:1647)

assert, “poverty is an indicator of substance abuse since the latter may serve as a means of coping with the daily pressure of poverty”.

In addition to substance abuse, participants also viewed prostitution as being a problem and indicated that young women are driven to prostitution as a form of employment in their neighbourhood. This practice by young women often leads to them becoming commodities on the street, to be rented and leased (Kaieteur news 2016). Because, prostitution tends to be linked with drug trafficking, it, too, is both caused by, and contributes to community deterioration.

As seen in the discussion above, low-income neighbourhoods are considered to be breeding grounds for crime and substance abuse and this often results in the early participation of adolescents in these kinds of activities. In this way, the experiences of participants described in this section highlight how daily social interaction with the neighbourhood that is their mesosystem influenced their socialisation, negatively by posing additional challenges that participants had to negotiate over and above the expected developmental tasks associated with adolescence.

#### *4.1.2. The role of community in meeting participants needs and wants*

The research revealed a lack of community structures to engage participants in productive activities. Neighbourhoods that lack structures such as recreational activities are prone to more risky behaviour. The Oxford Dictionary (2005:1218) defines recreation as ‘the fact of people doing things for enjoyment, when they are not working’. Therefore a community that lacks recreational activities for adolescents may experience a high juvenile crime rate, school drop outs and teenage pregnancy (Papalia *et al.* 2008). Moreover, Witt and Caldwell (2010) found that community structures often create opportunities to belong, promote opportunities for skill building and offers forms of support to adolescents. Whilst the participants in this study did engage in recreational activities, there was a consensus that those activities were inadequate and irrelevant to them. Five participants were not involved in any activities, thirteen were involved in school and of the thirteen, only four were involved in other activities such as going to church and exercising. Two non-schooling participants were involved in community activities. Ten participants expressed concerns

regarding recreational activities. For instance, the following conversation transpired with Teey during the focus group with boys, in the first session:

Ja where I live, there is not enough sports. If you want to play sports you have to take transport to Westville, Pinetown, Umhlanga, that's why you just stay home and end up not doing what you like, and that results in you joining others who are doing stupid things.

Leey shared the following during the focus group with the boys, in session one:

In my Neighbourhood at the grounds, they are smoking. So how are you going to play soccer now, and you end up smoking too, you see, that's why I stay home.

Kris in his semi structured interview shared the following:

They smoke weed, they go to house parties, they engage in unprotected sex. That's why the highest percentage of bad things you see are in the RDP houses.

Sassy during the focus group with girls, in the first session reflected:

I think we should get more activities because some of us like modelling, dancing. There are many halls here, so what they can do is get the girls together, have a competition like Miss or something like that because during the holidays we sit around and buy stuff like food, fries, wasting money, meeting with friends.

The above participants' accounts highlight the need for safe and drug-free sport facilities and spaces for creative activities in the community. The behaviours and activities mentioned above by participants are not uncommon amongst adolescents as they experiment with different roles and try to carve an identity. Development is affected by a wide range of factors, particularly the media. In this section it is also important to note the gender differences in the type of recreational activities that participants suggested. The male participants preferred more physical and outdoor activities that demonstrate masculinity, whilst the girls preferred indoor and more feminine activities. Because of this, boys prefer to play soccer to forge their masculine positions and their games monopolise the space, whilst girls engage more in social conversation and singing (Bhana 2005; Rose and Rudolph 2006). However, due to the lack of safe recreational activities offered at the level of their community, that is their meso level environment, the majority of participants felt discouraged. They felt that recreational structures in their communities were lacking and that they were given little opportunity for self expression. So while community structures, found in the mesosystem, foster individual interactions with different areas in the

environment, in the lives of participants, these interactions posed additional risks, rather than supporting them in the development of positive identities.

## **4.2. Home Circumstances**

The home circumstances of adolescents reveal the kind of relationships that they have with their family. This section also provides the socio-economic status of the family which is a strong factor in determining participation in consumption related activities. The pervasive nature of the media makes it difficult for those who are less affluent to participate in consumer markets. The financial status of the household can be experienced as pressurising by adolescents who are aware of their socio-economic status at the same time as they rely on their parents to support them while they build and rebuild their identities which often require consumption. For these reasons the socio-economic status of a household affects the relationships in the home. Consequently, family relationships become strained by financial challenges, and this creates tension between parents, and children, and between siblings, thereby affecting adolescent behaviour. Papalia *et al.* (2008) confirm that children of poor parents are more likely to experience negative home and school atmospheres, stressful events, and unstable households. These issues are explored further in the following, and the discussion is organised along the following sub-themes: *4.2.1. The implications of employment on the family structure; 4.2.2. Relationship with siblings; 4.2.3. The relationships with caregivers: the generation gap.* The systems that impact on the adolescent in this section are the exosystem and the microsystem. The exosystem does not contain the developing person but has a profound influence on them and the microsystem consists of the child's immediate surroundings (Berk 2000).

### *4.2.1. The implications of employment on the family structure*

Participants in this study were either living with their parents, or living with one parent and relatives in the household. In my sample, six of the households had one parent, five had both parents and nine of the households had no parents, with other relatives assuming the role of primary caregiver. The wide range of living arrangements in this study was evidenced, for example by Nic's accounts during the semi structured interview, Kay's

contribution to the group with boys, and Anny's and Nono's contribution to the focus group with girls:

I live with my uncle and his wife, and my big brother and their two kids (Nic).

I live with my grandmother, uncle, aunt (Kay).

I live with my granny, uncle, aunt, my small sister and cousin (Anny).

I live with my guardian (Nono).

Other participants lived with one parent and a sibling or relative, as reported by Gigi during the focus group with girls and Teey during the focus group with boys

I live with my dad, aunt and younger sister (Teey).

I live with my mother and two sisters (Gigi).

The above accounts illustrate participant's family structure. All participants who were not living with their parents did report visiting them and vice versa. The reasons for not living with their parents as indicated by participants included: parents reside closer to where they are working, or both parents were deceased, and their parents had separated. Parents who chose to reside closer to their workplace or move to the city to find work often did so to provide a better life for their children. This is referred to in the literature as urbanization. According to Edmonds (2013:2), the term urbanization indicates 'the percentage of a country's population living in urban areas.' In other words urban areas are considered to be thriving economically and therefore assumed to provide employment. However, this reality looks different for many, and people usually find themselves in exploitive labour. In South Africa, due to the apartheid regime, urbanisation particularly, affects economic growth, racial integration, and education (Edmonds 2013). People seek better employment opportunities to improve their standard of living frequently resulting in separation of children from their parents. This results in the increase of non-traditional families, which include cohabitation, one-parent family and living with grandparents (Papalia *et al.*2008). Although all participants were from low-income households (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2) the study showed up considerable differences within this group. For instance in the focus group discussion with girls, two participants stated that two people were employed in the household, whilst eight said only one person was employed. Another difference was the

type of employment. The accounts by Xoe during the focus group with girls and with Swazy during her semi structured interview demonstrates types of employment.

I live with my aunty and two siblings. My Aunty is a cook (Xoe).

I am employed and my mother is employed, she is a cook at a local business (Swazy)

The inequalities created by the injustices of the Apartheid regime have contributed immensely to unemployment in South Africa which in the lives of the study participants translated into re-arrangements of family lives as individual family members moved to the city and settled in Newlands West whilst searching for employment. The information contained in this section reflects therefore a great diversity of family structures that have emerged as a result. However this has impacted the socio-economic status of different participants' households and their relationships with other members in their households- that is, their microsystems as discussed in the following sub-themes.

#### *4.2.2. Relationships with siblings*

Living with financial difficulties is strenuous as is expected of any challenging situation. Hence, relationships with caregivers and with siblings are often tested leading to tension. Family conflict, depression and risky behaviour are more common in adolescence than during any other parts of the life span (Papalia *et al.* 2008). Papalia *et al.* (2008) confirms that the number of siblings in a family and their spacing often determines roles and relationships. In this study two participants shared experiences concerning their siblings and purchasing decisions. The participants were Bee and Sassy during the focus group with girls in the first session:

My younger sister will get something before me (Bee).

Another thing is, if you have siblings younger than you, you feel like they are receiving more than you. For example a boy, people have this mentality that boys must always get new expensive shoes and nothing is bought for the girl and then you feel bad (Sassy).

During adolescence, there are changes in sibling dynamics similar to the changes between adolescents and parents as the younger person seeks independence and demands that less authority be asserted by the older person (Papalia *et al.* .2008). Hence, most sibling relationships are characterised by rivalry. According to Boyse (2011: 1), 'sibling rivalry is the

jealousy, competition and fighting between brothers and sisters for almost all parents of two or more kids'. Environmental factors that both siblings may share such as the family's socio-economic status and neighbourhood provide a specific context of where sibling interactions occur, and some studies have found that lower socio-economic status is linked with more negative sibling relationships (Whiteman, McHale and Soli 2011).

The accounts of the participants narrated in this section indicate that economic constraints emanating from the exosystem have consequences on child rearing (microsystem). These accounts also highlight the gender differences readily accepted by society (refer to Chapter 2, Section. 2.3). The accounts presented above also demonstrated the gendered nature of how economic constraints in households played themselves out in purchasing choices and negatively affected siblings relationships in the lives of some of the study participants.

#### *4.2.3. Relationship with caregivers: The generation gap*

Adolescents are likely to express a growing dissatisfaction with unequal treatment and unfavourable outcomes (Laursen and Collins 2009). Due to their increased cognition they are often quick to point out logical flaws and inconsistencies in parents' and caregivers' positions and actions (Laursen and Collins 2009). Adolescent's behaviour at this stage, which is considered to be challenging can be attributed to their developing critical thinking skills, which causes them to question parental authority instead of accepting it, thus creating conflict in the relationship between adolescents and their caregivers. Five participants referred to misunderstandings between parents due to age differences. The context of the following interchange stems from the question: 'How does that make you feel? When you really want that new pair of boots or that new phone?'

Mbu during the first session in the focus group with girls reflected the following:

They [parents] like to stay in the past and say when they were growing up, this is how we did things.

Bee supported Mbu, responding:

Which is so unfair! Because times have changed.

Des during the focus group with boys in the first session also echoed these views:

Like I know that my parents don't understand why clothing has to cost over R100 rand. My parents are old and their time is different. Labels and stuff like that don't matter much, you know. Now in the present, I'm surrounded by logos and whatever, so my parents don't understand why there is a need to spend more than R100 on anything.

Laursen and Collins (2009) affirm that the patterns of communication that were established during childhood decline during adolescence as they seek independence. Grandparents who assume a parenting role are presented with unique challenges as they are expected to deal with changes related to growing old such as physical deterioration, menopause and a reduced income (Mokone 2006). Therefore, the tensions associated with adolescence may be heightened by the generation gap which is more pronounced between grandparents and grandchildren than between parents and children (Mokone 2006). According to Serra (1971: 2), the generation gap includes 'differences in beliefs and attitudes; adults' conceptions of what should be done, educational practices, adult envy of the youth, and an adult construction of a world that adolescents feel it is not theirs'. As a result adolescents may often feel that they have to justify their actions to their parents because the world has changed since parents were their age and continues to do so. In this context, the parenting style employed by the caregivers becomes significant with the authoritative style being the most adaptive approach for child rearing (Berk 2000). Authoritative caregivers make reasonable demands for maturity and set limits whilst expressing warmth and affection (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). Steinberg (cited in Papalia *et al.* 2008) confirms that authoritative caregivers exercise appropriate control over a child's conduct (behavioural control) but not over the child's feelings, beliefs and sense of self (psychological control). Furthermore, parents and caregivers who want to psychologically control adolescents' can harm their psychosocial development and mental health. Asekho during the focus group with girls, in the first session shared the following:

Sometimes parents don't understand like, if you want to go out with your friends, you have to do this and that, it's painful.

The following interchange including Xoe, Anny and myself during the second focus group with girls also highlights the conflict between adolescents and adults and the strong influence of peers.

If my mother sees me doing something bad or something you are not supposed to do, you jump and move but young people of today don't mind to disgrace their parents they just do whatever (Xoe).

Ja you just 'ghost' them sometimes (Anny).

What is that and why is that? (Researcher).

Ignore, not replying to text, because when you are with your friends, your'll just agree on stuff (Anny).

To conclude, this section provided information on the family dynamics and the impact of dominant consumer markets on relationships in low-income households, that is the microsystem level in participants lives. It also looked at the diversity of family structures with caregivers relocating in order to provide a better life for their children. The data suggests that the socio-economic status of the household does impact on the relationships between family members as well as demonstrating the differences between adolescent and adult thinking and reasoning where many misunderstandings are borne as seen in the findings presented in this sub-theme.

### **4.3. The Demands of Society on The Self**

The home circumstances of adolescents from low-income households demonstrate the relational tensions and strains brought on by the demands of society. It is now possible to examine these demands in this section. Socialization of individuals occurs both within and outside the home environment. Society sets the standards which determine which cultures and values are paramount. These benchmarks are influenced by the dominant context of globalisation, neoliberalism and consumer culture. As discussed in Chapter 2, these factors encourage the spending of money to keep up with standards, yet many are unable to, due to their low socio-economic status. The standards are also set by peers who have accepted materialist values as their own. These general observations in the literature were also evident in the data collected for this study. In the following discussion, they are organised along the following sub-themes; *4.3.1. Self image and consumer culture*; *4.3.2. Social comparisons*; *4.3.3. The power of brands* *4.3.4. The effects of the media*. This theme also illuminates how the macrosystem and the global system asserts influence on the adolescent's environment often to their detriment.

#### *4.3.1. Self image and consumer culture*

Despite their low-income status, six participants still expressed an explicit liking for brands and the purchasing of material goods to enhance their identity, or self image. According to Piacentini and Mailer (2004), the ambiguities and uncertainties commonly experienced during the adolescence stage can lead to symbolic buying behaviour. Interestingly, the focus group with boys yielded more data than the girls' group concerning the phenomena of creating a persona, looking a certain way and self presentation. Adolescent boys much like girls spend lengthy amounts of time on their physical appearance (Piacentini and Mailer 2004). This pre-occupation with the self was considered necessary by participants in establishing an identity (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). Several participants asserted how the task of establishing an identity not only included goals, values and beliefs but was also concerned with appearance and the perceptions of others. For example during the first focus group with boys, Kay reflected:

[Clothing] disguises you too, like, I can come to you looking fly as hell but maybe I live in the hood, and it's not the way I really am but it gives some people that feeling. So I can go into a crowd of people with my swag knowing that I look good and I am comfortable and you won't recognise how my background is. So me and you, we are basically equal at that time, you might have a different mindset if you knew where I come from, and you would look at me differently if you knew.

This is also reflected by Swazy during the semi structured interview:

So sometimes when my friends ask me where I live I just say 'I live in Fiti' I don't say, Nlace Place, because it's not a great place to live in, because of the crime and RDP houses, and some of my neighbours are criminals. So I don't want them to know that part.

Nkai during the focus group with boys in the first session shared:

So quality, when you appear you must look a certain way, it's nice when you look good.

Kay added:

its almost as if you give off what you are actually worthwhile you are wearing it but without changing your well-being, so you can still be you. It's just that, you feel good, like, oh my God, I got that shoe that I wanted, and I feel good in these, you know, something like that.

Materialism has become embedded in society and it is evident that it is a crucial part of self expression and interaction with significant others, such as the peer group (see Chapter 2,

Section 2.3). Participants spoke about using material items to disguise themselves so that they can be perceived differently. According to participants material items such as clothing give a sense of self worth. Self worth is closely related to self esteem, which are judgements a person makes about themselves (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). Piacentini and Mailer (2004:251), confirm that 'individuals use products and brands as materials with which to cultivate and preserve their identities'. Three participants also reflected on *Izikhothane*, a particular way of using material goods to define themselves (see Chapter 2 Section 2.3). For example Nic in his semi structured interview said:

Same thing as 'blessers', for me, I think the problem starts back at home because most of them they are not working. That refers to a young group of boys and girls who are still in high school mostly, and they can't be earning R3000 a week; where are they getting that kind of money? So I blame the parents for encouraging this behaviour, they ruin everything. Why would you give a matric child R4000 to spend? Most of them are given money by their parents and I think they have low self esteem, these kids, because they are trying to brand themselves, they feel they are not being noticed if they are just normal people, so they want more attention.

Embedded in consumer goods are symbolic meanings, which are used as an outside expression of people's self concept and in their interaction with others in the social context (Belk cited in Piacentini and Mailer 2004). Furthermore, as evident in the accounts above consumers are more likely to use products that are socially visible to others to communicate their identity (Piacentini and Mailer 2004). In other words in order to make an impact on peers and socially significant others, adolescents must consume products that are well-known.

As demonstrated in the comments in this sub-theme, finding an identity is a crucial task for adolescents. However, it is not enough just for the individual to accept this identity; it should also be accepted by others, and for that to happen it needs to be enhanced. Therefore adolescents turn to using well-liked influences such as branded clothing and using celebrity personas to enhance their identities. Their choices could be shown above to emanate from the macro and global system levels, thereby exposing participants to standards of consumption which as members of low-income households several of them found hard to meet.

#### *4.3.2. Social comparisons*

The findings of this study demonstrated that participants were aware of their socio-economic background to the extent that they perceived themselves as distinctly different from those who were from affluent backgrounds. Ten participants compared their circumstances to those who were seen to be doing better than they were in that they had access to what was considered adequate resources. For example, Nkai, reflected on the following during the focus group with boys, in the first session:

You forget that the background status of your friends is actually good, but yours isn't. When you want something you don't even think about the fact that your family is suffering financially, and that others who you want to be like are spoiled at home. Those spoiled people get whatever money they want. They use money differently from how you would use it as a struggling person.

Kris added:

It also depends on your upbringing. Another thing is friends. If I see my friend wearing a carvella, and if I see someone wearing expensive pants, you see, we don't know what kind of sacrifices they have made to buy that child those items, so we become greedy and jealous.

The strong impact of globalisation and neoliberal ideologies has reinforced a consumer culture which has deepened the divide between the rich and poor. This has made adolescents more demanding towards parents in ways that disregards their financial position. This immaturity in thinking is linked to an impulsive nature, which is common amongst adolescents (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.) Also, when interactions with other people are based on materialistic values the resultant relationships may lack empathy and intimacy and become more shallow and superficial as a result (Kasser 2002). Individuals are influenced by their environments and learn to adapt to the values shared in their community. And if this environment encourages risky behaviour, adolescents are likely to engage in that behaviour as it is acceptable and considered as a norm. This is the case as reflected by Kris in his semi structured interview:

That in the suburbs, those kids go to Gateway or to Suncoast, but I can't go. There is no car at home. So my environment provides me with entertainment, which I see everyday. Like, 'let me go and smoke weed', 'let me go take ecstasy', 'let me just go and drink'.

These comparisons further demonstrate the inequalities that exist in society. For example, during the focus group with boys, in the first session Wren shared the following:

I am a black person, and when I am travelling at night to use facilities in XXC I am looked at suspiciously.

This sub theme highlights the inequalities that exist in South African society, and how they were perceived by the participants. Also, the social comparisons that came to the fore extended beyond the types of shopping malls people are able to go to and included racial overtones. The participants quoted in this section expressed a sense of self in which their inability to consume and their racial identities as black South Africans merged into a feeling of inadequacy. This further demonstrates how global and macrosystem forces burdened these adolescents as they tried to develop positive identities in relation to their peers.

#### *4.3.3. The power of brands*

The research findings revealed that participants were influenced by brands, particularly the boys. Section 50 of the Trademark Act (RSA 1993) defines a brand as ‘any sign represented graphically which is capable of distinguishing goods or services of one undertaking from those of another undertaking’. As explained in the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1) brands are used to develop identities, build self esteem and integrate with peers. Purchasing branded clothing is also associated with investing in quality items as brands are perceived to have good quality, making them the preferred choice by many adolescents regardless of the cost. Six participants expressed a liking of brands. For instance Nkai during the focus group with boys, in the first session revealed the following:

You suddenly feel like you need that new pair of jeans, from Diesel and you say to your mother, hey mum, I need those jeans, and she asks you, how much?. And you tell her, its R1000 because that’s quality stuff. It puts me under pressure because I have seen it, and my friends have bought it.

The following interchange by Des and Kay during the focus group with the boys, session one also demonstrates the power of brands:

Would I take selfies in Check-Out? No! (Des)

Flex, Flex! (Kay)

From these responses, one can also see the different values placed on certain stores. Stores not only represent brands, but they have also become brands. In fact, some stores are considered as ‘low end stores’ whilst others are considered as being ‘high end’. Due to apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act, some facilities, including stores and shops were

built for the benefit of oppressed groups, such as low-income black people. They were located in areas which accommodated black people only, cementing racial identities. Such stores carry a stigma as being 'low quality' and lacking the 'cool' factor. Elliot (cited in Piacentini and Mailer 2004) adds that individuals might reject certain products if they prove to be incongruent. This maybe because Van Eck, Grobler and Herbst (2004) assert, brands create a form of trust, and are more of a psychological assurance than tangible items. This dynamic is illustrated by Des and Kay's reference to flexing which is popular amongst adolescents and with several pop icons. According to the Urban Dictionary (2016), to flex means to 'show off or boast'. In other words, flexing means showing off expensive, 'quality' items. In addition the argument between Kay and Teey during the first session of the focus group with the boys demonstrates how brands were appreciated, assuring the participant even when the item itself was not appealing:

What if you have an ugly, what is that dude's name you said Marc Jacobs, Marc Jacobs shirt, and a beautiful shirt from [pauses] (Kay)

Pep? (Teey)

No not Pep, a Mr Price shirt. You yourself can tell that the shirt is ugly. Which would you choose? You yourself can see that the shirt is ugly (Teey)

However not all participants showed an interest in brands such as the focus group with girls. This suggests that there are limits to the importance of brands in adolescents' lives. The following insert from the semi structured interview with Nic provides an example of such a disregard of brands:

Luckily I'm not a fashion person, so I don't follow trends. You can see now what I'm wearing: I just dress in whatever I feel like, I just wear what I think looks nice, and it will last, and it's strong. I have these grey takkies which resemble Nike. Same material, same structure, same style. But it's just that they are Nike and they cost around R700, I bought mine for R400. So I like them, and they are a strong quality. I don't mind, and I don't mind not trending. I just dress in whatever I feel comfortable in.

This sub-theme highlighted the importance of brands in youth culture. Participants, especially in the boys' focus group, reflected on how branded items were associated with quality, and how this enhanced their social identity. However, others were unable to purchase branded items, which left them feeling socially excluded. Chaplin and John (2010) confirm that brands relate to social status, prestige and group affiliation. Hence, even participants in this study started to believe that brands communicated their personal

qualities (Hudson, Huang, Roth and Madden 2015). However, it is important to note that not all participants accepted brands as part of their identity development and as an extension of the self. Nonetheless, these contradictions demonstrated the extent to which most participants were driven by materialist values, received from a global system. Additionally, at a macrosystem level, society prescribes for adolescents, the kind of fashion, body shape, skin, music or technology they should conform to (Hudson *et al.* 2015), which, some of the quotes suggest, a number of participants had internalised.

#### *4.3.4. The effects of the media*

The standards of consumption discussed in the preceding section are influenced by a strong media presence. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Section 2.1 under conditions of globalisation, the media plays a key role in determining what adolescents consume. This is because communication methods have become more pervasive and have moved beyond the radio and television, with the targets being young children and adolescents. Marketers know that it is easier to convince vulnerable age groups and rely on these strategies to sell their products (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). They also know that using well liked models to sell their product will also appeal to adolescents who seek references to affiliate with. The discussion that follows focuses on, the impact of advertisements, social networks and television icons on adolescents.

Marketers have always relied on advertisements to create public awareness in order to sell products. However these strategies which focus on children and adolescents have increased with the focus shifting away from traditional magazines and commercials to the internet, commercial sponsorships and movie spin offs (Piachaud 2007). Nine participants reflected their thoughts on advertisements. For instance Nkai during the focus group with boys, in the first session reflected:

Adverts they show us these stores Pep, Mr Price, Truworths, Woolworths. So if you are at home watching TV, then you suddenly feel like you need that new pair of jeans from Diesel.

Marketing strategies such as television advertisements, print media and radio are designed to encourage people to participate in the consumer markets (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). This form of communication has increased due to globalisation which has solidified and

intensified commercial relationships between countries. However, globalisation has also affected the interaction amongst individuals in families and societies. It has increased consumption which boosts the economy but excludes those who are unable to spend. Advertisements present temptations which place a great amount of pressure on parents from low-income households to ensure that their children are not left without. Studies on low income parents concluded that adolescents remember advertisements clearly and they consciously use advertising to put pressure on their parents to spend (Middleton cited in Piachaud 2007). Kay during the focus group with boys, in the first session, attests to the pressure that advertisements exert on young people and their parents:

I feel like there are different types of adverts but for the same thing, like different fashion shops or stuff like that. These shops are in competition with each other. Like new clothes come out and they advertise them. So when it comes to us it causes competition between us too, as you want to get new stuff so you can keep up. It's almost like I will buy vans and he will try to buy a better shoe, and after a few months, maybe 2, the vans that you bought start looking old to you. So now, the pressure goes up on your parents on what you want again, cause now you want new shoes again.

The relationship between consumer culture and advertisements is evident in the above insert and is also pointed out in (Chapter 2, Section 2.1). The findings presented above demonstrate the pressure of persuasive messages which in turn places pressure on their caregivers. The above insert also reiterates the social comparisons that exist in society and the importance of brands. Adolescents want to fit in with their peers and failure to do so can result in great distress or behaviour that is considered risky. To this Barber (2007:18) adds 'adolescents enjoy spending time together, the result is that they very much want the same things, they tend to translate their needs into similar wants that tend to transcend youth culture.' Advertisements contribute to the fast paced world which has turned citizens into consumers. According to Barber (2007) a global consumer economy in a world of differentiated cultures depends on the ability to sell uniform goods and the best way to do so is to target vulnerable age groups such as adolescents.

The discussion that emanated from the above subtheme indicates the manipulative nature of advertisements driven by a pervasive consumer culture. Therefore many adolescents are faced with messages of consumption but many find themselves at a disadvantage due to their low socio economic status. Moreover advertisements are considered to be driven by

capitalism to which Barber (2008) asserts 'requires us to need all that it produces in order to survive, so it busies itself manufacturing needs for the wealthy while ignoring the wants of the truly needy'.

As far as the role of social networks is concerned, it has been noted in Chapter 2. Section 2.1 that social media communicates the latest news, celebrity gossip and trends at an incredible speed. The most common forms of social media amongst South African adolescents currently are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Whatsapp and are mostly accessed on cell phones (World Wide Worx 2016). Social media platforms have undoubtedly revolutionized the spread of information such as the marketing of consumer goods. Eight participants confirmed being active on social media. The interchange by Sassy and Mbu during the focus group with girls revealed the following:

Sometimes girls like to be popular, to be famous, and to be seen. And sometimes there may be a girl that you don't like and you want to compete with her. So, you end up doing those things like on Instagram, you post your photos. Or there's this girl whose profile you always look at, maybe she's in your class and you are like she has that item that I wanted, and you end up doing such things (Sassy).

Sometimes I end up talking about it on Facebook and sharing pictures of those things I like (Mbu).

Sleep, watch TV, check social media like all day, and the more you stay on social media, the more you get used to it. When it's time to go back to school and you have assignments you are used to staring at your phone, and if you are getting many responses from people from there you always want to be updated (Sassy).

Swazy during the semi structured interview echoed their views:

I like to do hair, and I also like to do make up, and I like to take videos of my make-up and people like my videos.

Like television, social media can generate both positive and negative material. It has therefore become a dominant socialisation tool amongst peers. A majority of participants included engaging in social media as a hobby they engage in jointly with their friends. They take pictures and post them online as a form of socialisation and leisure, which validated their social positioning. The personal nature of social media leaves little room for adult supervision, more so as the age of children accessing the internet is getting younger, placing adolescents and children at risk. The above accounts demonstrate how social media has become an important tool for leisure and a form of integration with others. Furthermore,

this sub-section highlights how the global system encourages consumption activities through the accessible and relatively easy spread of information at a fast pace.

In Chapter 2, Section 2.1, it has been noted that television icons play an important role in the lives of many adolescents. The visual advantage has an edge over print media and it is perhaps for this reason that it is perceived as more appealing by adolescents. The pressure to participate in consumer markets is indeed reinforced by persuasive messages and these can take on a vast number of forms. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, advertisements employ celebrities to represent brands in campaigns to which young people can relate. The research study revealed that trends as seen on television personas were instrumental in influencing purchasing decisions. The interchange by Zee, Sassy and Mbu in the focus group with the girls is telling of this:

Yes you think you want Rihanna's weave, or those shoes! (Zee).

I personally, I do follow trends and if something is trending I want to be a part of it (Sassy).

anduCiara, she is my favourite, her style, everything! (Mbu).

Adolescents are prone to using messages from the media to construct their realities. According to Peirce (2010) people expect that what they are watching on television is a genuine reflection of their culture and they expect to see elements of their own lives portrayed in the lives of television characters that they are watching (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). Mainstream television programmes much like advertisements also target adolescents. Sometimes television programmes aimed at adolescents receive criticism for what is considered to be controversial content. Swazy from the semi structured interview shared the following:

I do, I really love trends, really love clothes, like I said I like beauty and hair. I like to watch this TV show called Devious Maids. There's this lady called Marisol and I love all her clothes so I would like to dress like her, but you know it is difficult because of money. But sometimes my friends at the salon will ask me advice on what to wear and I just laugh because, that's my style they must find their own style. I can't get all of those things that Marisol has.

Music videos play a large role in adolescent fads. They bring together peer groups who begin to integrate the video with their identity. According to Ford-Jones and Nieman (2003), up to 75% of videos contain sexually explicit material, violence and portray women in a

condescending manner (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). Consequently many young people want to emulate the lifestyle portrayed in music videos such as copying the glamorous weaves worn by the latest artists. Six female participants in the study expressed their liking for the 'weave' (as indicated in Section above). Participants spoke affectionately about 'the weave', and those who were school-going expressed regret that they were forbidden to wear it in school. It is during the holidays were they require money to purchase the hair. The weave has improved over the years shifting from cheap fibre to a more high quality expensive Indian, Brazillian, Peruvian, Malaysian style and the lace wigs. According to one price list provided by the company Volure the price range for these styles range anywhere from R1000 to R3000, with lace wigs reaching R 6500. These styles are very popular amongst local and international celebrities who inspire young girls.

This sub-theme illustrated the extent of external influence on adolescence. It demonstrates how the media portrays an ideal world filled with perfect people, which contrasted sharply with the realities of participants. They were placed under pressure by a demanding society, peers and the mass media to conform to a dominant global consumer culture, found in a macrosystem. Consumer culture, which is characterised by celebrity lifestyles and items that embrace this lifestyle, has become a crucial part of adolescent culture as it provides the tools to express who they are. At the same time, the data presented in this theme demonstrates how the socio-economic status of the study participants constrained their engagement in the consumer markets. The glamorous models portrayed by television programmes played a major role in these adolescent's social integration. The macrosystem and global system exerted an influence beyond the participants' control and affected their preferences, choices, and interactions with their environment.

#### **4.4. The Inability To Participate In Consumption Activities: Responses Of Adolescents**

Individuals with a low-income status are often labelled as worthless. However most people living in poverty do not engage in illegal activities and may be earning a living in a noble fashion. There is a stigma attached to having a low-income that places blame on the individual for their situation (Barki and Parente 2010). Nonetheless, Graham *et al.* (2010:22)

maintain that 'public policy in South Africa is based on the assumption that the poverty of our people is the result of historical, political and economic forces within our society'. This section examines the responses and coping mechanisms adopted by adolescents to deal with their inability to meet their needs and wants. In this study participants were asked what coping strategies they employed when they did not receive assistance from their parents. The themes discussed include: 4.4.1. *Responses and coping strategies in the home*, 4.4.2. *Adolescents and part time work*, 4.4.3. *The participation in criminal activities*, and 4.4.4. *Transactional relationships: Blessers*. These themes affect the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

#### *4.4.1. Responses and coping strategies in the home*

Adolescents argue with their parents more frequently than any other stage. According to Papalia *et al.* (2008) they are constantly looking for opportunities to test their reasoning abilities. Furthermore they try to create facts and logics to build a case for their behaviour (Papalia *et al.* 2008). They relish in challenging authority figures, which often include parents. In this study six participants relayed that their requests to fulfil their needs and wants are often rejected. These behaviours and responses are evident in the interchange below by Kay, during the focus group with boys; Mbu and Anny during the focus group with girls in the first session:

Kay: That's the situation, you have to really humble yourself because you find that my grandmother has money, but it's not enough to cater to your needs. If you don't have something, sometimes you have to accept because the time will come when you will get what you want and it will be even better, then this other thing that you wanted so ja (Kay).

Anny: Sometimes you are told that if you pass then 'I will buy it for you', or you save your money and ask them to add to it (Anny).

The thing that I do when I really want something and my parents say no I can't have it in terms of this and that and that, I just ignore them, for like days. When they talk to me, I just answer that and then I just keep quite (Anny).

Caregivers often place conditions which must be adhered to before meeting adolescents' needs and wants. Whilst some participants indicated that they could not readily accept having their requests denied (see above accounts), three participants expressed an

acceptance of their caregivers authority towards the adults decision. For example Nkai during the focus group with boys in the first session reflected on the following:

Can you hold on and bear with your parent when he/she says 'not now'? Just wait because you are dependent on them.

Zee during the focus group with girls in the second session also echoed these thoughts:

And sometimes there is no need for you to take it the wrong way. You have to wait because all parents want to do nice things for their children.

The older adolescents in this study demonstrated an understanding towards caregivers decisions such as refusing to give them money. Three participants during the focus groups with girls expressed their use of social media to cope with unfavourable decisions. For example, Sassy from shared that:

When I want something I want it so badly that I even start thinking of doing silly things, so the silly thing I do is I post it, I post that I can't have this and that on my Whatsapp status and, like 'not in the mood'.

The discussion above illuminates constructive coping strategies at the microsystem levels. Participants who were in a position to communicate with their parents or caregivers did so in an effort to meet their needs and wants in socially accepted ways. However, low household socio-economic status, often results in youth considering other means to obtain their needs and wants. This is the topic of the next three sub-themes.

#### *4.4.2. Adolescents and part time work*

In order to meet their needs and wants some adolescents exercise their autonomy by engaging in part time work. In fact, Papalia *et al.* (2008) note that in some communities working is considered a normal part of the adolescents' socialization and point out that having a part time job fosters responsibility. In this study, however, only two participants reported being employed on a part time basis. Swazy in her semi structured interview and Des during his focus group with boys:

I work at a salon part time (Swazy).

So when I want something expensive I have to work myself, I design clothes and with the money I buy things myself (Des).

Papalia *et al.* (2008) caution that adolescents who start working at an early age are exposed to an adult world, including at times alcohol and drug use, sexual or criminal activities. As much as adolescents want to gain 'economic autonomy' they are not adults and cannot cope in the same way as adults with the responsibilities that this entails. Anny during the focus group with girls also shared the following about work:

They [caregivers] do things for us but there is a limit to the things they give us. They [caregivers] see that you are asking for many things and then they say, Aaaaaaaa my child, I think you have to work for this.

Some of the participants who reported having to work to earn money did not appear to be pleased about doing so. I not only got that sense from their tone but their non verbal communication as well. Participants want to acquire consumer goods but the method of doing so is perceived as unpleasant. In addition, some part time jobs can create tension in the household. For example Kris in his semi structured interview indicated the following:

So a person here resorts to stealing if they want something, drugs, or becomes a (taxi) conductor.

Becoming a taxi conductor usually entails long working hours, hence leading to a large percentage of school drop-outs among adolescents employed in this field (Mbili 2015). Mbili (2015) claims that young people often choose work over going back to school as this improves their socio-economic circumstances for the short term in spite of having negative implications for their future.

This sub-theme illuminated adolescent part time work. The findings of the study revealed that some participants were willing to work to meet their needs and wants, even if not all were pleased by having to do so. And while considered to being socially acceptable, part time work could be shown to expose participants to potential harm, such as school drop-out. Yet in working, participants demonstrated their credibility and resourcefulness in meeting their needs and wants.

#### *4.4.3. The participation in criminal activities*

This study found that indeed, some adolescents from low-income households consider crime as an option for meeting their needs and wants. Two participants described explicitly

what crimes were committed in order to satisfy these needs and wants, while others employed euphemisms such as 'stupid things' or 'wrong things'. Six participants mentioned behaviours that would be morally judged by society and of the six, four distanced themselves from these responses by speaking of 'us' as opposed to 'other people'. For instance during his semi structured interview Kris reflected:

Okay I am a black person. If I can't get it [what I want] then I will turn to plan B, which is stealing. If it's something that I want, and then plan C which is drugs. But a common thing amongst us is that you wait for the person to wash those pants and hang them on the line and then steal them. What follows is violence.

Minaz from her semi structured interview shared the following:

I was seeing another bhuti in July, with this one we started last year. In July, I met with another one but he was married, so we just slept and he would give me money, R2000 what can you do with R2000 rand? (let me sit down) What can you do with R2000? So I visited my friends who live nearby the waterfront (point) who told me that you can double that money and score some free drugs with the rich Nigerians. I went there only for a week.

Nkai shared the following during the focus group with boys, in the first session:

So when you ask your parent to buy you something and they can't buy it. You know, we don't think alike as people. Some people just decide to get it on their own. There are many ways to get things out here. Some people get involved in scams like trading so they can get money, and others, as we know get involved in robbing others of their valuables and stupid things, which just gets them put in jail. So it is up to you.

Poverty, unemployment and feelings of hopelessness about their situation can motivate young people to commit crimes (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). The World Youth Report (2003:98), found that 'in Africa, juvenile delinquency is attributed to primarily hunger, poverty, malnutrition and unemployment which are linked to the marginalization of juveniles in the already severely disadvantaged segments of society.' Furthermore the report highlights that the crimes committed by the youth are mainly theft, burglary, prostitution, robbery, smuggling and drug offences. Studies conducted on juvenile inmates in a corrective centre in Kenya revealed that over 70% of inmates came from poor family backgrounds, and some had left home to beg for survival in the streets because they lacked basic needs (Omboto *et al.* 2013). South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world and has one of the highest rates of violence (Ward, Merwe, Dawes 2012). Violence has been shown to be strongly associated with economic inequality. Furthermore, it is often

accompanied with a high crime rate including drug related crimes theft and prostitution. The data collected in this study shows that when the community, that is the mesosystem, is marred with crime and unemployment it becomes easier for adolescents' to get drawn in negative sub-cultures, which promise opportunities for rewards for engaging in behaviours that are harmful and attract moral judgement. Furthermore, an unstable macrosystem that is characterised by social and economic inequalities can lead to criminal activities.

#### *4.4.4. Transactional relationships: Blessers*

The implications of a pervasive consumer culture have resulted in relationships between adolescent girls and older men referred to as 'blessers'. Whilst they were commonly referred to as 'sugar daddies' in the past, in recent times the phenomena has a new term but the same rules apply (see Chapter, Section 2.3). Adams (2016) describes a blesser as someone who gives money and gifts as part of a relationship. Traditionally known as a sugar daddy, a blesser tends to be rich, and can set his blessee with clothing accounts, overseas holidays to Dubai, a flat, and a car (Adams 2016). According to Nkosana (cited in Leclerc-Madlala 2008), many young women find themselves in relationships with older men because of poverty. However, many play active roles in seeking and exploiting relationships with older men and do not perceive themselves as victims (Nkosana, cited in Leclerc-Madlala 2008). Blessers with new and efficient communication methods can now easily 'market' themselves on social media, reaching vulnerable adolescents who want to, but do not have the means to participate in consumer markets. Adams (2016) asserts that the demand for blessers will continue as long as poverty and inequality exist in South Africa. The pressure to keep up with the modern world leaves many young women believing that they have little other choice but to engage in these relationships. In her semi structured interview, Minaz who is in a relationship with an older man, demonstrates how she gets him to meet her needs and wants:

I mean, I gave it to him, I gave him sex. You know, when you have nothing, you will do anything. You can look at something and say, I will never do it, not me, but the day will come when you are forced and lokshin girls know they must perform or they will get left behind. How do you think their hair is done, their clothes are new, their phones are expensive? Because they give the thing! You can't be playing out here. Life is very fast, you will get left behind.

The research findings revealed that eight of the girls were against 'blessers' and thought of 'blessees' as 'wanting to be famous on social media' and 'desperate to fit in'. However there were other opinions (three) which were more empathic towards of girls who engaged in 'blesser-blessee' relationships. Nono reflected on the following during the focus group with girls, in the first session:

The person doesn't get cosmetics they don't get anything and there is nobody to help them persevere in that situation.

Leclerc-Madlala (2010:6) confirms that often money obtained is used to pay for education, buy food or clothes and luxuries such as soaps, body lotions and snacks. Other reasons offered in the girls' focus group as to why adolescents got involved with blessers that is, the need to integrate with others who had certain material items. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, peer groups want to be similar, and, a certain level of conformity is required to fit in. Thus, Mbu revealed the following during the focus group with girls, in the first session:

And then you realise that, 'I'm not on that level' and then your friend encourages you to join. There are other 'blessers' and then you join because you want that phone, you want to be like your friend, and then you end up doing stupid things.

The focus group with boys revealed particularly negative attitudes towards blessers. Nkai, Leey, Teey and Kay during the focus group with boys in the second session expressed the following:

Blessers get girls pregnant, they are always with money, alcohol and most of them are sick. Ja so I would tell my sister about all these things and consequences because they have many partners, you are not the only one (Nkai).

You are on foot and he appears in his BMW. So you know she has forgotten about you (Leey).

They come with their 'so called' love (Teey)

Blessers bring standards and it's hard to have a relationship with a girl who has been with a blesser because her expectations are high. So blessers are trying to kick us out. And basically its mostly young girls, and they should just leave the youth alone. Now they will think that a 50-year-old is more good looking than us, just because they have money (Kay)

These were some of the ways in which the boys expressed this disgust about the idea of an older man 'dating' girls who were their age. They felt that blessers violate not only young girls but also their 'territory' as young men, and that this undermined their efforts to win over opposite sex.

The findings presented across the different sub- themes contained in this section indicate that some participants were able to meet their needs and wants in socially accepted ways. However, it also became apparent that participants did not always follow that path and did engage in behaviours that are socially judged and placed them in harm's way. The findings demonstrate the ways in which young women from disadvantaged backgrounds are more vulnerable to transactional sex relationships as they see these as an escape from poverty. Also, the findings showed how engaging in criminal activities can come to be seen as an attractive way of earning money to satisfy needs and wants; more so when there are inadequate community structures to support participants in doing so in safer and morally acceptable ways. In this way, the omnipresence of a consumer culture that associates happiness with material items, deepens the divisions in society and risks undermining shared values that are necessary for communities to provide safe environments in which adolescents can explore who or what they want to be. The study's findings therefore demonstrate the destructive impact of certain global and macro level developments and dynamics on adolescents growing up in low socio-economic communities.

#### **4.5. The Blurred Boundaries Between Needs and Wants In The Lives Of Research Participants**

This section examines the participant's perceptions of needs and wants. The literature cited in Chapter 1, Section 1.1 on needs and wants clearly distinguished the two from each other. In addition, Rosales (2011) describes needs as being universal and essential and wants as being self-centred and trivial. According to the findings of this study, the relationship between needs and wants is more complex, I will discuss this in the following order: 4.5.1 The theoretical argument on needs and wants, 4.5.2 The link between needs and wants and identity, 4.5.3 The need and want for education. Additionally, this theme illustrates the role of the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and the global system in determining to needs and wants.

#### 4.5.1. *The theoretical argument: needs versus wants*

During the focus group discussions, participants were asked to share their understanding of needs and wants. As indicated in the findings below, several participants provided theoretical definitions of needs and wants, as well as offering examples to illustrate their understandings.

For instance during the semi structured interview Swazy shared the following:

I think needs are more important than wants, I think you can't live without needs.

Sassy during the focus group with girls shared a similar explanation:

Needs are important to survive, they are things that you can't live without.

Nkai during the focus group with boys indicated the following:

Needs come before wants because we can't live without needs. When it comes to needs you must eat everyday.

The explications offered by Swazy, Sassy and Nkai above provided a 'formal' definition, which resembles the ideas of Humanist Maslow who developed a hierarchy classifying needs (Meyer *et al.* 2008). At the bottom of the hierarchy were the physiological needs which had to do with survival (Meyer *et al.* 2008). These included basic needs such as food, air and sleep. The hierarchy of needs was criticised mainly for generalizing needs across all human populations. It has also been questioned whether it was possible to conceptualise needs along clearly defined hierarchies (Kenrick 2010). And indeed, whilst participants were able to define needs, in these terms it was not simple to apply these definitions in their lived realities. For instance Des stated during the focus group with boys:

I can say that my need, that is the utmost, is to make my parents proud and not to disappoint them after all these years of paying school fees. My want is to pass matric. People think that passing matric is a need, but really it is a want, food is a need like he said but passing matric, is a want. It's not a need it's just that you need to have it in life so you can have a good life (Des).

In this way, Des demonstrated how he experienced his needs and wants as intertwined. More so, he points to the importance of education both in and outside the school system. I return to this at the end of this theme.

#### *4.5.2. The link between needs, wants and identity*

For the participants in this study, the development of their identity and their understanding of needs and wants in their lives were interlinked. This was evident in the ways they spoke about gender issues, status symbols and the use of social media during leisure time. Firstly, the descriptions of needs and wants revealed gender differences in participants needs, wants and consumption patterns. These differences were already discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3 and Section 4.1.2 of this chapter, and point to the different roles and activities boys and girls are socialised into. The following interchange between Bee and Asekho during the focus group discussion with the girls on the other hand, and Nic during his semi structured interview on the other hand illustrate this:

And we love money, also to get married (Bee)

And support (Asekho)

My want, I'm not sure what I want I think a car, like a van (Nic).

The roles described in literature (Rudolph and Rose 2006), influence what behaviours may follow both males and females. These roles are at the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem levels which in this study included the socio-economic status of households, neighbourhood characteristics and consumer culture.

Secondly, Bee's, Asekho and Nic's descriptions of needs and wants, it becomes apparent that they were linked to status symbols. Belk (cited in Piacentini and Miller 2004) maintains that young people use material possessions to not only establish their identity but also to gain prestige, (see also Chapter 2, Section 2.3). For example, Swazy in her semi structured interview and Wren during session one of the focus group with reflected the following:

My wants are I want new clothes, a new house, a new phone and I want to move away (Swazy).

My want is to get the cherries and those nice cars, you know, that's all (Wren).

These contributions reveal that participants felt that they needed to make a favourable impression on others by being good consumers. Even though they did not have those material items they could be obtained in the future in order to enhance their status. Status

is very important to adolescents who want to fit in with their peers and feel accepted. However, the economic inequalities emanating from the macrosystem meant that some of the desired status symbols would remain out of reach for participants in this study and could only be dreamt about.

Thirdly, needs and wants amongst participants were used interchangeably to describe leisure activities, hobbies, relationships and future plans. Leisure activities amongst participants involved the use of cell phones, which were considered to be a need rather than a want. Hence eight participants in this study discussed the role of social media in their lives. In South Africa there are 7.4 million Twitter users and 13 million Facebook users (World Wide Worx 2016), which could mean that in the near future the ability to participate in social media will also be considered a need rather than just a want. The interchange by Zee and Sassy in the focus group with girls, in session one revealed in this regard:

I like taking selfies and chatting with my friends (Zee)

I like dancing, singing, watching television, social media and taking selfies (Sassy)

Cell phones, once considered a privilege, are now an object used to not only communicate but to also integrate with peers. The cell phone is the most common means of communicating with others (Munezawa *et al.* 2011). A large number of adolescents, use social media as a tool to build identity by sharing messages, videos and photographs which can validate status as discussed in the preceding paragraph. According to Wallace (2016), 50% of teenagers feel that they are addicted to their mobile phones. Wallace (2016) adds that 80% of adolescents feel pressured to check their phones hourly, and 72% felt the need to respond immediately to messages and social networking messages. Whilst these figures are based on an international context, the findings of this study suggest that this equally applies to the participants' context, highlighting once more the impact of the global system in their lives.

#### *4.5.3. The need and want for education*

Some participants in this study felt that education was important although this, too, was not clearly distinguished as being either a need or a want. However, seven participants associated needs and wants with education. Four of those who were in school, shared that

their main need was to finish school and to pursue a career by studying further. Three who were not in school also expressed their need for further education. The research found that participants placed a high value on education as both a need and want. The account by Des quoted in Section 4.5.1 demonstrates this. The following accounts by Kay and Wren during the focus group with boys, in the first session give a similar impression.

My need and want is to get my matric certificate, cause after that I know that I am secured. Forms of employment and education wise, basically and the family will be happy because basically that's why they raised me (Kay).

Wren: My needs are to get an education, get a job so that I can be able to stand alone (Wren).

The above accounts demonstrate how participants who are in school have a need to finish school, which includes a need to make loved ones proud. Fifteen participants did not reside with their parents and reported facing additional pressure to perform well in school so as to not disappoint their parents on their return. Rana and Mahmood (2010) confirm that during adolescence, academic achievement is important because in today's society, academic accomplishments as well as failure determine an individual's future academic career and job opportunities. It is also obvious from the discussion above that the need for education was regarded as important to attain a number of want at a later stage. Unsurprisingly therefore, those who were not in school also shared their needs and wants to study and develop further. For example, during his semi structured interview, Kris reflected:

First of all I need opportunities. For example, if somebody has finished their matric, if they want to study further, so they apply for busaries. What if you have finished your matric but you don't want a bursary you want to open a business? Why is there nothing like that to assist us? You will write the business plan and then they will take you and lend you money and fund you. Being from Nlace, it's very difficult for me to go and apply for a loan because they will look at my background and judge me. Those that are available go to their friends. Me, myself it's been two years since I've been trying, I have almost all the things I need for this business but I don't have money to buy a van. They say they want to see my assets. I don't have such tangible things to call my assets back at Nlace. The houses that we live in are RDP houses, they don't have value, so for me it's hard.

Nic during his semi structured interview shared the following:

Right now I need NSFAS. Ja, I need funding, I need to complete my studies. I had issues with my funding that's why I couldn't further my studies, so I had to pause.

Swazy in her semi structured interview revealed:

My needs are an education. I wanted to study law but we couldn't afford it so education is a big need for me. I couldn't do law, and even if I save, it's very expensive, so I would like to go to a beauty school, or I would like to do Somatology and learn more about hair, make-up, doing nails and eyebrows.

Based on the data presented above it is clear that due to low socio-economic backgrounds, participants found it difficult to satisfy their need and desires to meet their plans for education and other future plans. In the absence of opportunities, participants considered different methods that could help them reach their goals and satisfy their needs and wants. Additionally, considering the socio cultural backgrounds and home circumstances of participants it is unsurprising that participants want a way out.

The discussion above draws attention to the contrast between theoretical literature, cited in this study, which distinguishes neatly between needs and wants, and the lived experiences of the study's participants, in which the distinction between needs and wants is less clear. As a result, the blurred boundaries impacted on the development of participants' identities, a central task of adolescence. However, identity formation is affected by macro processes included in a pervasive consumer culture and processes of globalisation that place materialistic values at the core. This implies that at a macrosystem level consumer culture manipulates wants in such a way they appear as essentials. As a result the boundary between needs and wants cannot but get blurred. This manipulation has been successful and in contexts of low socio-economic communities such as those found in Newlands West, produced challenges that have not been considered previously by social workers.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

Chapter four discussed the findings of the study based on the data collected from twenty participants from low socio-economic areas in Newlands West. The discussion was divided into themes and sub themes. This facilitated the comprehensive narration of the participants lived experiences.

Theme one discussed the socio-cultural factors affecting participant's needs and wants. The findings revealed that the environment lacked meso level activities, leaving participants' vulnerable to negative behaviours that often manifest in communities considered to be low-income. The theme also drew attention to the need for recreational activities which would

support participants creative talents needed for forming positive identities. In this regard, participants made recommendations that needed the capacity of social workers to facilitate solid interventions (see Section 4.1).

The second theme provided information on the study participants home circumstances. These included the sacrifices made by caregivers such as changing living arrangements and family structures in order to create a better life for their children. Furthermore, relationships between family members such as, between siblings and caregivers, were affected negatively as a result of a low socio-economic status (See Section 4.2).

Theme three addressed the demands of society on the self. The findings indicated that adolescents were vulnerable to the standards prescribed by society, persuasive media messages and consumer culture that encouraged materialist values. Much of what is portrayed and celebrated on these pervasive platforms contrasts sharply with the realities of participants. In other words, these sources, created pressure on adolescents' to be good consumers even though many could not due to their low socio-economic status. On one hand the findings revealed that some participants conformed to consumptions messages, and on the other hand some participants did not. (see Section 4.3).

In theme four, I discussed participant's inability to participate in consumption activities: the responses of adolescents. The findings revealed that some of the study participants were able to meet their needs and wants in socially acceptable ways such as seeking support from caregivers and finding part time employment. This demonstrated the impact of consumer culture on South African societies which, are marred with inequalities. However, others engaged in destructive behaviours which placed them in harm's way such as, engaging in criminal activities and entering into transactional sex relationships (see Section 4.4).

In theme five, I drew attention to how the distinction between needs and wants is blurred in the experience of the participants and how this is an effect of the exposure to a consumer culture which manipulates adolescents into using material items to identify with others and to identify themselves with (see Section 4.5). Furthermore, the lack of meso level activities, left participants with no choice but to embrace consumer culture values which were received from a dominant context of globalisation. This I found to be a concern because

surprisingly, participants in this study were able to reflect on activities that were unconcerned with consumption which demonstrated the need for proper interventions.

I return to these concerns in Chapter 5 which concludes the dissertation by relating the above back to the aim and objectives of the study with a view to respond to the problem statement and making recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the findings and concludes the study, *Understanding Needs and Wants in Context: The Lived Experiences of Adolescents from Low Income Households in Newlands West*. It also provides recommendations towards social work research and practice. This was a qualitative, descriptive study. A total of twenty participants, predominantly below the age of 18, were selected using purposeful and snowball sampling. A total of four focus groups and four individual interviews were conducted, and the data was analysed using thematic content analysis. In addition, the ecosystems theory provided the theoretical framework for the analysis. These findings were presented in the preceding chapter along five themes. They are now summarised in relation to the research aim and objectives. For this reason, it is imperative that I reiterate these here. The overarching aim of the study was to understand the needs and wants of adolescents from low income households in Newlands West, Durban. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were pursued:

- To better understand the socio-economic backgrounds of participants;
- To better understand how participants perceived their personal needs and wants;
- To better understand the extent to which participants are able to meet their perceived needs and wants;
- To better understand how participants went about meeting their needs and wants;
- To better understand in what ways participation in meso level structures and activities such as schooling and sports could support participants' strategies of meeting their perceived needs and wants

The underlying assumptions formulated alongside these objectives were that -

- The participants' poor socio-economic background would be found to limit their performance in consumer markets;
- Participants' perceived needs and wants would be impacted by the latest global and local trends;
- Participants would be found to be prepared to use means that attract moral judgement and may be harmful to themselves and others in order to meet their

perceived needs and wants, for as long as they did not get caught. These means would include committing crimes and engaging in transactional sex;

- Meso level structures and activities would be found to lack creative interventions from social workers to help young people develop goals and express their talent. This gap would leave adolescents exposed to the negative impacts of the consumer culture surrounding them.

In Section 5.1, the study's findings are summarized in relation to the research objectives and underlying assumptions. Section 5.2 discusses the study's conclusions which have been formulated in relation to the problem statement. Section 5.3 focuses on the recommendations, based on the study's findings and the conclusions contained in 5.2.

### **5.1. Summary of findings**

This section informs of the study's findings, which are presented according to the research objectives.

The study's first objective was to better understand the socio-economic backgrounds of participants. Data pertaining to this theme was discussed in Chapter 4, Sections, 4.1.1 and 4.2.1. The socio-economic status of each participant's household is available in the demographic profiles of participants which I included in the form of two tables in Appendix 5. These two tables demonstrate the number of people employed in the household and the type of occupation held by the caregiver. Participants revealed that caregivers often relocated to areas that were thought to be thriving economically in order to provide a better life for their children. In several cases, this could be shown to have resulted in negative family relationships. This study found that their socio-economic backgrounds did indeed disadvantage the participants. Their descriptions of what it was like to reside in neighbourhoods that were considered to be low-income highlighted an unequal society where those who are more affluent are able to be good consumers, while others were unable to do so due to economic constraints in their households. Additionally, participants were aware of their socio-economic status and engaged in social comparisons with others

who were more affluent. These kinds of comparisons, however, only emphasised participants' own inability to consume.

The underlying assumption that was formulated in respect of this objective was that the participants' low socio-economic background would be found to limit their performance in consumer markets. The data revealed how participants received messages to be good consumers from a dominant consumer culture, society and their peer group, even though participants had a limited role. The findings presented in Chapter 4 demonstrated some of the ways in which these persuasive messages shaped participants' identities who indeed aspired to be good consumers in order to integrate with peers. As a result, the majority of participants in this study appeared to have internalised the materialist values received from the consumer culture surrounding them, even though they were from low-income backgrounds. However, not all participants accepted materialist values as their own which proved that to an extent, consumption values could be challenged. Overall then, participants' low socio-economic background was found indeed to limit their performance in consumer markets, but participants did exercise a choice with regard to the extent to which they adopted consumerist values as their own.

The second research objective was to better understand how participants perceived their personal needs and wants. The findings that are relevant to this theme were discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.5, and revealed that participants perceived their needs and wants to be interlinked, with blurred boundaries between the two. From the onset, participants provided understandings of needs and wants that proved to be unclear. And with identity formation being a central task of adolescence, participants' identities were informed by these understandings. The findings demonstrate that some of these understandings were linked to material goods. These were seen to be necessary to gain status; to exert and differentiate gender roles; and linked to social media as a means of fitting in with peers during leisure time. Thus, the findings suggest that participants' process of identity formation was indeed affected by consumer culture and processes of globalisation, which manipulate wants to appear as essentials. However, participants also linked their understanding of needs and wants to education. With education being a non-material good, this can be seen as an aspiration and means to formulate a positive identity in a way that serves as an alternative to materialist values and a dominant consumer culture.

The assumption underlying this objective was that participants' perceived needs and wants would be impacted by the latest global and local trends. The data revealed a pervasive presence of a consumer culture and globalisation messages, which portray advertisements, brand culture, celebrity lifestyles as acceptable points of reference for adolescents, thereby, encouraging participants to form identities based on consumption values. As a result, consumption was experienced by this study's participants as a necessary activity, that is, a need. In other words, participants were manipulated into perceiving material goods as necessary to communicate and integrate with others even though on account of their socio-economic status, their chances of doing so successfully were extremely limited (see the discussion of objectives three and four below). For this reason, participants' understandings of their needs and wants were not in their own best interest and problematic in a society where many are disadvantaged (see the discussion below). To an extent therefore, my initial assumption proved to be correct. However with education, several participants also expressed needs and wants that were not impacted by the latest global and local trends, and this was an important exception to this theme.

The study's third and fourth objective are discussed together as there was a strong overlap in the findings between the two. Objective three was to better understand the extent to which participants were able to meet their perceived needs and wants, and objective four was to better understand how participants went about meeting their needs and wants. The data pertaining to these objectives was discussed in Section 4.4. The study participants adopted a range of strategies to meet their needs and wants. Some participants were able to meet their needs and wants in socially accepted ways, such as negotiating with caregivers and engaging in part time work. Especially with regard to the latter, participants demonstrated their resourcefulness and creativity. However when needs and wants could not be satisfied in socially accepted ways, participants also engaged in behaviour that was destructive and placed them in harm's way, including criminal activities and entering into transactional sex relationships, demonstrating the extent to which they were prepared to go to meet the demands placed on them as consumers.

I had formulated one assumption in relation to these two objectives, which was that participants would be found to be prepared to use means that attract moral judgement and may be harmful to themselves and others in order to meet their perceived needs and wants,

for as long as they did not get caught. This assumption was found to be accurate for several but not all of the study's participants. While the findings drew attention to coping strategies in the home and engaging in part time work, which is perceived as being socially acceptable means to meet needs and wants, the absence of these opportunities, saw a number of participants engaging in behaviours that attracted moral judgement, regardless of their harmful consequences. The data revealed that those participants who engaged in these behaviours did so because it appeared to them as the only way to meet their needs and wants. Although they were aware of the potential negative consequences, the idea of getting caught was not a priority. These strategies once again point to a dominant consumer culture that adds pressure on adolescents to perform well as consumers and to keep up with the apparent standards, regardless of their socio-economic background.

The study's fifth and final objective was to better understand in what ways participation in meso level structures and activities such as school, church youth, and sport could support participants' strategies of meeting their perceived needs and wants. Findings relevant to this objective were discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.1. They illustrated that due to a lack of supportive meso level strategies in the community, participants were left exposed to risky, negative interactions. Furthermore, the findings indicated a lack of safe and drug-free sport facilities and spaces for creative activities in the community. Noticing this to be a lack, the study participants shared the kind of activities they would prefer to see in their community, which included activities concerned with self expression and the development of positive identities, such as dance, modelling, and sports. In this way, the study also revealed gender differences in the types of recreational activities preferred by participants.

The assumption in respect of this objective was that meso level structures and activities would be found to lack creative interventions from social workers to help young people develop goals and express their talent. This gap would leave adolescents exposed to the negative impacts of the consumer culture surrounding them. Indeed, social workers, or creative social work interventions were not even mentioned once during any of the focus group discussions or any of the individual interviews. Furthermore, the study's findings suggests that there is a link between inadequate community structures and the negative influence of consumer culture. The absence of effective recreational activities that engage and support participants left them vulnerable to needing and wanting to engage in activities

that would integrate them into the prevailing consumer culture, namely consumption. Such activities, also mentioned in objective two, included the use of material goods as status symbols, and the use of social media during leisure time. This, too, points to a lack of creative interventions by social workers in Newlands West to help young people develop positive identities, express their talent and develop satisfying yet achievable goals. This means that the underlying assumption was also consistent with the findings.

## **5.2. Conclusions**

Against the background of the study's findings I would like to conclude by returning to this study's problem statement, which was, 'Adolescents from low-income households have been described in the literature as struggling to fit in and maintain standards prescribed by peer groups, and to meet the apparent demands on consumers in modern societies. These challenges have been observed to persist in Newlands West youth from low-income households, and contextualized with reference to available statistics of high levels of unemployment, school dropout and juvenile crime in South Africa. While the available literature points to the challenges faced by adolescents from low income households, there appears to be limited research representing the perspectives of adolescents under the age of 18 themselves. Yet, these perspectives are important if social work interventions are to succeed'. To help close this knowledge gap, the overarching aim of this study was to 'understand the needs and wants of adolescents from low-income households in Newlands West'.

Available literature focuses on the challenges faced by adolescents from low-income households and fails to consider their perspectives. Furthermore, this literature is based on international contexts which can be transferred to the local context, but to an extent. In response to this gap, the present study attempted to better understand the perspectives of the adolescents, predominantly under the age of 18, as this knowledge, prior to this research was unavailable. The study was concerned with understanding how adolescents from low-income households in Newlands West perceived, and acted upon, their own needs and wants. Their explanations and descriptions were influenced by processes on the global and macro systems levels that interacted with the socio-economic conditions within the

participants' exo, meso, and micro environments to shape their particular identities. In fact, what was central to the findings regarding the participants' needs and wants was how consumer culture impacted their identities during a time in their development when as adolescents, they experienced uncertainties regarding their appearance and wanted to integrate with peers. With most participants coming from low-income households, and all participants living in a low-income community, none of them seemed able to function adequately as consumers. In the absence of safe meso level activities available in the community, and of creative interventions from social workers to help young people develop goals, express their talents, and develop positive self images, the dominant consumer culture led to negative consequences in participants' family relationships and harmful behavioural choices. Importantly, however, the perspectives of the adolescents sought in this study also revealed information that could helpfully inform interventions by policy makers, town planners, as well as teachers, social workers, and child and youth care workers.

This study was successful in helping to close the existing knowledge gap in that it has expanded on the existing literature. That is, it has added more than just describing the challenges faced by adolescents from low-income households, but focused on the perspectives of adolescents aged eighteen and below. At the same time, the notion that 'adolescents from low-income households have been described in the literature as struggling to fit in and maintain standards prescribed by peer groups and to meet the apparent demands on consumers in modern societies', was found to be accurate, and the findings of this study provided further insights into how this was experienced by participants in their realities.

The findings were interpreted in terms of the ecosystems theory which provided the theoretical framework for this study. The ecosystems perspective highlights how interconnected societies are in their multilayered realities and the means in which individuals achieve equilibrium and maturity (Rothery 1999; Paquette and Ryan 2001). The participants' experiences of their neighbourhood, that is their mesosystem, posed negative challenges for them as adolescents who had to negotiate their expected developmental tasks. These included a lack of recreational structures in the community. Although this

discouraged participants, they still made suggestions on what activities they would like to see.

Experiences with significant others such as family and the peer group were understood in terms of the microsystem. This included participants' relationships with caregivers and siblings in a diverse range of family structures. The socio-economic status of participants' households and the employment they held were considered part of their exosystem. Messages reinforcing a dominant consumer culture were pervasive throughout this study. These emanated from a global and macrosystem, which, by prescribing materialist values and the standards, pressured participants into wanting to be good consumers. This was demonstrated when participants expressed a desire to consume, conformed to materialist values, and embraced role models whose realities sharply contrasted with their own. Indeed, the findings revealed that study participants' conceptualisations of needs and wants were informed by the global and macrosystem. In order to meet their needs and wants, some participants adopted constructive coping strategies at the micro and the mesolevel (in terms of caregivers and finding part time work), while others engaged in behaviours which were harmful attracted moral judgement (such as engaging in crime and transactional sex relationships). These practices were in response to global and macro level influences on adolescents growing up in low socio-economic households.

In this way, the study's findings revealed that there was disequilibrium between the different ecosystem levels, due to the low socio-economic status of participants' households, a lack of appropriate recreational activities in their community, and the influence of a pervasive consumer culture. Although in this study's findings, needs and wants appeared to be blurred, it was clear that in order to assert themselves in society, participants had to engage in consumption activities supporting the goodness of fit theory which claims that people need to adapt to their environment. All in all, participants' experiences were largely consistent with literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, although important deviations in the themes presented in Chapter 4 - that is, non-materialist values, suggestions for recreational activities at the community level, a desire for further education, and participants' willingness to be creative and work to meet their needs and wants - revealed important openings for positive change. These will be discussed further as part of the recommendations below.

### 5.3. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, I would like to end with the following recommendations.

For policy makers and town planners:

- ❖ As indicated in the findings, there is a lack of safe and drug free sport facilities and space for creative activities in the community. I therefore recommend that government provide infrastructure for recreational spaces such as community centres and sport facilities that are aligned with the expressed needs and wants of youth in the community.
- ❖ The findings underscored that unemployment contributed to the low-income status of both households and communities at large. Therefore my recommendation is that government re-evaluate their strategies and development initiatives so that employment can be created. This can also assist those who are interested in starting their own businesses.

The findings revealed that due to a lack of funding, some participants were unable to pursue their education and entrepreneur goals. I recommend that bursaries and scholarships should be provided to youth who are interested in furthering their education. Furthermore, all government departments and state funded entities such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) should offer and / increase the number of internships, learnerships, apprenticeship, as well as training, financial, and technical support for young people wanting to start their own businesses. Again, the anticipated beneficiaries of such programmes themselves should be guiding the design of such interventions.

For teachers, child and youth care workers, and social workers:

- ❖ There is a need for programmes that bring together a multi-disciplinary team consisting of teachers, social workers, child and youth care workers, and community members in order to challenge the dominant consumer culture and develop holistic, relevant programmes for youth. The findings of this study revealed that there were significant challenges in all levels of the ecosystem therefore the collaboration of

services will be needed in order for the issues raised by this study to be addressed efficiently.

- ❖ A major concern in the findings was the lack of constructive, future oriented developmental programmes in the community. I therefore recommend a career guidance and skills development programme. The purpose of this programme would be to guide youth in choosing a suitable career path, to teach skills that help youth in finding employment, and could include practical skills such as compiling a Curriculum Vitae or a business proposal. Furthermore, this programme would introduce careers/open days within the community and liaise with tertiary institutions to provide information on careers which would help those youth who are interested in pursuing a career, decide on a suitable path.
- ❖ Participants in this study recommended that recreational activities including arts such as modelling, singing, dancing and poetry should be implemented in their community. These activities would allow youth to express their talents in safe spaces, build self confidence, independence and positive self-identities. Social workers, teachers and child and youth care workers are all equipped to manage these programmes and offer support to ensure positive outcomes.
- ❖ The findings of this study revealed that coping strategies need to be expanded for youth who are unable to meet their needs and wants in socially acceptable ways. I recommend that in order is to build resilience and teach responsibility, volunteering and mentorship programmes should be offered in the community. These activities would also demonstrate to young people that they themselves could be real-life, positive role models to others, rather than 'manufactured' role models promoted via television and social media. Furthermore, such activities would provide young people with early work ethic which they could add on to their Curriculum Vitae.
- ❖ Some intervention programmes may need to be gender specific, addressing issues concerning females and those concerning males separately. This recommendation is based on the study's findings, which repeatedly drew attention to the differences between gender preferences; with girls preferring activities that contrasted from the boys even though their ideas emanated from the same dominant consumer culture. I

also recommend dedicated group work programmes with girls to discuss their issues of concern and group work with boys to discuss issues that are of concern to them.

- ❖ Finally, there is a need to strengthen programmes that offer support to adolescents engaged in activities and behaviours that are either morally judged, harmful, or both and are integrated back into society. The purpose of such programmes would be to enable the adolescents concerned to develop alternative ways of going about meeting their different needs and want; however, I recommend that these programmes focus on empowering youth and avoid labelling and blaming approaches. Rather, the programmes should focus on equipping young people with information and skills to help them reach their goals (as indicated above).
- ❖ I recommend a broad inter-generational programme that is directed towards improving relationships between participants and their caregivers. This programme should focus on a range of factors such as communication skills, modern discipline methods. It should be directed at bridging the generation gap and providing family members with conflict management skills. As witnessed in the findings and literature, rural-urban migrations and the search for work have changed family compositions and dynamics within many South African families, and these transitions need to be managed accordingly in order to improve relationships and to achieve stability within households.

For education and training in the fields of education, social, and child and youth care work:

- ❖ I recommend that education institutions training future teachers and practitioners who will be working in the Department of Social Development and NGOs in the field of child and youth care should ensure that students are equipped with relevant, up-to-date knowledge and understanding of central development tasks of the adolescent stage of development.
- ❖ Critical thinking and understanding of concepts such as globalisation, neoliberalism, and of social, economic, and cultural developments at the global and macro levels of society are also important for future social workers, teachers, and child and youth care workers.

- ❖ Therefore it is important that adequate funding of education and training in these fields is ensured.

For further research:

- ❖ There is a need for further research to be conducted in other geographical areas to confirm these findings as the sample of this study was limited to adolescents from low income households in Newlands West. Such research could be quantitative, with the aim of producing generalizable results.
- ❖ I also recommend further qualitative research to explore the topic of this study further, paying attention to the experiences of adolescents from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, and focusing more explicitly on gender than this study has done.
- ❖ There is a need for further research into other social issues that emerged from the study. I recommend that these issues such as substance abuse are explored further so that the community of Newlands West is developed positively.

This study provided insight into the lived experiences of adolescents from low-income households in Newlands West. The fundamental issues in this study centred around a pervasive consumer culture and globalisation processes that were ominous throughout the ecosystem and greatly affected the participating adolescents. Their influence created interlinked, blurred descriptions of needs and wants which informed the identities of participants. With most of them being attracted to activities concerned with consumption, it is hoped that stakeholders and those working closely with youth would benefit from the findings of this study.

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4 August 2016

Ms Pumla Nofemele 216039036  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Nofemele

Protocol reference number: HSS/1109/016M

Project Title: Understanding needs and wants in context: The lived experiences of Adolescents from Low Income Households in Newlands West

**Full Approval – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 4 July 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr Dorothee Hölscher  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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## **APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT/ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**

### **Information Letter**

**Date:**

#### **To whom it may concern**

My name is Pumla Nofemele. I am a Social Work Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research project that will enable me to complete the Masters degree. The aim of my research is to understand the needs and wants of adolescents from low-income households in Newlands West.

I would like to discuss some of the issues relating to the topic with you as part of a focus group of between eight and twelve participants of about sixteen to eighteen years of age. There will be two meetings of about one hour each, and with your informed permission I would like to record the sessions.

You need know that your participation in this research is completely voluntary and no payment will be made for your participation. Should you agree to participate, you are allowed to withdraw from the study any time

Should you feel upset by anything that has been said in the focus group, I will be there for you to talk about it afterwards; or I can refer you to Ms Zinhle Mqadi, a qualified social worker who will be available to support you free of charge.

Please note that all the information that you may share during the focus group discussions will be kept confidential by myself as the researcher and my research supervisor and will not be divulged to anyone else. Your names and identity will remain confidential as pseudonyms will be used in my research report. The interview transcripts will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.

Confidentiality also means that neither you nor any other participants in this study may talk to anyone outside the group about anything that was said during the focus group discussion, so you can only participate if you commit to that.

I am passionate about working on this topic as I feel this research will benefit participants, service providers and the community regarding the pressures put onto adolescents from low income households to perform in consumer markets and to provide possible interventions.

For any further information please feel free to contact my research supervisor Dr Dorothee Holscher at 031 260 4965.

Yours Sincerely,

Pumla Nofemele

[216039036@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:216039036@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

I, the undersigned, have been informed about the study entitled 'Understanding needs and wants in context: The lived experiences of adolescents from low income households in Newlands West' by Pumla Nofemele.

- I understand the purpose and procedure of the study and have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I will be required to participate in two focus group sessions of about one hour each. I understand the nature of focus group interviews and am aware that the two sessions will be audiotaped.
- I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any treatment or care that I would usually be entitled to.
- I understand that all the information that I may share during the focus group discussions will be kept confidential and will not be divulged to anyone else.
- I understand that the interview transcripts will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- I have been informed about the debriefing and counselling available to me should I require this as a result of questions asked and topics discussed during the focus group discussions.
- If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher or her supervisor. I have been provided with their contact details.
- I am willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

Since I will be part of a larger group discussion, I hereby undertake the following:

- I will not expose group participant's identities to any persons outside this group;
- I will not disclose or make use of the confidential information/discussions to any persons outside of this group;

I understand this clause and will adhere to it to maintain the group's integrity as well as my own.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

### **APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR LEGAL GUARDIANS OF PARTICIPANTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18**

#### **Information Letter**

**Date:**

#### **To whom it may concern**

My name is Pumla Nofemele. I am a Social Work Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research project that will enable me to complete the Masters degree. The aim of my research is to understand the needs and wants of adolescents from low-income households in Newlands West.

I am kindly requesting your permission for your child/ward to participate in a focus group discussion on the above topic. The focus group will have between eight and twelve participants of between sixteen and eighteen years of age. There will be two meetings of about one hour each, and with your informed permission I would like to record the sessions.

Your child/ward's participation in this research is completely voluntary and no payment will be made for his/her participation. He/she may withdraw from the study any time, and will not need to answer any question, or participate in the discussion of any topic that could make him/her feel uncomfortable.

Should your child/ward feel upset by anything that has been said in the focus group, I will be there for him/her to talk about it afterwards. Should he/she feel the need to see a counsellor to talk about these things further, my colleague, Ms Zinhle Mqadi, a qualified social worker with the Department of Social Development will be available to support him/her free of charge.

All the information that your child/ward may share during the focus group discussions will be kept confidential by myself as the researcher and my research supervisor and not be divulged to anyone else. His/her names and identity will remain confidential as pseudonyms will be used in my research report. The interview transcripts will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.

Confidentiality also means that neither your child/ward nor any other participants in this study may talk to anyone outside the group about anything that was said during the focus group discussion, so he/she can only participate if he/she commits to that.

I am passionate about working on this topic as I feel this research will benefit participants, service providers and the community regarding the pressures put onto adolescents from low income households to perform in consumer markets and to provide possible interventions.

For any further information please feel free to contact my research supervisor Dr Dorothee Holscher at 031 260 4965.

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- I understand that my child/ward will be required to participate in two focus group sessions of about one hour each. I understand the nature of focus group interviews and am aware that the two sessions will be audiotaped.
- I declare that my child/ward's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any treatment or care that I would usually be entitled to.
- I understand that all the information that my child/ward may share during the focus group discussions will be kept confidential and will not be divulged to anyone else.
- I understand that the interview transcripts will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- I have been informed about the debriefing and counselling available to my child/ward should he/she require this as a result of questions asked and topics discussed during the focus group discussions.
- If I or my child/ward have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I or my child/ward may contact the researcher or her supervisor. I have been provided with their contact details.

I am willing to allow the interview with my child/ward to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

Since my child/ward will be part of a larger group discussion, I hereby undertake to ensure that my child/ward will not expose group participant's identities to any persons outside this group; and that my child/ward will not disclose or make use of the confidential information/discussions to any persons outside of this group;

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## **APPENDIX 4: ISIZULU**

### **IPHEPHA IEMIYALELO**

Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

Kulowo eqondenenaye:

Igama lami ngu Pumla Nofemele, ngingumfundi owenza izifundo zezeNhlalakahle, iziquze-Masters, eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natal. Inhloso yaloluphenyo ukuqondisisa izidingo nezifiso zezingane, nentsha ehlala emindenini ehola kancane elokishini lase-Newlands West.

Ngithanda ukuthatha leli thuba lokuxoxisana neqembu elibandakanya amalunga ayisishiyaga lolunye kuya eshumininambili, abaneminyaka engaphezulu kweyishumi nesithupha kuya eminyakeni eyishumi nesishagalolunye. Lengxoxo izohlukana izigaba ezimbili ezingathatha ihora elilodwa lapho uzophendula imbuzo engiyihlelile. Nginesicelo futhi sokuthi ingxoxo yethu ngiyiqophe ukuzengikwazi ukuqaphela konke esizokuxoxa.

Yazi ukuthi uzikhethela futhi awuphoqelekile ukuba kulengxoxo. Yazi ukuthi ayikho inkokhelo ngokuba ingxenye yale ngxoxo. Unegunya lokuphuma kule ngxoxo noma ingasiphi isikhathi.

Kufanele ngikwazise ukuthi ukuba ingxenye yaloluphenyo kungase kunga kuphathi kahle. Ngizimisele ngokukusekela emva kwengxoxo, okanye ngikudlulisele kusonhlalakahle uNkosazana Zinhle Mqadi akwazi ukukusiza mahala uma isidingo sikhona.

Yonke into esizoyixoxa ngiyathembisa ukuthi izohlala iyimfihlo kanti nomeluleki wami wase Nyuvesi naye uzoyigcina iyimfihlo. Ngiyathembisa ukuthi akukholapho engizo khipha khona igamalakho, neminingwane yakho ukuze uvikeleke. Ingxoxo izoqoshwa iphinde ibhalwe. Ngizoyigcina endaweni ephephile. Izolahlwa emuva kweminyaka emihlanu.

Ukuba yingxenye yaloluphenyo kumele ukuba uzimisele ukugcina yonke into eziso yixoxa iyimfihlo, ungayikhulumi nabanye abangaphandle kwaleliqembu. Lesisicelo sibaluleke kakhulu futhi kumele uzimisele ukuzi bophezela kusona.

Nginentshiseleko ngaloluphenyo oluqonde ekutheni kutholakale izindlela zokuthuthukisa izimpilo zezingane, nentsha ehlala emindenini ehola kancane elokishini lase-Newlands West. Loluphenyo lungasiza ekutheni ababhekelele nezingane eziku lesisimo bangenelele bakwazi ukuzikhuthaza.

Uma udinga ulwazi olubanzi, ungathinta umelulekiwami uDr Dorothee Holscher kwinombolo ethi (031 ) 260 4965.

Uma uthanda ukubayingxenye yalolu phenyo, ngicela ugcwalise incwadi yesivumelwano elandelayo.

Ozithobayo

Pumla Nofemele

[216039036@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:216039036@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

## Incwadi yesivumelwano

Mina, osayinile, ngiyitholile incazelo mayelana naloluphenyo 'ukuqondisa izidingo nezifiso zezingane, nentsha ehlala emindenini ehola kancane elokishini lase-Newlands West'

- Ngiyayiqonda inhloso futhi nganelisiwe izimpendulo nenqubo yaloluphenyo futhi nginikeziwe ithuba lokubuza imibuzo mayelana naloluphenyo.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi kuzofuneka ngibe ingxenye yengxoxo ezohlukana izigaba ezimbili ezinga thathi hora elilodwa. Ngiyaluqonda uhlobo lwezengxoxo nokuthi izingxoxo zizoqoshwa.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngizikhethela futhi angiphoqelekile ukuba kulengxoxo, nginemvume yokuphuma kuloluphenyo noma inini futhi ngeke ngijeziswe ngalokho.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi yonke into esizoyixoxa izohlala iyimfihlo.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ingxoxo izoqoshwa iphinde ibhalwe, umbhalo uzogcinwa endaweni ephephile. Izolahlwa emuva kweminyaka emihlanu.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ayikho inkokhelo ngokuba ingxenye yalengxoxo.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukuba ingxenye yaloluphenyo kungase kungangi phathi kahle. Ngiyavuma ngokuthola ukwelulekwa kuyena uPumla Nofemele okanye ku Nkosazana Zinhle Mqadi.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi umangidinga ulwaz iolubanzi ngingathintha uPumla Nofemele okanye umelulekiwakhe uDokotela Dorothee Hólscher.

### **Ngiyavuma ukuqoshwa ngalezizindlela ezilandelayo:**

	Uyavuma	Awuvumi
Ukuqoshwa inkulumo ngesiqophamazwi		
Ukuqoshwa ngokuthatha izithombe		
Ukuqoshwa ngokuthatha ama-video		

Njegoba ngizobe ngiyingxenye yengxoxo, ngiyaqonda ukuthi:

Iminingwane yeqembu izohlala iyimfihlo, angeke ngiyikhulume nabantu abangaphandle kwaleli qembu.

Yonke into esizoyixoxa ngiyathembisa ukuthi izohlala iyimfihlo, angeke ngiyikhulume nabanye abanga phandle kwaleli qembu.

Ngiyakuqonda ngokulotshwe ku lencwajana, futhi ngiyavuma ukuthi ngithembekile nokuthi ngizoku gcina ubuqotho be qembu.

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Kusayine ozibandakanyayo

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Usuku

## **Mzali/Bambamzali**

### **Iphepha lemiyalelo**

Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

Kulowo eqonde nenaye:

Igama lami ngu Pumla Nofemele, ngingumfundi owenza izifundo zezeNhlalakahle, iziquze-Masters, eNyuvesi ya KwaZulu Natal. Inhloso yalolu phenyo ukuqondisisa izidingo nezifiso zezingane, nentsha ehlala emindenini ehola kancane elokishini lase-Newlands West.

Ngingathanda ukuthola imvume yakho ukuthi ingane yakho ibe yingxenywe yaloluphenyo. Leli qembu elibandakanya amalunga ayisishiyaga lolunye kuya eshumini nambili, abane minyaka engaphezulu kweyishumi nesithupha kuya eminyakeni eyishumi nesishagalolunye. Lengxoxo izohlukana izigaba ezimbili ezinga thatha ihora elilodwa. Nginesicelo futhi sokuthi ingxoxo ngiyiqophe ukuze ngikwazi ukuqaphela konke esizoku xoxa.

Yazi ukuthi ingane yakho ayiphoqelekile ukuba kulengxoxo. Yazi ayikho inkokhelo ngokuba ingxenywe yalengxoxo, futhi angakwazi ukuphuma kulengxoxo noma ingasiphi isikhathi.

Kufanele ngikwazise ukuthi ukuba ingxenywe yaloluphenyo kungase kunga muphathi kahle umntwana. Ngizimisele ngoku kusekela umntwana emvakwe ngxoxo, okanye ngimudlulisele kusonhlalakahle u Nkosazana Zinhle Mqadi akwazi ukumsiza mahala uma isidingo sikhona.

Yonke into esizoyixoxa ngiyathembisa ukuthi izohlala iyimfihlo kanti nomeluleki wami wase Nyuvesi naye uzoyigcina iyimfihlo. Ngiyathembisa ukuthi akukho lapho engizo khipha khona igama lomntwana, neminingwane yakhe ukuze avikeleke. Ingxoxo izoqoshwa iphinde ibhalwe. Ngizoyigcina endaweni ephephile. Izolahlwa emuva keminyaka emihlanu.

Ukuba yingxenywe yaloluphenyo kumele umntwana azimisele ukugcina konke ezisokuxoxa kwiyimfihlo, angayi khulumi nabanye abanga phandle kwaleliqembu. Lesicelo sibaluleke kakhulu futhi kumele ukuba uzimisele ukuzibophezela kusona.

Ngingentshiseleko ngaloluphenyo oluqonde ekutheni kutholakale izindlela zokuthuthukisa izimpilo zezingane, nentsha ehlala emindenini ehola kancane elokishini lase-Newlands West. Loluphenyo lungasiza ekutheni ababhekene nezingane ezikule simo bangenelele bakwazi ukuzi khuthaza.

Uma udinga ulwazi olubanzi, ungathinta umeluleki wami uDokotela Dorothee Hölscher kwinombolo ethi (031) 260 4965.

Uma uvuma ukuthi ingane yakho ibeyingxenywe yaloluphenyo, ngicela ugcalise incwadi yesivumelwano elandelayo.

Ozithobayo

Pumla Nofemele

[216039036@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:216039036@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

## Incwadi yesivumelwano

Mina, Mzali/Bambamzali,

Ngiyitholile incazelo mayelana naloluphenyo 'ukuqondisisa izidingo nezifiso zezingane, nentsha ehlala emindenini ehola kancane elokishini lase-Newlands West'

- Ngiyayiqonda inhloso nenqubo yalolu phenyo futhi nginikeziwe ithuba lokubuza imibuzo mayelana nalolu phenyo, futhi nganelisiwe izimpendulo
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi kuzo funeka umntwana wami abe ingxenye yengxoxo ezohlukana izigaba ezimbili ezinga thatha ihora elilodwa. Ngiyaluqonda uhlobo lwezi ngxoxo nokuthi izingxoxo zizoqoshwa.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi umntwana wami akaphoqelekile ukuba kulengxoxo; futhi angakwazi ukuphuma kuloluphenyo noma inini futhi ngeke ajeziswe ngalokho.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi yonke into ezoxoxwa izohlala iyimfihlo
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ingxoxo izoqoshwa iphinde ibhalwe, umbhalo uzogcinwa endaweni ephephile. Izolahlwa emuva kweminyaka emihlanu.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ayikho inkokhelo ngokuba ingxenye yalengxoxo.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukuba ingxenye ya loluphenyo kungase kunga muphathi kahle umntwana. Ngiyavuma ngokuthi athole ukwelulekwa kuyena uPumla Nofemele okanye kuNkosazana Zinhle Mqadi.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi umangidinga ulwazi olubanzi, nginga thintsha uPumla Nofemele okanye umeluleki wakhe uDokotela Dorothee Holscher.

### **Ngiyakuvuma ukuqoshwa komntwana wami ngezindlela ezilandelayo:**

	Uyavuma	Awuvumi
Ukuqoshwa inkulumo ngesiqophamazwi		
Ukuqoshwa ngokuthatha izithombe		
Ukuqoshwa ngokuthatha ama-video		

Njegoba umntwana wami ezobe yingxenye yengxoxo, ngiyathembisa ukuthi uzoyivikela imininigwane yeqembu futhi uzoyigcina inkulumo yeqembu iyimfihlo.

**Ngiyaku qonda ngokulotshwe ku lencwajana, futhi ngiya vuma ukuthi umntwana wami abe ingxenye yalolu phenyo.**

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Kusayine uMzali/Bambamzali

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Usuku

## Appendix 5: Demographic profile of participants

### Girls

<b>Pseudonym Names</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Meso level activities</b>	<b>Hobbies</b>	<b>Type of residence</b>	<b>Number of people living in the household</b>	<b>Number of employed people in household</b>	<b>Occupation of employed individual/s</b>
Swazy <sup>1,2</sup>	18	Not involved	Make-up, social media and TV	RDP housing	3	1	Cook
Mini Minaz <sup>1,2</sup>	19	Not involved	Cooking and visiting with friends	RDP housing	2	1	Business owner
Zeemi <sup>2,3</sup>	17	Grade 11 Not involved	Dancing, taking selfies,	Municipal housing	5	1	Teacher
Nono <sup>2</sup>	16	Grade 11 Church	Dancing, taking selfies	Municipal housing	3	1	Teacher
Anny <sup>2,3</sup>	17	Grade 12 Not involved	Writing poetry, being with her friends	Municipal housing	6	2	Unknown
Bee <sup>2</sup>	17	Grade 11 Not involved	Writing, watching TV and talking to her friends	RDP housing	4	1	Employed in a hospital
Neeh <sup>2</sup>	17	Grade 11 Not involved	Dancing, singing, writing and taking photos with friends	RDP housing	3	1	Nursing assistant

<sup>1</sup> Also participated in individual interview

<sup>2</sup> Participated in session one of focus group

<sup>3</sup> Participated in both focus group sessions

Girls cont.

Pseudonym Names	Age	Meso level activities	Hobbies	Type of residence	Number of people living in the household	Number of employed people in household	Occupation of employed individual/s
Asekho <sup>2</sup>	18	Not involved	Watching television and taking photos with her friends	RDP housing	6	1	Security guard
Sassy <sup>2,3</sup>	17	Grade 11 Not involved	Dancing, singing, watching TV, social, media and selfies	Municipal housing	5	1	Unknown
Xoe <sup>2,3</sup>	17	Grade 11 Church	Chatting with friends and selfies	RDP housing	4	1	Cook
Mbu <sup>2</sup>	16	Grade 11 Not involved	Dancing, cooking, singing and selfies	Municipal housing	4	2	Working at a business
Gigi <sup>2</sup>	18	Not involved	Singing, visiting friends and chatting	Municipal housing	6	1	Call centre

## Boys

Pseudonym Names	Age	Meso level activities	Hobbies	Future plans <sup>4</sup>	Type of residence	Number of people living in the household	Number of employed people in household	Occupation of employed individual/s
Leey <sup>2,3</sup>	16	Grade 10 Soccer	Cricket and soccer	Study taxation	RDP housing	6	1	Unknown
Teey <sup>2,3</sup>	16	Grade 10 Soccer	Soccer, cricket and being with friends	Undecided	RDP housing	4	2	Chef
Kay <sup>2,3</sup>	17	Grade 12 Not involved	Writing songs and smoking	Study video editing, photography and film	Municipal housing	4	1	Administrator
Wren <sup>2</sup>	18	Gym	Playing chess and telling jokes	Undecided	Municipal housing	5	1	Inspector

<sup>1</sup> Also participated in individual interview

<sup>2</sup> Participated in session one of focus group

<sup>3</sup> Participated in both focus group sessions

<sup>4</sup> This column appears only for the boys as the girls did not explicitly discuss their future plans

**Boys cont.**

<b>Pseudonym Names</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Meso level activities</b>	<b>Hobbies</b>	<b>Future plans <sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Type of residence</b>	<b>Number of people living in the household</b>	<b>Number of employed people in household</b>	<b>Occupation of employed individual/s</b>
Nkai <sup>2,3</sup>	18	Grade 12 Not involved	Cooking and exercising	Undecided but something that involves working with his hands	Municipal housing	3	Nobody	Teacher
Des Mfana <sup>2</sup>	17	Grade 12 Not involved	Music, fashion, clothing design and smoking	Fashion design	Municipal housing	3	1	Unknown
Kristopher <sup>1,2</sup>	18	Not involved	Soccer and sports	Start a business	RDP housing	3	2	Cleaning staff, store pacer
Nic <sup>1,2</sup>	18	Poetry group	Music, poetry, writing songs and playing soccer	Open Art centre/mechanical engineer	Municipal housing	6	2	Security guard, car washer

## **APPENDIX 6: FOCUS GROUP PROMPTS AND SECOND SESSION PROMPTS**

**Age, gender, number of people living in the household, type of residence.**

### **Personal details/profiles**

- Hobbies
- What are you doing right now (schooling or other)
- Community activities you are involved in

### **Understanding participants socio economic backgrounds**

- With whom do you live with?
- Number of people employed in this household
- What type of employment are they engaged in?
- Are participants employed/unemployed? If so what type of employment are they engaged in?

### **Discussing needs and wants**

- What do participants consider as personal needs and wants?
- How did this perception come to be? /What influenced this way of thinking?

### **Extent to which individuals are able to meet their needs and wants**

- Are participants able to access their needs and their wants?
- How do participants go about meeting their perceived needs and wants?
- How do participants obtain their needs and wants?
- Description of possible challenges in meeting needs and wants
- Description of feelings when needs and wants are not met
- Descriptions of coping mechanisms

### **Discussion on Subcultures**

- Trends: Television, music and social media

### **Friends and peer pressure**

- Type of activities with friends
- How do they express individuality
- The socio economic status of friends
- Discuss school (those not in school will discuss *daily activities*)

### **Sources of support**

- What support do participants receive?

### **Future plans**

- The future plans/ goals of participants
- 

## **SECOND SESSION PROMPTS**

- **Recap of the last session**

- The influence of advertisements, social media, television and music
- Perceptions about blessers
- Relationship with parents/caregivers
- Perceptions of needs and wants
- Challenges on meeting needs and wants
- Trends: Izikhotane
- Support systems

- **Additional discussions**

- Elaboration on community activities
- Recommendations on activities that adolescents would like to have
- Career and future plans of participants

## **APPENDIX 7: FOCUS GROUP WITH GIRLS SESSION ONE (EXCERPT)**

Researcher: And then what do you do? If for example say you really want something but you have been told to wait or that you can't have it? ***(Open ended questioning and probing)***

Zee: You have to wait until you get it or do something to get it

Researcher: That's that something I want to know? What is that something you do?

Mbu: Sometimes you are told that if you pass then they will buy it for you, or you save your own money and ask them to add to it ***R/CS (Responses and coping strategies in the home)***

Sassy: When I want something I want it so badly that I even start thinking of doing silly things, so the silly thing I do is I post it, I post that I can't have this and that ***R/CS***

Researcher: What you say 'posting' what do you mean? ***(Clarification)***

Sassy: My WhatsApp status like 'not in the mood' ***R/CS***

Anny: The thing that I do when I really want something and my parents say no I can't have it in terms of this and that and that, I just ignore them, for like days, when they talk to me, I just answer that and then I just keep quite ***R/CS***

## **APPENDIX 8: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Age, gender, number of people living in a household, type of residence,**

### **Personal details/profiles**

- Hobbies
- What are you doing right now? (schooling or other)
- Community activities you are involved in

### **Understanding participants socio economic backgrounds**

- With whom do you live with?
- What is the number of people employed in this household?
- What type of employment is your caregiver engaged in?
- What type of employment are they engaged in?

### **Discussing needs and wants**

- What do participants consider as personal needs and wants?
- How did this perception come to be? /What influenced this way of thinking?

### **Extent to which individuals are able to meet their needs and wants**

- How are you able to access your needs and their wants?
- How do you go about obtaining these perceived needs and wants?
- What are some of the challenge you encounter in meeting needs and wants?
- How do you feel when needs and wants are not met?
- In what ways do you cope?

### **Discussion on Subcultures**

- Trends: Television, music and social media

### **Friends and peer pressure**

- Type of activities with friends
- The socio economic status of friends
- Discuss school (those not in school will discuss *daily activities*)

### **Sources of support**

- What support do you receive?

### **Future plans**

- Tell me about your future plans/ goals

## **APPENDIX 9: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: MINAZ**

P: When you said he provides you with everything what do you mean? (*Open ended questioning*)

M: I mean that he buys the food, pays the bills and buys other things but sometimes he just wants sex first before he can buy these things

P: Are you fine with that?

M: I left home to get a job and couldn't find one and ended up living here I'm lucky I even met him because I was selling fruits and vegetables in town but you know how men are easily charmed when you look pretty and have those woman things to get attention, so I met him and he liked me and everything of mine, I had to perform at one hundred percent he liked it and now we are here

P: I have to ask you because I don't want to assume, what do you mean perform?

M: I mean I gave it to him, I gave him sex, you know when you have nothing you will do anything, you can look at something and say I will never do it, not me, but the day will come when you are forced and lokshin girls know they must perform or they will get left behind, how do you think their hair is done, their clothes are new, their phones are expensive because they give the thing, you can't be playing out here life is very fast, you will get left behind T/R (*Transactional relationships*)

## **APPENDIX 10: EXAMPLE OF OBSERVATION NOTES**

### *Focus group session: Girls*

Main observations: Some members were more dominant and some members were much quieter.

Participant Xoe; kept staring down and it seems as if she wanted to speak but she did not and ended up saying very little. Most of the time she would just nod in agreement to other participants points of view. During session two she was more involved and expressed herself more.

Participant Gigi; had her arms folded during the session and never really contributed anything. She made facial expressions when other girls revealed something interesting. Her expressions ranged from being focused to being surprised, shaking her head and at one point she made a comment 'you guys loves weaves'. This was a contradiction as it seemed as though G was distancing herself from the study when she had agreed to be in it. Gigi was one of the participants who was not involved in meso level activities. I would occasionally glance at her to encourage communication. She was not present in session two.

Participant Sassy was very involved. She participated and was interested in the study. She was attentive and eager similar to participant Anny. They would be engaged in adding on to points that were already made and provide lengthier responses.

During the responses for part time work there were many girls who shook their heads, sighed and moaned just at the thought of working.

During our discussion on blessers and participants were visibly upset, cross. Nono seemed more empathic towards girls who turn to blessers for assistance.

## APPENDIX 11: REFLEXIVE DIARY NOTES

- 19/08 Today I conducted the first focus group session with the boys. There were eight boys in the session. Although, they were all from low income households some of them came from better homes whilst some were lower than others. Those from very low income households spoke less but were talkative when we spoke about community activities. The boys answered my questions and they 'owned' the discussion (even though they did not own some the issues) and even argued with each other, making an interesting discussion and thick descriptions. Participants seemed genuine and natural- they were even questioning each other which demonstrated that they were listening and alert. Refreshments!!!!!!!!!!
- During the sessions participants gave examples from their own life experiences which made me pleased. Prior both sessions I explained my role as a Social Worker as we had felt this was necessary with Dorothee (when we were discussing the objectives), I also had to reiterate confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms because participants were a bit concerned about this and I had to go over it again so that they could feel relaxed.
- **Bias:** Some of the responses from the groups about the community sounded familiar to me because I live in Newlands, I didn't want to ask leading questions about certain things such as activities in the community, I stopped myself. I also had to remind myself that this was not about me even though I live in Newlands I should not say yes to the participant without letting them explain further.

## APPENDIX 12: MEMBER CHECKS

### *Girls*

Since I had already transcribed the first session I was able to conduct member checks before the second session with two girls Sassy and Anny. Based on the transcripts I was able to clarify the following:

Researcher: Last week when we spoke about what you guys want to see in the community, Sassy you said *I think we should get more activities because some of us like modelling, dancing, acting and singing*, Is that correct?

Sassy: Yes

Researcher: May I just find out why you specifically mentioned those activities?

Sassy: Because it is the things that I like and my friends like doing it to, we don't all like sports like netball and volleyball

---

*The insert below demonstrates an example of member checks during the second session:*

Xoe: If my mother sees me doing something bad or something you are not supposed to do , you jump and move but young people of today don't mind to disgrace their parents they just do whatever

Anny: Ja, you just ghost them sometimes

P: What is that and why is that? (**Clarification of slang**)

Anny: ignore, not replying to texts

## **APPENDIX 13: PEER REVIEW**

### ***Content***

Under this section the following comments were raised.

This is an interesting topic judging by the theme and subthemes you discussed and it is well written. However my only concern is the somewhat lack of link between your results and what your literature says. Are these findings consistent or inconsistent with your literature? If they are consistent state that and if they are not tell us why they are not similar.

The reviewer raises interesting concerns. When I revise this theme I will restructure and link to the literature. The results of the study are consistent with the literature and I will highlight these clearly.

### ***Sentence style and clarity***

*Rephrasing of certain sentences and wording e.g.*

However a consequence of brand culture is when adolescents evaluate relationships and values based on brands

*However a consequence of brand culture occurs when adolescents evaluate relationships and values based on brands*

It has made adolescents more demanding towards their parents and have a disregard for their financial position.

*It has made adolescents more demanding towards their parents without having any consideration of their financial position.*

### ***Technical issues***

In this section the reviewer raised concerns about spacing being too compact. I have addressed these issues by making the necessary adjustments.

*Reviewer: Thomas Gumbo.*