RESEARCH REPORT

Sibling influences on decision to study at university.

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ABSTRACT

This study utilises the dynamics of sibling relationships to detect probable influences of older siblings on the educational decisions of younger siblings. This is a qualitative study and one-on-one interviews were conducted, which have been analysed thematically. The participants were 20 students from the University of Cape Town, of mixed gender and race, who have an older sibling currently studying at university, or whose older sibling has completed his/her university degree within the last five years. The findings support past research that older siblings do have a positive impact on the decision of younger siblings to study at university. However, several unexpected themes, which have not been widely discussed by authors in the field of sibling influences, emerged from the data. For example: almost half of the older siblings are not seen as positive role models because their behaviour is against the principles of the younger sibling. Furthermore, more than half of the relationships were not close if siblings does not spend much time together. Lastly, sibling de-identification has been researched enormously; however, younger siblings feel unappreciated if they are not perceived as a person with unique characteristics.

Keywords: university; sibling relationships; influence; educational attainment; roles; decision-making

INTRODUCTION

Although educational aspirations are rarely studied as the main outcomes of research interest, the broader literature has placed considerable emphasis on sibling relationships as agents in educational attainment. Hauser and Wong (1989) identified reciprocal influences between siblings' educational attainments and the predominant influence of older on younger siblings. Boyle et al. (2007) investigated the relationship between social and familial influences on the educational attainment of siblings. Other studies point out that siblings have direct and indirect influences on each other resulting in achievement and/or delinquent behaviours (Fagan & Najman, 2003; Brody, 2004; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007). Siblings as agents of cognitive development through observational learning, and role modelling have been associated with sibling relationships (Steelman & Powell, 1985; Azmitia & Hesser, 1993; Teachman, 1996; Bankstone, 1998). Up to now, researchers have sought to identify siblings as agents or mediators for educational attainment and learning.

Clearly, the list of events, behaviours and conditions associated with sibling relationships are extensive and may affect educational aspirations and decisions pertaining to university studies. Indeed it is difficult to envisage describing and evaluating all the things siblings do to influence the educational decisions of younger siblings. The present researcher seeks only to identify some of the components of sibling relationships that are responsible for the intention to achieve further educational attainment, specifically where the older sibling acts as a distinct resource for the younger sibling. The study draws from the theoretical framework of two studies by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Shields (2002), which are not primarily focused on sibling influence in the decision to study at university level, but which explore the same theme of sibling relationships and higher education.

Within families siblings develop distinctive associations which form the basis of their social world. In these relationships, older siblings represent several roles for example: mediators, role models and support agents and provide support, advice, and assistance where necessary to younger siblings (Brody et al., 2003). Moreover, younger siblings look up to older siblings for guidance and influence, and learn from them. Young siblings show affection towards older siblings, and this relationship helps them both to learn social skills and to handle constructive conflict within a stable and safe relationship (Brody, 2004).

Conflicts within sibling relationships are the result of destructive influences. These types of influences transpire because of power differences of siblings, due to birth order and de-identification. To be different from older siblings, younger siblings demonstrate overall resistance to birth order, and find other activities that illustrate their individuality. Younger siblings align their moral standards with that of older siblings and judge them. As such, this sibling association will most likely be long lasting and would allow simultaneous closeness and separation; approval and rejection; affection and dislike and so forth (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2002). This association allows them to expand their relationship into several areas of interest, which may become major determinants of their development, especially in the educational context. Furthermore, the adjustment of siblings pertaining to learning does not only include their cognitive abilities, but also their moods, experiences and the roles they play in each other's lives (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993; Bankstone, 1998). Accordingly, their shared experiences lead to acquired skills, which contribute to competence, maturity and decision making; hence affecting each other's lives (Hauser & Wong, 1989; Brody et al., 2003; Whiteman & Christiansen, 2008).

However, being part of a family, various patterns of family influences are associated with sibling relationships and their social world. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing, imitation, and modelling behaviours that leads to different types of attitudes and emotional reactions of others. All the learning takes place in a social context and forms a bridge between behaviour and cognition frameworks. The social learning theory acknowledges that human thought, influence and behavior can markedly affect observation as well as direct experience, specifically if the influence results in positive outcomes which have a functional value for the sibling. Bandura's theory on social learning is most useful in detecting probable influences in sibling relationships in its social context.

In many families, the older sibling serves as a distinct resource when they have had the opportunity to be the first to attend university. The older sibling as the first university student within the family, apart from the parents, consults various support networks on the decision of university education and choice of study (Tomeh, 1973; Shields, 2002). In this scenario the older sibling bridges worlds of the family with that of the university. According to Bandura (1977), people are not simply reactors to external influences; they select, organize, and transform the stimuli that impinge upon them, because within the influences lies the opportunity to control

their destiny as well as their limits of self-direction. Being in this unique space the older sibling has the potential to inspire the younger sibling with aspirations to study at university.

SIBLING SUPPORT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Older siblings are in a position to draw from both academic and family/society-related experiences when interacting with their younger siblings (Shields, 2002). The experience older siblings get through interaction with parents, siblings and friends endow them with valuable socio-emotional support and advice about tertiary education. This becomes fundamental in aiding younger siblings through the enrolment process into tertiary education. The question then is, how do older siblings affect the intentions and behaviours of younger siblings in going to university?

University and decision-making processes: The decision of going to university for younger siblings is supported through several channels. Families, friends, mentors, teachers, guidance counsellors and mass media all aspire to provide support (Kinzie et al., 2004). Nevertheless, how does the context of the support provided influence university decision? The social learning theory of Bandura (1977) explains that the inner focus of response patterns attributing to peoples' emotional state shift due to external influences. Given the importance of sibling influences in socialisation, relationships that are largely competitive and antagonistic are at the same time supportive and affectionate with older siblings as support agents for younger siblings. Concurrently Bandura postulates that if external environmental influences control behaviour, people's emotional state will change as the external environment changes. As such, younger siblings learn consciously, and/or unconsciously, from the experiences of older siblings. Furthermore, younger siblings realise that it is not merely due to the influence from relatives and environments that they decide to aim for higher education, but it is an important life choice, and that they have to think about their own future.

Siblings see themselves as unique individuals, despite evidence of similarity and find a way to be different and to establish their position (Brody, 2004). Azmitia and Hesser (1993) hypothesize that the natural power disparity that result from the age difference between siblings mean that two children are likely to have diverse experiences. These experiences cause younger siblings to develop other qualities that reduce competition. Moreover, younger siblings' differentiations give them a chance to excel in other hobbies or to choose different life paths

(Bradley & Mims, 1992). Therefore, a discussion of tertiary education needs to acknowledge that macro level influences affect micro level decisions and relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). The development of certain patterns and roles, gives siblings a sense of belonging and a unique identity

Role of older sibling and university education: Are first-born siblings then significant support agents for both institutional and familial environments? Siblings are constantly in each other's presence, and that involves activities, which are shared for example; play and some activities that are not shared, for example, bath time. The interaction of siblings has an important function in preparing the child for social relations outside the family, for example, learning to give and take, to respect the rights of others and in self-definition or evaluation (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2002). Siblings fulfill a variety of different roles with respect to one another – they are companions, role models, mediators, and antagonists (Steelman & Powell, 1985; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Fagan & Najman, 2002; Shields, 2002; Brody et al., 2003). They are closer in the relationship status than parents are and that permit freer expression of feelings, especially aggression. However, there is an opportunity for co-operation and companionship in play and other activities (Steelman & Powell, 1985). Social environments contain numerous modelling influences, which may be compatible or conflicting (Bandura, 1977) with younger siblings' actions, which they experience daily.

Older siblings being in the position of a mediator who has information and experience of both worlds, that of the family and the university, is readily accessible and can be asked for information related to both environments (Shields, 2002). Being mediators' older siblings' roles are purely facilitative. They seek to help the younger counter parts to develop a shared understanding of the issues at hand and to work towards building practical and lasting relationships. Furthermore, they can provide advice because they posses expert knowledge on university education matters. This type of information is instrumental for younger siblings, who need to make a decision. However, can older siblings intervene as mediators? Steelman and Powell (1985, p. 122) argue, "Although their development with respect to leadership outcomes may be facilitated by different factors, the influence of these factors may offset each other." The mediators' role are a result of influences of different factors, which may counterbalance each other, such as indirect contributions to the development of younger siblings, through parental instructions and observations along with the power of older siblings. Moreover, the

characteristics of older siblings may be an indirect result of the parenting styles towards younger siblings by the parents (Essman, 1977). Therefore, the development of younger siblings is the combined efforts of both parents and older siblings or single parents and older siblings. Furthermore, it is crucial to look at the contributions of the parents and the nature of older siblings contributions, due to the amount of time siblings spend together (Hauser & Wong, 1989; Brody, 2004; Bankstone, 2008). Accordingly, the experiences of older siblings contribute to the development of younger siblings. Being mediators' assist in the decision-making processes of younger siblings and in so doing older siblings are seen as role models.

Siblings learn by copying behaviours within relationships. Most positive and negative behaviours can be learned through observations and partly through modelling. Hauser and Wong (1989) found supporting evidence, that educational attainment of older siblings influences the education of younger siblings by means of role modelling or social facilitation. First-born siblings engage in leadership and teaching roles, whereas later born siblings are more likely to imitate, follow, and be learners (Steelman & Powell, 1985; Bankstone, 1998; Brody et al., 2003; Fagan & Najman, 2002; Whiteman & Christiansen, 2008). Interestingly, Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1970) postulates that older siblings must use the parents as models of what they should do, whereas younger siblings are more interested in older siblings whom they perceive as similar to themselves in what they themselves can do.

When younger siblings view older siblings as role models, they modelled the behaviours observed, which motivates them to demonstrate what they have learned. However, younger siblings can control their own behaviour if they feel that the observed behaviour is not in line with their self-concept. On the other hand, if younger siblings have low self-esteems and find they are not achieving their own standards, they would model harmful behaviours of older siblings. Various conducts of siblings may influence choices or decisions among them (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993; Bankstone, 1998). As such, the inter-sibling experiences influence the decision-making process that may become an important determinant of choices made in later years. Tomeh (1973) hypothesizes that traditionally, it is usually the younger one in the family who needs to find a perspective on certain matters and seeks the advice of the eldest and not vice versa.

Younger siblings perspective on university education: Younger siblings are affected by various psycho-social processes, such as perceptions of self-efficacy, ambitions, dreams and

expectations of education attainment from family members and themselves (Shields, 2002). So, how do younger siblings view university education? The internalised expectations, behaviours, and values derived from experiences with families, friends, and society group members influence interactions between siblings and their social structures. Subsequently Bandura (1977) posits that the external environment is not solely responsible for people's behaviour, because people have some influence over their feelings, thoughts, and actions. Younger siblings need to decide what they want to do with their lives, and need to make decisions that satisfies both them and their families. The diverse perspectives of the social environment and the internal perceptions of siblings play an essential role in fostering or discouraging the idea of university education for example: Parents may interfere to reinforce innate or developing differences between children (Whiteman & Christiansen, 2008). Sibling relationships are at the centre of the family, and inter-family dynamics add to the existing influence siblings have on each other (Brody, 2004). Another source of sibling-specific variation in education outcomes is the pattern of sibling interactions (e.g. older siblings teaching younger siblings) that lead siblings to experience the same family differently (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993). As such, behaviour, and decision making interplay between self-generated and external sources of influence and this may affect how younger siblings perceive university education. Moreover, younger siblings need to make use of their cognitive skills to convince others of their viewpoints, and at the same time imitate the actions of older siblings to gain approval. Amidst all this, younger siblings need to find the balance between the positive and negative aspects of their interactions with their social environments to make a decision.

Family relationships and decision-making: Acknowledging that family relationships in part affect siblings will lead towards a more robust understanding of how individual characteristics shape sibling relationships and how those relationships influence the way information is shared and behaviour is shaped. Missing from this literature review is a discussion of how individual characteristics (gender, birth order, family size, sibling size) affect sibling relationships within the context of family relations. Further analysis of siblings acknowledge that their multi-faceted experiences, identities, and social exchanges are integral to understanding how they communicate, share information and make meaning out of those social and environmental interactions.

Bandura (1977) felt that certain behaviours determine which environmental influences will come into play and what form they will take; simultaneously environmental influences determine which behaviours are activated that in turn produce two-way influence processes. Influences on academic attainment for example; successful academic performances of higher educational and occupational aspirations of siblings are more likely to receive approval from the family. This approval encourages siblings to put emphasis on their scholarship with the added benefit of acceptance by friends and society resulting in a collaborative process. Although parents' level of education plays a role in the educational attainment of siblings, having warm and supportive parents, generates children with higher cognitive abilities and better academic performance (Boyle et al., 2007). Furthermore, parents with higher education are one of the factors that either positively or negatively influence children's decision about studying.

Other factors like family expectations for siblings' together with the contributory role of the family's negative socio-economic status perhaps may hamper educational attainment in some instances (Blake, 1985; Blaess, 2005; Boyle et al., 2007). Various types of assistance such as the community, businesses, churches, non-profit organisations and so forth, diminish the status of being disadvantaged and advance accessibility for educational attainment. Most families support the idea of education for their siblings and in most circumstances; the whole family contributes to academic achievement of their siblings. Nonetheless, sibling relationships have much greater influence, and this influence filters through into the area of education encouraging positive reinforcement of academic attainment (Bankstone, 1998; Steelman & Powell, 1985; Teachman, 1996; Blaess, 2005). What's more, Blaess (2005) illuminates in her study "That the educational attainment of the elder child, has a significant and positive effect on educational decisions of the second child" (p. 22). In addition, most studies on sibling education attainment are in school settings and a few rarely focus on higher education.

AIM

The aim of the current study is to determine the framework of sibling influences, particularly looking at sibling support. The focus will be on older siblings influences on university going aspirations of their younger counterparts; the context of younger siblings decision to go to university, and older siblings as the mediators, role models, and support agents in fostering higher educational attainment of younger siblings, of a small group of South African university students. As can be seen from the preceding discussion not many studies focussed on the

relationships of siblings and their influences on university aspirations. The studies that have been done focussed on interrelationships of siblings, with sibling influences as the focal point. In addition, most studies (Steelman & Powell, 1985; Hauser & Wong, 1989; Teachman, 1996: Bankstone, 1998; Boyle et al., 2007; Conley et al., 2007) are concentrating on educational attainment at school level. Fewer studies concentrating on educational aspirations at university level (Tomeh, 1973; Bradley & Mims, 1992; Shields, 2002; Kinzie et al., 2004; Blaess, 2005). It is especially necessary to consider the profound insights of the network of support structures that younger siblings encounter and utilise to further their education, since university education is portrayed as the gateway to social mobility.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question can be stated as: *Does university education of older siblings influence younger siblings to study at university?* This main research question will be addressed by means of the following sub-questions:

1. How do older siblings affect the intentions and behaviours of younger siblings going to university in their different roles as mediators, role models, and support agents?
2. How do younger siblings make decisions about going to university or college?

METHOD

Design

Silverman (2001) distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative research design and provide the following explanations. Qualitative research is carried out in order to understand participants' perspectives, to define phenomena in terms of experienced meanings and observed variations, and to develop theory from fieldwork. Quantitative research includes studies that lend themselves to testing hypothesized relationships or causal explanations evaluating the reliability, validity and underlying factor structure of psychological measures, and measuring a degree of generalisability across samples. A qualitative research approach will allow more involvement and openness with research participants rather than a quantitative research approach that has a more rigid and calculated nature. A qualitative approach is flexible and draws on new unknown information (Esterberg, 2002). Another view, that of Flick, von Kardorff, and Steinke (2004) illustrates that qualitative research claims to report, from the inside out, the lives of participants from their point of view.

In light of the above explanations, the researcher follows a qualitative research approach with a systematic plan in order to answer the research question: *Does university education of older siblings influence younger siblings to study at university?*

Marshall and Rossman (1995) identify four types of research, namely exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and predictive research. The authors state that not all research strategies necessarily warrant the use of qualitative data collection methods, for example histories and case studies. The main difference between the types of research is the focus. Exploratory research aims to address the "what" question, and endeavours to look at salient themes, categories and patterns. This type of research examines how these patterns are linked with one another and seeks to explain the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In order to answer the research question, the researcher will be using a qualitative design, an exploratory research approach with a thematic analysis.

Participants

Participants were chosen according to their knowledge and experience with regard to this phenomenon. In other words, the participants were not chosen at random and had to comply with certain criteria. The respondents were chosen according to the following criteria:

- The research subject must have an older sibling;

- The older sibling can be first-born or a middle child;

- The older sibling must have completed his/her tertiary education within the last five years, or is still at university;

- The participants of this study must currently study at university.

According to Patton (2002), there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, because it depends on what one wants to know. The sample of the study is a purposive sample with 20 students of mixed gender and race: six White female and two White males; six Black females; four Asian females; one Coloured female and one Greek female. The data gathered through interviews did not provide more information than what has emerged after the 10th interview and it appeared the sample of 20 participants sufficed at the time.

Interview schedule

Patton (2002) identifies two types of interviews, the one-on-one interview, and the focus group discussion. Interviews were the most functional and practical way of data collection in conducting this study. The aim of using this method of data collection was to explore the topic and allowed interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words (Esterberg, 2002). However, for the purpose of this study, the semi-structured guided interview approach was discussed. A semi-structured interview guide based on a basic list of topics pertaining to the research question, were discussed with the participants. Interviews were on a one-on-one, face-to-face basis' and took place according to a booked schedule-in the psychology department. Although this type of interview is still quite rigid, it can rather be seen as a guided interview as there is still a certain amount of freedom (Flick, von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). It seems that the use of individual interviews and the semi-structured interview guide, as methods for data collection for this study were beneficial to explore the topic because the information discussed carried personal content and it would not be appropriate for focus group discussions. The semi-structured interview guide appears in Appendix A.

Procedure

The following course of action was followed:

1. After approval from the psychology department, announcements of the study were put on the notice board with the intention to invite voluntary sign-up by participants, who needed to provide their details on a list (name and contact details) in order to be contacted;

2. Participants who met the criteria set out in the notice signed up. Twenty-six participants were listed according to the *criteria* set out in the *participants section*;

3. Electronic mails were sent to the participants listed in order to arrange with them a suitable time to be interviewed;

4. A suitable venue on campus in the psychology department was used for the interviews;

5. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 25 to 40 minutes per interview. This allowed room for the interviewer to use critical listening skills, in order to follow the conversation and note any new information, for further exploration (Esterberg, 2002);

6. The interview questions were asked in a way that validated the previous answer and assisted in assessing the reliability of the data, although one cannot guarantee complete accuracy and honesty;

7. An audio tape was used to record the interview and assist in the process;

8. After the interviews were done, the data were transcribed and analysed.

The study involved single sessions and therefore a general thematic analysis would be more appropriate in order to examine the themes, which influenced the relationships of siblings and provided an opportunity for them to articulate their experiences in their own way.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

An ethics committee of the Department of Psychology gave formal approval for the study to be conducted (See Appendix B + C). Prior to starting with interviews ethics approval was obtained for data collection. Before starting with one-on-one interviews, participants signed an informed consent letter (see Appendix B) after explanation of what the study entails. Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time. After the interviews the participants were informed that, the results would be available after analysis of the data for their perusal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis involved the examining of the data and the transformation of data into findings. Marshall and Rossman (1995) postulate that "Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (p. 111). Patton (2002) expresses his view on qualitative analysis that the challenge lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. He further elucidates that there are no absolute rules for analysing qualitative data except for doing one's very best to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study. Data analysis in qualitative research is a search for patterns in data, through identification of recurring behaviour, objects thought patterns and beliefs that link people together (Breakwell et al, 2006).

It is clear that when qualitative data is analysed, it will be necessary that patterns be determined and that the data be analysed in that respect. The process can best be described according to the following steps (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Flick, 2002; Patton, 2002):

- **Step 1:** Data Collection;

- **Step 2:** Managing and organizing data into themes;

- **Step 3:** Reading and summarizing data;

- **Step 4:** Describing and classifying data and the interpretation thereof;

- **Step 5:** Presenting data in the form of a research report.

This process was followed during this study.

The data were collected using one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and were transcribed and analysed according to a thematic analysis framework using the principles of an exploratory approach. According to Seale et al. (2004), the audio recordings provide a much more detailed record of verbal interaction than any amount of note taking or reflection could offer. Silverman (2001) states that transcriptions assist the researcher in organising data, but caution must be taken not to change the meaning and nature of the contributions.

The generic qualitative procedure (Esterberg, 2002) of identifying themes and recurring ideas, organising and categorising them, and drawing connections between them were followed. The processes of coding the data were used (Breakwell et al., 2006; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Seale et al., 2004):

- **Open coding**: The researcher sorts through the data for the first time, themes are identified and preliminary labels assigned to the themes

- **Axial coding**: Occurs after open coding, where data are coded the second time, codes are reviewed, examined, and organised

- **Selective coding**: The researcher makes comparisons when the data collection process has been completed and validates the relationships between categories

Patton (2002) explains that conceptualization is important when a researcher wants to code data. The function of conceptualisation is that it indicates the *themes* in which the data should be

coded through reduction of mechanical data and categorising of data. Each relationship was analysed as a unit and was interpreted with reference to the others. Once the data were analysed, themes relevant to the broader emerging picture were drawn out where necessary. The analysis therefore attempts to unearth recurrent patterns across the narratives, while maintaining a sense of coherence in the individual data. While maintaining coherence it is crucial to be reflective about the researcher's own voice and perspective in bringing a balance.

Reflexivity is a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness and ownership of one's perspective by self-questioning and self-understanding (Patton, 2002). Patton further elaborates, that reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to one's own voice as well as the perspective and voice of those one interviews and those to whom one reports. As this is a qualitative study, several matters may play a role in diminishing reflexivity for example:

- Researcher bias could play a role if one is not careful;

- Assuming that results are always applicable to the individual;

- Limited literature to correlate data and findings with regards to reliability and validity;

- Time pressing issues and the overwhelming nature of the data;

- Subjective influence of the researcher cannot be eliminated totally.

Analysis of the accounts of the relationships in this study revealed threads of commonality. The following overarching themes emerged from the siblings experiences spoken about in the interviews: **The effects of older siblings influence on younger siblings, sibling support, younger siblings own individuality,** and **decision-making of younger siblings**. These were analysed thematically.

The effects of older siblings influence on younger siblings

It is generally known that siblings shape each other in many ways due to their extraordinary relationship, and that the negative and positive qualities of the relationship are independent from each other (Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970; Hauser & Wong, 1989; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007). Positive influences motivate imitation of that specific behaviour and negative influences are judged according to ones self-concept and self-control not to imitate that behaviour. Sibling influences revealed three sub-themes namely; **positive effects of older siblings influence on younger siblings lives; the effects of negative characteristics of older siblings on the lives of younger siblings;** and **the types of relationships siblings had when older siblings were at university and younger siblings were still at school.** A letter of the alphabet identifies the quotes extracted to illustrate themes excluding the letter "I", which has been reserved for the Interviewer.

Positive effects of older siblings influence on younger siblings lives: Participants had much to say about the different types of influence their older siblings had on them. Certain sub-themes were common for example, motivation, growth, and **sociability.** Younger siblings look up to older siblings for guidance (Boyle et al., 2007). This relationship helps both to learn social skills. Some answers on the question from the researcher: "What actions or behaviours did your sibling display that made a difference in your life?"

> A: "Well I think his personality and who he is. He has this amazing gift, he is such nice company to be around with, he makes people laugh. He is a charmer and ladies love him. But socially he is so outgoing and he is so liked"

Younger siblings found it easier to identify with older siblings, when older siblings showed positive tendencies. The awareness of the effects carried major value for siblings and they would like to exhibit the same type of behaviour. The likelihood of being accepted reinforces the behaviour. Moreover, older siblings served as sources of **inspiration** and **motivation** for younger siblings for example:

> G: 'Her drive to work and dedication and she always motivates me."

> N: "He taught me not to be afraid to go for my dreams."

Shields (2002) emphasizes that siblings play a role in persistence that yields positive effects for educational accomplishments. The feeling of accomplishment stimulates motivation and inspires younger siblings to do better.

Sibling relationships allow room for **growth** through various experiences that lead to acquired skills. According to Bandura (1977), the experiences generated by behaviour, influence what individuals can do and becomes which in turn affect behaviour. Siblings who feel better prepared to experience university life are open to explore student life and are more likely to succeed academically, as can be seen from the quote below.

L: "He showed me as a person you have to grow and no matter the circumstances"

Often the positive characteristics in sibling relationships were sought to confirm the power status of older siblings. Various authors confirmed this phenomenon for example; Bandura (1977) postulates that positive effects of older siblings lead to positive attributions of the social learning experiences of younger siblings for future developments. The attributions seemed to be linked to guidance and influence, which younger siblings found much easier to relate to (Whiteman & Christiansen, 2008). For some younger siblings, the positive effects of older siblings' actions and behaviours changed their lives in such a way that they tended to evaluate themselves and often correlate their own behaviours with that of older siblings for positive outcomes (Hauser & Wong, 1989). However, the negative characteristics of older siblings are judged according to the standards of younger siblings.

The effects of negative characteristics of older siblings on the lives of younger siblings: While interactions with a negative effect play a less significant role in sibling relationships, some themes did emerge. The themes illuminate the complexity of the relationship siblings have with each other. Concepts like **lacking self-confidence**, harsh and blunt, and negative tension, provide notable insights, which have not been discussed widely. A question asked by the interviewee "Did the behaviours and characteristics your older sibling displayed make a positive or negative impression in your life, or?" Respondents said the following :

D: "Hmm... I think self-confidence. He's never had enough of it"

G: "Negatively I think she does not take enough chances."

H: "She has a very poor self-esteem and soft and she cries easily"

The negative traits of older siblings have been a discovery for the respondents. They felt that they have learned from the *mistakes* of older siblings, whose predominant role is that of a role model with positive attributes. However, having the same role model with negative and positive attributes gave the younger sibling some solace, that their older sibling, being in a power position all of their lives, has flaws too. That diminished the power of their older siblings in their eyes. This brings the relationship onto an equal footing, and they said the following:

A: "...he struggles to complete things. So I am very aware of his weaknesses as well..."

N: 'He is very authoritative... Does not mean he is right because he is clever"

For most siblings having meaningful relationships made them feel close to their sibling. They felt comfortable around them and trust them more. For some younger siblings (less than half) older siblings represent companions, but most of all confidantes (Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970). The respondents felt if siblings were not successful in certain tasks, there is nothing they could learn from them. Instead, younger siblings felt that older siblings must learn from them. Furthermore, four of the respondents claim that having siblings that are **harsh and blunt** left a rift in the relationship, which is very difficult to overcome, if there are no behaviour changes. Being mediators, older siblings left younger siblings with many doubts and uncertainties on how to handle these types of situations. On the one hand, this may improve the relationship with the parents and on the other hand may weaken the relationship siblings have (Essman, 1977). The respondents said the following

L: "On the other hand she can be quite blunt and harsh and not prepared to listen to change her view."

According to Fagan and Najman (2003), older siblings being emotionally close in long-term relationships may foster deviant role models. This risky behaviour operates within a family causing **negative tension.** The respondents put forward that negative tension in families made it very difficult for all members in particular younger siblings. Bandura (1977) explains that cognition plays a role in learning and the expectations of future punishments can have a major effect on the behaviours people display.

M: "Negatively, she has always been a naughty girl... It affected me negatively, because there was tension in the house."

The types of relationships siblings had when older siblings were at university and younger siblings were still at school: Siblings are caught in several relationships; it is difficult to attribute aspirations and behaviours to a particular influence. However, older siblings being at university gives them a specific power position over younger siblings still at school (Shields, 2002). In the present study, 13 of the 20 respondents said there were almost no relationships between them to speak of while this situation prevailed.

D: "It was not much of a friendship as it is now."

R: "There was a point where we did not know what was going on in each other's lives."

The respondents were mostly of the opinion that the relationships lacked closeness. The conditions of the relationships did not portray any negativity. However, it seems that there was just no link between them at the time, due to the distance between them. The siblings felt that both are responsible for the lack of closeness at the time, because of the different interests that they had. Despite the lack of closeness, other respondents felt that there were **good relationships**.

U: "The relationship was still there and we talked a lot about what I was doing in school and what she is doing at university"

The study of Brody et al. (2004) found that siblings play an important role in each other's emotional, social, and educational developments. When they go to university the relationships between siblings grew closer on all levels, but more so on academic levels.

Sibling Support

Older siblings can act as sources of support in many situations. They offer emotional support and encouragement specifically in educational attainment. Older siblings are mediators between parents and younger siblings on educational matters. All siblings draw on support from a variety of sources, which are broadly conceptualised along the sub-themes of **the treatment of parents**

towards their siblings; advice and support from older siblings, and **family support, and expectations.**

The treatment of parents towards their siblings: Siblings form part of a bigger set-up, that of the family. The behaviours of siblings are in some cases a direct consequence of the treatment parents directed towards them. Differentiation in treatment might lead to more disassociation (Brody, 2004) and similar treatment might lead to more closeness and solidarity in sibling relationships (Shields, 2002). The respondents shed light on this in excerpts of the data when asked "how they experienced the treatment of their parents towards the siblings." More than half, that is 14 of the 20 respondents said that they were **treated equally**.

A: "You know I never felt favoured or that another sibling was favoured over me."

A quarter which were 5 respondents from the total of 20 felt that the older siblings have **more freedom**

F: "...they treated my brother differently, they let them do more things,..."

The rest felt that they were **happy** because of the treatment the older siblings received.

K: "We were taught be happy for the others when they get something although you did not get anything."

The majority felt that the treatment of their parents never made them feel disadvantaged, which fostered a better relationship with their siblings. This may led to more positive role modelling of older siblings and less pressure on younger siblings. Younger siblings accept guidance of older siblings and in some cases substituted the role of parents for that of siblings (Essman, 1977). However, where treatment was perceived as unequal, respondents felt unfairly treated and that they were not worthy of their parents' love and attention

N: "...because he is the favourite and that made me feel I am not good enough to be my parent's child..."

This may originate in lack of closeness and withdrawal of younger siblings. This may also push younger siblings away from their families toward peers and friends for support and acceptance (Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970).

Advice and support from older sibling: Relationships with older siblings provided a platform for younger siblings to go to, whenever they were in need of support or advice. This becomes an integral part of sibling development (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2002). Although parents played a big role in childhood development, older siblings appeared to inhabit a different position to parents. They became significant support agents because they previously walked the path in becoming adults, paving the way for younger siblings. The experiences of older siblings are essential when sharing information with younger siblings and for younger siblings to make meaning out of those exchanges (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Shields, 2002; Kinzie et al., 2004). On the question posed to the siblings "To whom would you normally go for advice or support?" half of the siblings said that they **go to their siblings for advice or support**.

D: "Yes, really pretty much for everything"

The other half said they would **never go to their siblings for advice or support** and one female respondent gave this explanation

J: "My friends. I never go to my brothers because they have distorted morals."

Older siblings as support agents enhanced the relationship they have with younger siblings. Support and advice from older siblings provided a nurturing perspective to the relationship, with a lot of warmth and intimacy. However, if younger siblings are unable to find that nurturance within their relationships, they do not regard older siblings as powerful or able to provide them with any support. This in turn annihilates the relationship and this is where siblings rather look for advice from other relationships apart from the older siblings. This also led to younger siblings protecting themselves from comparison, and most of the time this reduced rivalry. Whiteman, McHale, and Crouter (2007) observed a similar effect in their study and explained that siblings are thought to developed distinct attributes and engaged in different activities and behaviours in order to establish their unique identities.

Interestingly, according to previous research, emotional, cognitive, social, and observational learning, as well as educational attainment, are the most important elements in the relationships siblings have (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993; Shields, 2002; Brody, 2004) Rarely does the research refer to the morals and principles of younger siblings, and how they use it to evaluate their own standards and the self. Younger siblings felt that their standards carried more value than being in

power positions of older siblings. According to Bandura (1977), moral thinking and moral behaviours are influenced by observations and modelling, which includes moral judgements regarding right and wrong. However, the expectations siblings have for themselves and their families prevented them from modelling this type of behaviour.

Family support and expectations: Families as social settings are significant parts of support systems of siblings. Moreover, families have expectations for their siblings and one that is eminent is university education. Older siblings get more support from families when going to university. Older siblings together with their families provide dual support and advice for younger siblings. Families with rich educational backgrounds where the parents and grandparents also attended university are important for siblings as they look up to them for support and advice (Kinzie al., 2004). This might lead to **high expectations** for children. The respondents conveyed the following information when asked, "Being part of brothers and sisters and being children, what can you tell me about the expectations that your parents had for you?"

A: "My parents gave us, they kind of did not put pressure on us directly, but they kind of supported us and guided us.

G: "My mum said do your best, do what makes you happy, and don't settle for less. My dad on the other hand wanted me to study medicine, but I don't want to be a doctor."

N: "My brother set the pace for everyone. My sister disappointed my parents, my brother made everything good, and now it is expected of me. I don't want to live up to someone else."

C: "So I think there is a certain standard that needs to be fitted, but no one really talks about it."

L: "I don't think my parents had big expectations for me, I put it on myself, because both my sisters are clever and that put pressure on me."

The respondents covered a broad area of expectations and support leading to them not feeling any pressure from the parents; that some of the pressure is self-inflicted due to the achievements of older siblings. They also felt that if there were any expectations it was directed more towards educational attainment. They felt that they do get support from their families specifically if the

family had a rich educational background. The family felt that siblings need to be able to take care of themselves, which the respondents can only achieve if they have tertiary education. Most of the respondents, that is seven, felt that this led to a closer relationship with the parents and siblings; Four respondents felt because of the expectations they let their parents down if they did not achieve academically; Another four felt they put pressure on themselves and work very hard. Other four respondents felt the family did not care much about their feelings and pressurised them to live up to the standards of the older siblings. One respondent felt that parents who did not have any education lived their lives through them having high expectations, which they felt were unfair. These findings are consistent with Shields (2002) supported by Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1970). Although they are younger siblings, they felt the family tended to forget they have their own individuality and want to be appreciated for who they are.

Individuality of younger siblings

Although siblings may share some similarities, they are likely to differ to some extent due to external (environmental) and internal (inborn) influences (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). All these influences affect the way a person develops and are linked to the developmental processes through a person's lifespan (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2002). The sub-themes drawn from the data are **individuality of siblings** and **siblings' future development**.

Individuality of younger siblings: The respondents experienced sibling relationships as individuals and not just as younger siblings. However, younger siblings felt the power position of older siblings made it very difficult to be assertive. The respondents felt that it is important to them that the family recognised their individuality. The following emerged when respondents were asked "Did you ever felt the need to establish your own individuality, apart from your siblings?" One of the female participants age 21 said the following:

G: "It is a problem, because they only saw me as her sister, and in the larger family, they
          always go on how she is the doctor, but they don't know anything about me."

Half of the respondents felt that they **wanted to establish their own individuality**, to move away from the image that they had. Some images that emerged were, being the baby, not being recognised as having their own life and achievements, living in the shadows of older siblings; achieving more in order to establish their own individuality; and doing things

differently from older siblings. The respondents felt that the influence their older siblings had on them whether good or bad carried much value when it comes to their own individuality, and makes it harder to project their own identity. Sibling de-identification refers to siblings who want to be the opposite from other siblings (Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007), while their own individualities carried more value. The respondents felt that people must look at them for who they are, because having their own traits (the same or different from the older sibling), made them unique.

The other half of the respondents felt that they **have been an individual** and did not want to establish it, because it has been emphasized throughout childhood. Interestingly, some of the respondents felt that their siblings did not have that much power over them, which differed from some of the studies that hypothesized that siblings influenced each others lives by means of being similar or different from each other (Hauser & Wong, 1989; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007).

> J: "I don't because I have always proven myself, by just being me. My brother's achievement has never been threatening to me."

Nevertheless, one respondent replaced their sibling with the mother, and another felt that because they are a different gender there were no power issues with older siblings at all. They had this to say:

> O: "No not my siblings, but my mother."

> L: "I was always different from them because I was the boy"

Siblings realised that being their own person with unique characteristics were not enough to be successful people; they had to think about their future and develop themselves through academic attainment.

Future development of younger siblings: Various factors influenced younger siblings and could affect their aspirations toward furthering their academic career. In certain situations they become indecisive when making a decision with regard educational attainment. However, the respondents perceived opportunities toward academic attainment differently. When asked

"When did you realise that you would like to further your academic career?" most respondents only emphasised this about it.

> C: "Actually all through my school life"

The notion that having a good education is one of the best things one could ever do for oneself, is a generally accepted belief among various networks within a family and the institutional realm. Individual indications from the respondents' show that most of the younger siblings endeavour to further their education after high school, and there were never any doubt in furthering their academic career.

> N: 'When I was in my a-levels. I became an individual and become the head girl and realise I want to do more with my life.

Younger siblings appeared to inhabit different positions to parents and older siblings, because they know what they want. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), this view falls more or less in the first stage of the three-phase model of college choice, stating that it is a developmental phase where students determine whether they would like to continue their education beyond high school.

However, for some families it means more than that, it is supposed to maintain social hierarchies. The decision to further one's academic career does not encompass only the person involved. Moreover, it becomes a **discussion for the whole family**, and the expectations in some situations, burdened the siblings involved. A number of respondents said that they had other plans but their parents had higher authority and they had to succumb. This may led to rebellion or weak educational performance, because the younger siblings views were not taken into account.

> P: "I grew up knowing that this is how my life is supposed to go. It was always the plan, made for me rather a choice of myself."

> J: "I wanted to take a gap year and decided what I wanted to do, but my parents forced me to register for anything."

Hauser and Wong (1989) posit that parents education and authority play an important role in shaping the attitudes toward higher education for their siblings, although we cannot infer causality from such findings, it may have a reinforcing effect on their decision to study.

Decision Making

Interrelated factors influencing educational aspirations reflect a more comprehensive view of siblings' decision to study. The following sub-themes emerged from the data, the **influence of older siblings' roles on decision-making of younger siblings** and **choice of study.** The following question was put to the respondents. "The fact that your older sibling was studying, did that influence your decision to study?"

> F: "Yah, I wanted to study too. I guess I felt like, if I did not go to university, I would be one-step below him."

> M: "Yes, in a big way. I always wanted to study something."

Parents and older siblings who attended university are support agents for younger siblings aiding them in making a choice and a decision with regards going to university (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Kinzie, et al., 2004). Older siblings, being in the unique position of mediator for the reason that they experienced university, family and sibling environments, are of great support to the younger sibling. Being aware of their position as role models older siblings take it seriously by being responsible for sharing information and being a good example for younger siblings to follow.

At this point, the data showed that older siblings who attended university made a **difference** on the decision to go to university for almost half of the respondents. It seemed as if the older siblings are positive reinforcers in the decision making process of younger siblings. In a way, it did encourage readiness for younger siblings to enrol at university though they were not key in the decision making process. Gathering and processing information received from the web of resources surrounding the younger sibling in a social setting, forms an essential part of the decision making process (Shields, 2002). However, older siblings did not seem to hold the same value for the other respondents. The following quotes from females aged 21 shed more light on it.

> S: "Not directly, my parents and then me."

G: "It was more than a realisation, when I thought I will not be happy with just my matric certificate."

It appears that siblings almost never made a decision to study at university. The expectations that they had for themselves, the authority, and expectations from their parents, and the influence from older siblings impinged on their decision to study at university. The events that shaped siblings decision to study might be from high school years together with the expectations of the parties involved, although they were not sure about the choice of study.

Choice of study

Brock & Green (2005), explain that every decision involves several factors within a particular set of circumstances interacting with each other. This influence filters through in the decision-making process. However, the influence of the sibling support network has little significance on the choice of study for younger siblings. Younger siblings have their own dreams of a career and attempt to find out more than what has been taught at high school. They use the family as back-up support and in most cases, families have their own perception of what would be the best for younger siblings. Often families are not in a financially sound position to pay for siblings' education especially when siblings change their minds often. Furthermore, family backgrounds and rules may impose inappropriate career expectations, thereby limiting study choice. When asked, "who influenced the choice of your study?" the respondents gave these explanations.

B: "Not influenced but maybe guidance from my sister."

E: 'I think my mother,

H: 'I went to a career guidance counsellor,

O: 'Myself actually.

The implication for career decision-making is significant because each person's unique identity allows for different roles, which gives them a sense of belonging. This role is lived out in what they want to become one day. If they are not sure what career to pursue, it makes them indecisive when it comes to the choice of study. However, sibling support networks played a

crucial role in assisting younger siblings in making study choices. The support network includes parents, siblings, career guidance counsellors, and younger siblings themselves (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Kinzie et al., 2004). It seems that the respondents are **happy** with their study choices and have no problem with the assistance they received from their support networks.

LIMITATIONS

The generalisability of the findings is of course limited, due to the Western angle of the current study. The study acknowledges the results may vary according to different communities and sample sizes. Despite these limitations, the purpose of the study, from a theoretical perspective was to explore university education as part of older siblings influence on the decision to go to university of younger siblings. Although there are various findings that are in support of past research, there are disclosures that have not been researched extensively, and broader research could explore those topics and add more value to the perceptions of relationships and influences siblings have on each other. In most studies, the relationship is portrayed as nurturing, but while the older sibling attended university and the younger sibling was still at school, there was virtually no relationship between the siblings. This relationship did not portray any negative acquaintance, between siblings only that were no connection between them at the time. It appears that it has not been highlighted in past research, which provides another angle to the relationships of siblings when they are not constantly in each other's presence.

Although small in scale, this study will assist in understanding the effect siblings have on each other, specifically influences on decision-making processes to study at university in the South African context. This may be able to inspire further research on this matter.

CONCLUSION

The study examined how students experienced influences from older siblings and how that affected their decision to go to university. Part of the focus was on younger siblings and the decision-making processes to further their education at university. The other part of the focus was on the effects university education of older siblings had on younger siblings' decision to study at university. Understanding the role that siblings play to foster further education can assist in making entrance to university easier. It also provided insight on how students view their siblings, who are in a more powerful position, being older and having experienced university

life, and life in general. It expanded the knowledge of understanding the value sibling relationships have in the decision-making processes

Several findings elucidated the effect older siblings have on younger siblings specifically in the area of university education. First, it is clear that older siblings have positive influences on younger siblings' decision to study at university. Older siblings embody various roles for younger siblings for example they act as mediators, role models, and support agents. Second, it is equally true that they may also have negative characteristics. Where this happens, their position of power becomes diminished. This places them at the same platform as their younger siblings. Third, younger siblings felt that they never consciously thought of making the decision to further their education. They always knew from their high school years, as well as through expectations from both themselves and their families that they would go to university.

Older siblings are seen as mediators occupying a unique space as university, family and social mediators. They have the potential to draw from academic, family, and social experiences when interacting with their siblings, because they have access to different resources. The relationships younger siblings have with older siblings benefit them, because of the institutional and socio-cultural know-how and emotional support of older siblings. These multi-faceted experiences, identities, and social exchanges are essential with regard the influences of older siblings as mediators.

The educational aspirations of older siblings play a big role in the lives of younger siblings. Older siblings are seen as role models representing intellectual skills and educational achievement. This influences the education aspirations of younger siblings by means of role modelling or social facilitation. Being observers, they started to imitate their older siblings and part thereof was to go to university as their older siblings did. Surprisingly though, when it comes to individuality, younger siblings would like to be appreciated for the traits they have, whether they are different from, or the same to those of the older sibling. They would not pressure themselves to live up to the standards of the older sibling. However, this only counts when they want to assert themselves.

Based on some qualitative studies younger siblings would put pressure on themselves to perform well in order to be on equal footing with older siblings academically. However, when in

need of support, they are willing to succumb to the older sibling in order to find assistance on educational matters. Thus, older siblings provide invaluable insight into university and educational matters. However, siblings support networks have a variety of contributors; the ones who added most value are the parents and older siblings, which is also consistent with most of the previous studies. However, the findings on advice and support are almost a fifty-fifty situation, where one part of the siblings would go the older siblings and the other half would go to parents or friends for the same issues. Previous studies do not report widely on the findings that reflect the moral standards of the respondents, which is quite surprising since the support of the older sibling does not carry any value if it goes against the principles of the younger sibling. However, it may contribute to older siblings changing their ways.

When younger siblings were, still in high school they always knew they would like to go to university although unsure of what course to study. They felt that they were not consciously thinking of making a specific decision to go to university; rather it was a realisation on their part and expectations from themselves and their families. Although the influences from their support network assisted in reinforcing their expectations for themselves, it was never a case of making a decision the inspiration to go to university was always there.

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APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Could you tell me more about the structure of your immediate family?

Structure?

Parents, age _____, marital status _____

Children, age _____ , sex _____, Names _____

Anyone else living with the family?

age _____ , sex _____, race_____

2. Could you describe your relationship with your siblings?

How close areou to your various siblings?

Anyone else that forms part of the siblings (stepbrothers and sisters)

Adopted brothers and sisters?

3. When you were growing up, did your parents treat you and your sibling in the same way?

If not, how were you treated differently?

4. How did this affect your relationship with your siblings?

Younger?
Older?
Anyone else that forms part of the siblings (stepbrothers and sisters)
Adopted brothers and sisters?

5. What is it like to grow up as the younger sibling?

6. Being the younger sibling, how did the behaviour or actions of the older sibling (Name:) affected you?

Positive experiences
Negative experiences
Punishment?
Reward?

7. What actions/characteristics/events/behaviours did the older sibling (Name:) had on you that made a difference in your life?

Positive influences
Negative influences

8. Do you go to the older sibling (Name:) for support or advice?

How often?   On what matters?   Are there some matters that you do not ask them?

9. Has the advice or support from the older sibling (Name:) ever influence the decisions you have made?

If so, which decisions?   How did it influenced your decisions/actions?

10. Have you ever felt the need to establish your own individuality apart from your older siblings?

If so why?   How?   Describe specific instances?

11. What are you currently studying at UCT?

What made you decide to study this course?   Other influences perhaps.

12. What is your older sibling studying / What did he/she study?

13. Did your older sibling (Name   ) studying at university influence your decision to study?

If so, how?

What about your parents influence?

Other influences perhaps?

14. Did your older sibling (Name:) influence your choice of study direction?

If so, how?

If not, how?

15. How do you feel about your choice of university study?

Do you feel you made the right choice for now?

If not, please elaborate more?

APPENDIX A

REVIEWED

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Could you tell me more about the structure of your immediate family, starting with your parents?

Parents, age _____, marital status _____ Children, age _____ , sex _____, Names _____ Anyone else living with the family? age _____ , sex _____, race_____

2. What are your parents' professions?

They're level of education?

3. Could you describe the atmosphere within the family?

How

4. Could you describe your relationship with your siblings?

How close areou to your various siblings?

Anyone else that forms part of the siblings (stepbrothers and sisters)

Adopted brothers and sisters?

5. When you were growing up, did your parents treat you and your sibling in the same way?

If not, how were you treated differently?

6. How did the treatment of your parents affect your relationship with your siblings?

Younger?

Older?

Anyone else that forms part of the siblings (stepbrothers and sisters)

Adopted brothers and sisters?

7. What is it like to grow up as the younger sibling?

8.   Being the younger sibling could you tell me about the expectations of your parents for you?

> How was it different from your older brother or sister?

9.   Being the younger sibling, have the expectations of your parents affected you in any way?

> Positive experiences
>
> Negative experiences
>
> Punishment?
>
> Reward?

10. How were the reactions of your older siblings to your parents' expectations for them?

11. Did the expectations of your parents influence the relationship between you and your older sibling?

> Positive influences
> Negative influences
> Competitiveness?

In which areas?

12. What actions/characteristics/events/behaviours did the older sibling (Name:) had
     that made a difference in your life?

Negative? What did you learn from it Positive? What did you gain from it?

13. Do you go to the older sibling (Name:) for support or advice?

How often? On what matters? Are there some matters that you do not ask them?

14. Has the advice or support from the older sibling (Name:) ever influence the decisions
     you have made?

If so, which decisions? How did it influence your decisions/actions?

15. Have you ever felt the need to establish your own individuality apart from your older
     siblings?

How? Describe specific instances?

16. In establishing your individuality what was the motivation behind that?

17. When did you realise that you would like to further your academic career?

Can you tell me what happened

18. What are you currently studying at UCT?

What made you decide to study this course?

Other influences perhaps.

19. What is your older sibling studying / What did he/she study?

20. When your older sibling enrolled at the university to study further, what were your interests than?

21. Could you tell me about your relationship with your older sibling while they were busy studying,

22. Did your older sibling (Name   ) studying at university influence your decision to study?

If so, how?

What about your parents influence?

Other influences perhaps?

23. Did your older sibling (Name:) influence your choice of study direction?

If so, how?

If not, how?

24. How do you feel about your choice of university study?

Do you feel you made the right choice for now?

If not, please elaborate more?

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant

My name is Yvonne Stramiss. I am an honours student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. I am conducting a research that explores the possible influences of older siblings' tertiary education on the younger siblings' decision to study at university. The study explores the types of influences and how it manifests in your behaviour. I am interested in the impact this decision has on your academic career as a student.

The method of data collection will be a one-on-one interview to ensure free and open interaction. An explanation of the study and your role as participant will occur before taking part in the 30 minutes interview. There will be no questions ask that may elicit any uncomfortable behaviours. However, you do not have to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable with it. All responses and names will remain confidential and anonymous, but you may withdraw from the study at any time when feeling uncomfortable. The use of a tape recorder is required, but you have the right to refuse to answer any question or parts of it during the recording. This is to guarantee trust and respect for your privacy and safety.

After all interviews are completed, the data will be analysed. If you are interested in the outcomes, it will be available for your perusal. It will give you an indication whether your decision to study at university was solely your own and may clarify any reservations with regards your academic career.

Regards

Yvonne Stramiss

Signature: **Date:**

APPENDIX C

STUDENT STATEMENT ON RESEARCH ETHICS

University of Cape Town
Psychology Department

Name: Yvonne Stramiss

Name of supervisor: Johann Louw

*Please answer the questions written in **bold** in each box. The additional questions in italics are intended help you identify information that may be important to include.*

Briefly outline the nature of your intended research?

Sibling's relationships have been a central point of investigation for many researchers. The focus is on the effects sibling's relationships have on each other. These effects influence siblings in various ways. The research undertaken is going to focus on the topic: Sibling influences on decision to study at university?

Where will you get your data?

Is your research making use of human subjects as sources of data?

What is the approximate number and ages of participants involved in your research?

Is your research using UCT students as participants?

Is your research using any group of people who might be considered to be particularly at risk for exploitation? (For example children, mentally handicapped people, medical patients etc.)

Yes, UCT students will be the participants

No, there is no risk involved for any type of exploitation

Will you inform your participants about your research?

Will you secure their informed consent and if not why?

What, if any information, will you hold back and why?

Will participants have a choice about their involvement in the study?

Yes, through advertising on campus, no information will be withheld from participants

Participation is absolutely voluntarily

How will you get your data?

What method of data collection will you use?

Is the inquiry likely to produce discomfort in your participants?

Will you be asking questions about sensitive topics like sex, illness, trauma etc.?

Gather information through open-ended questionnaires. Letter of individual consent will guarantee safety, trust and anonymity.

No discomfort, because there will be no questions to invoke such feelings.

Will you offer confidentiality to participants?

What will you say to participants about confidentiality?

Are there any threats to the participants' privacy that you can foresee?

Yes, pledging confidentiality and anonymity with letter of individual consent before the interview will ensure no threat to anyone's privacy.

Will your research benefit or harm participants?

> *Are there any possible risks of physical, psychological or social harm for participants as a result of their involvement in the research? Can you minimise these?*
>
> *Are there potential benefits for the participants in the research? Are there ways in which you can maximise these?*
>
> No

Will the research benefit or harm any institution

Could the image of UCT be affected by your research

Could any institution (e.g. a school or business) be compromised by your research?

What steps can you take to minimise harm and increase benefit for these organisations?

No

Are there any other ethical issues you think might arise during your research?

Not that I can think off.

Have you read the UCT Code for Research involving Human Subjects (available from the UCT web-site)? **YES** **NO**

Student Researcher

Name: Yvonne Stramiss   **Signature:**

Supervisor

Name: Johann Louw   **Signature:**