

DOING HOPE WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN LIVING ON THE STREET

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment consists of my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety, or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

.....
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.....
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SUMMARY

This research journey explores the lived experiences of children who had previously been living on the street and were now part of a house being managed by two voluntary organisations. The caregivers and boys are incorporated as co-researchers in a participatory action research journey within a post-modern, social constructivist paradigm. The following research curiosities inform the study:

- How do the caregivers and children in the house stand up to homelessness and poverty?
- How do their stories reflect the notion of doing hope?

Positioning myself within the research journey necessitates the discussion of beliefs and constructs that inform the paradigm, such as post-modernism, social constructionism, discourses and the deconstruction of discourses. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:14), the research strategy comprises the practical application of the assumptions underlying the paradigm through the use of certain skills, and can be regarded as the paradigm in action which provides the methods for the researcher to engage in the research journey.

In this study, a qualitative method is used to describe and understand human behaviour and the meaning attached to it in the participant's own terms. The co-researchers participate during all the aspects of the research journey, and the cyclical nature of participatory action research described by Babbie and Mouton (2001:315-316) is honoured.

The narrative approach is used in conducting the conversations. According to White (1991:28), it is a non-recriminatory, power-sharing way of interaction that provides a context where the consciousness and knowledges of the person are at the centre of the process of consultation. An opportunity is created for the boys and caregivers to story their experiences and to explore the meanings that they attach to these experiences. The main ethical principles that operate are autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence and validity.

Tape-recordings, transcriptions, reflections and letters are used to document the research journey. Homelessness and poverty had been dictating certain behaviours to the boys, and it was even dictating their lived identities. At the time of the research journey, the caregivers are creating a community of support that is effectively doing hope for the boys, thus enabling them to loosen the grip of poverty and homelessness. Personal reflections indicate that I as researcher am not unaffected by the research journey. Although obstacles present themselves during the research journey, new possibilities are opened up for further exploration.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingsreis ondersoek die ervarings van kinders wat voorheen op straat gewoon het en wie nou in 'n huis woon wat deur twee vrywillige organisasies bestuur word. Die versorgers en seuns word betrek as medenavorsers in 'n deelnemende aksie-navorsingsreis binne die raamwerk van 'n postmodernistiese, sosiaal konstruktivistiese paradigma. Die studie word toegelig deur die volgende navorsings-ondersoeke:

- Hoe weerstaan die versorgers en kinders in die huis die impak van woningloosheid en armoede?
- Hoe reflekteer die stories wat hulle vertel die idee van 'hoop doen'?

Ten einde myself binne die navorsingsreis te posisioneer noodsaak 'n bespreking van die oortuigings en samestellings onderliggend aan die paradigma, soos postmodernisme, sosiaal konstruktivisme, diskoerse en die dekonstruksie van diskoerse. Volgens Denzen en Lincoln (1994:14) behels die navorsingsstrategie die praktiese uitvoering van die opvattinge onderliggend aan die paradigma deur die toepassing van sekere vaardighede. Die navorsingsstrategie kan beskou word as die paradigma in aksie deurdat dit die metodes vir die navorser verskaf om betrokke te raak by die navorsingsreis.

'n Kwalitatiewe metode word tydens hierdie studie gebruik om menslike gedrag te beskryf en te verstaan en om vas te stel watter betekenis die deelnemers self aan hulle belewenisse heg. Die medenavorsers neem deel aan alle aspekte van die navorsingsreis en die sikliese aard van deelnemende aksienavorsing soos beskryf deur Babbie en Mouton (2001:315-316) word gerespekteer.

'n Narratiewe benadering word tydens die gesprekke gebruik. Volgens White (1991:28) is die narratiewe benadering nie-blamerend en is daar 'n gelyke verdeling van mag. 'n Konteks word geskep waar die bewustelikhede en kennis van die persoon sentraal geplaas word in die konsultasieproses. 'n Geleentheid word geskep vir die seuns en versorgers om hulle ervarings te vertel en om die betekenis wat hulle aan die ervarings heg te eksploreer. Hoofsaaklik word outonomie, nie-kwaadwilligheid, goedgesindheid en geldigheid as etiese beginsels gerespekteer.

Bandopnames, transkriberings, refleksies en briewe word gebruik om die navorsingsreis te dokumenteer. Woningloosheid en armoede het vantevore die gedrag van die seuns, sowel as die identiteite wat hulle uitgeleef het, voorgeskryf. Ten tye van die navorsingsreis is die versorgers besig om 'n gemeenskap van ondersteuning te skep wat effektief hoop doen vir die seuns en wat hulle in staat stel om die greep van woningloosheid en armoede te verbreek. Persoonlike refleksies dui aan dat ek as navorser nie onaangeraak gelaat word deur die navorsingsreis nie. Struikelblokke verskyn tydens die navorsingsreis, maar nuwe moontlikhede baan die weg vir verdere eksplorاسie.

Just Because I'm a Street Girl

I have something to say,
But I'm a street girl and nobody cares.
I have a point to make,
But nobody listens.

If a child lives with hostility,
She learns to fight.
If a child lives with encouragement,
She learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise and friendship,
She learns to find love in the world.

But I look around and ask myself
"Where is my helper?"
Just because I'm a street girl nobody cares.

I beseech you be merciful to street children
And come to their aid.
They need food, clothing and education,
But most of all they need love.

Children are the pride of Africa.

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CHAPTER 1

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

1.1 TITLE

Doing hope with children who have been living on the street.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

In my exploration of the research topic, I embarked on a journey with Sophia¹ who was managing a house for boys who had previously been living on the street. I was deeply touched by her commitment and involvement, and became aware of the richness of the personal stories that both she and the boys had to tell. I asked her whether she would allow me to document their experiences and use this material for a research project. I was hoping that conversations with her, the boys and the other persons involved in the caregiving of the boys, might contribute to the co-authoring of useful meaning making of their experiences. Writing down these meanings could not only give voice to the children and caregivers, but also transport their ideas, values, hopes and dreams into the realm of experienced living for the participants, thus having a transforming influence on the participants. If others are able to witness this transportation by reading about this study, it could further serve to strengthen their lived experiences and meaning making.

1.3 DOING HOPE

Hope is a word that can have many different meanings. Each person constructs meaning according to personal, cultural and societal influences in their lives (Gergen, 1999:47-48). In describing an approach to support families who have lost hope,

¹ All the names that are used for adult persons are their own names, used at their request. The names used for the boys are pseudonyms that they had selected for themselves.

Connolly and McKenzie (1999:79) speak about hope as an activity involving participation, rather than as an idea of achieving some outcome.

"Doing hope" as a construct was given meaning by Kaethe Weingarten (2000:401-402) when she described it as "something we do with others". According to Weingarten, hope is not, as the common view would have it, a feeling that resides within a single individual, but rather something that caring individuals can bring about in that person when the latter has given up hope and is experiencing feelings of hopelessness (p.401-402). She mentions some of the advantages of hope, namely thinking and feeling more positively, increased feelings of competence, decreased feelings of depression, increased problem-solving ability, and a better ability to cope with illness and disability (p.401). According to Weingarten, people who are caught in the grip of suffering are unable to keep hope alive on their own, and need others to do it for them.

In this research journey, an attempt will be made to describe the way in which caring adults created a community of support where they were doing hope with the children who had given up hope and were living on the street.

1.4 SITUATIONAL STORY

1.4.1 'Street child' versus 'child living on the street'

In structuralist thinking, the term 'street child' is used to describe the situation where a child no longer lives at home, but has resorted to living on the street (see 2.3.2). Terminology such as this locates the problem within the child, which is contrary to narrative practices (see 1.7.4.3). In this study, I prefer to use the term 'children living on the street', which sees the problem as separate from the person, and which allows an exploration of the larger socio-political contexts and discourses that support this problem (Freedman & Combs, 1996:283). In my discussion with the participants about their preferred way of speaking, it became clear that they did not like this term. This was confirmed by Sophia who mentioned on one occasion that the boys "hated

the use of the term 'street child'" and that they preferred to call themselves the "children of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*".²

In our conversations, we used the latter when speaking about their current situation, but when we referred to their lived experiences before coming to *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, we would use terminology such as "when you were living on the street" or "when you were on the street" rather than "when you were a street child".

1.4.2 The situation in Stellenbosch

In Stellenbosch, South Africa, an estimated 33 to 35 children have been identified as living on the street (Youth Outreach, 2004). Of these, 23 names are on the list at the shelter in Stellenbosch. They range in age from 10 to 18 years, and come from different residential areas such as Cloeteville and Kayamandi. There are two girls, who are sisters, and whose brother is one of the 21 boys. The rest of the children do not visit the shelter, and so are not listed there, but they live on the street.

According to one of the workers at the shelter, they distinguish between 'street children' and 'strollers' (Youth Outreach, 2004). The latter are children, mainly from Kayamandi, who are often sent to beg for food and money on the street by their parents, but return to their homes at night. There are an estimated 20 of them. They do not have any association with the shelter.

The shelter has been in existence since 1997, and has been open since then, except for a two-month period during 2002. Previously the organisation (Youth Outreach) allowed the children to sleep at the shelter, but since 2003 it provides only food, a place to wash, and clean clothing for the children. Volunteer workers spend time at the shelter, keeping the children busy with art and other activities, and a teacher gives mathematics lessons to the children.

1.4.3 *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*

Huis Rus-en-Vrede is situated between the business area and a suburb on the outskirts of Stellenbosch. The house was established toward the end of 2002 as a home for children who had been living on the street, after the shelter that most of the boys had

² *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* is the name that the boys gave to the house, and is used at their request.

been living in was closed down. Joe, the founder and director of Hard Rain Children's Trust, had been working with the children at the shelter, and decided to contact them and invite them to attend a camp for two weeks prior to moving into the house. December and January are school holiday months, and Joe and his sister, Marita, decided to do their utmost to care for the boys and keep them occupied until the school started in 2003. Joe approached Prochorus Community Developments to become involved in the project in February 2003, and the organisation has worked in partnership with them since then. Twelve boys between the ages of 14 and 19 years old were living in the house when I first became acquainted with them, cared for by a housemother who also lived in the house.

There had been several housemothers that had taken care of the boys. When I visited the house for the first time, things were not going well for the boys in the care of the housemother at that time. They were reverting to the type of behaviour they had exhibited while living on the street. In August 2003, Thuso became the new director of Prochorus, and he and Joe decided to appoint a new manager to run the house. It was this change, and the resultant difference in the functioning and behaviour of the boys, that prompted me to incorporate them as co-researchers in giving voice to their changed circumstances and preferred way of living. Six of the boys, Flipper, Big Boy, Skipper, Skibo, Cane and Bones, agreed to participate in the research journey, as did the housemother (Sophia), Joe and Thuso. Marita was no longer living in Stellenbosch, but agreed to having the information she provided used, as well as her name.

1.5 PERSONAL INSPIRATION

The inspiration for this study developed over a period of time. From 1993 to 2000 I worked as a school psychologist at an industrial school for girls, as they were then called. We, the staff of the school, preferred to speak of a child-care school, because the programme that we engaged in at that school was concerned with the support and care of the children until they could be reintegrated into their families or communities. In 2000 the Western Cape Department of Education closed down all these schools and opened what are now called Youth Care Centres. The girls that attended our school had been sent there after a court hearing where their parents had been declared

incapable of caring for them. In a certain sense they were 'homeless', and so the school became their home. Our school was fairly new, and we were in a position to implement a system that was based on mutual understanding and co-operation, rather than coercion. I was often moved to tears by the stories of these girls, the hardships they had had to endure at their own homes, the sexual abuse, deprivation and violence. Many of them had often run away from home or stopped attending schools, and this was how they had come to the attention of social workers. I developed a deep understanding and compassion for them, and often wondered at the callousness with which some members of the broader society viewed the girls. They, the girls, were very sensitive about being at the school, and did not want to be publicly associated with it. They would ask me to pose as their 'mother' during outings or in shops, and would address me as such, rather than admit that they were from the school. This spoke to me of a deep sense of their desire to 'belong', and to be part of a functioning family. When I became involved in this current research journey, I hoped that I could draw on this experience and the insight it had brought in my new relationship with the boys who had been living on the street, as well as with the caregivers.

Two years ago I attended a presentation by a lecturer from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University on the work that he was doing with children who were living on the street. I was impressed by the approach that he advocated as well as the success that he was having in creating a situation where the community became involved and the children experienced care and involvement 24 hours of every day. I remembered this experience a year later when I read an article in the local newspaper in which a child, living on the street in Stellenbosch, told his story. He told of his hardships and chosen method of living and explained how he managed to survive each day. This touched me deeply, and I realised that he and the other children living on the street had to cope with many difficulties and that their circumstances were even more adverse than the girls who had attended the school where I had previously worked.

1.6 PERSONAL SITUATEDNESS REGARDING BELIEFS AND VALUES

I am very conscious of the fact that any activity that I become involved in as an educational psychologist is not a value-free enterprise, and I need to be aware of, what Kelly (1995:36) terms, the "interplay" between my own values and that of the co-researchers. Freedman and Combs (1996:275) use the term "situating ourselves" to describe the process of clearly identifying those aspects of our experiences and intentions that influence our work. This could contribute to what White (1991:35) terms "transparency", which is a condition where the therapist is able to situate his/her ideas within the context of personal experiences, intentions and beliefs. According to White (1991:38), this type of transparency will assist the client in making decisions about the responses of the therapist. By acknowledging my own situatedness regarding values and beliefs, I hope to facilitate transparency in this research journey, thus opening up space for interchange of experiences and meaning-making.

The values and beliefs that I have developed are a result of my own life-experiences within a certain political, social, economical and spiritual context, and the institutions that sustain them. I am a member of a family who have a farm in a rural, conservative, Afrikaans-speaking community. I developed a sense of 'being different' during my early childhood years, because we spoke English, belonged to a different religious denomination, supported the official political opposition party at that time, and were considered to be more liberal than the rest of the community in the views that we held. This sense of being different has accompanied me on my own life-journey, and has often prompted me to align myself with people who are regarded by society to be in a 'different' position, be it politically, socially, spiritually or emotionally. I try to maintain a respectful curiosity as to the reason for the positions that people occupy, and I can often share in their beliefs as a result of my own experiences.

1.7 THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

1.7.1 Introduction

In planning this research journey, I was guided by the principles of research design described by Durrheim (1999:33). He lists four dimensions in which decisions need to be made:

1. The purpose of the research
2. The theoretical paradigm informing the research
3. The context or situation within which the research is carried out
4. The research techniques employed to collect and analyse data.

I have chosen to use the term "research curiosity"³ to inform the purpose. I will discuss this term, my positioning regarding the theoretical paradigm, beliefs and constructs informing the paradigm, and the research strategy (techniques used) in the following sections. The context of this study, which will be elaborated on in Chapter 2, is referred to in the section headed Situational Story.

1.7.2 Research Curiosity

During initial conversations with the current housemother, Sophia, I became aware of the different stories that were unfolding within the house. She told stories of poverty, drug abuse, illness, homelessness and physical and emotional abuse and neglect. According to McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (1998:7-9), these are factors that could contribute to states of hopelessness, aggression, depression and anxiety and encourage activities and behaviours that could further jeopardize a child's situation. Sophia's own story reflected her personal knowledges concerning her spiritual beliefs and hopes for the children, the problems that she was encountering, and the difficulty of sustaining a community of support.

Several questions came to mind as I started engaging with Sophia, Joe and the other adults and children involved. I was curious as to how the caregivers would story their

³ "Research curiosity" is a term used by Ryna Grobbelaar (2001:170) in preference to "research problem".

experiences and what their wishes were for themselves and for the children. How were the children making meaning of the new structure and what were their wishes for themselves, both for the immediate future and long term? How would they story their experiences of living on the street? What was the meaning of living on the street for them? Would they be interested in deconstructing the dominant discourses (section 1.7.4.2) regarding children living on the street? What was the meaning that I attached to 'children living on the street'? Would the children and caregivers describe the situation in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* as one where hope was being done? Could it be regarded as a community of support?

I was planning to do participatory action research (McTaggart, 1997), so I was aware that these preliminary questions were part of my own research curiosities, and would not necessarily reflect the wishes or curiosities of the other participants. These would have to be discussed with the other participants (the boys and caregivers) before we could formulate relevant research questions. My main concern was to create an opportunity where both caregivers and children could give voice to their experiences, where their life stories and preferred ways of standing up to homelessness and poverty could illustrate the importance of doing hope in the lives of these children.

During discussions with Sophia, Joe, Thuso, Flipper, Big Boy, Skipper, Skibo, Cane and Bones, who had all agreed to participate in the study, we agreed on the following research curiosities:

- How do the caregivers and children in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* stand up to homelessness and poverty?
- How do their stories reflect the notion of doing hope?

1.7.3 Purpose of the study

I engaged in this research journey because I was impressed by the way that *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* had been established and how it was being managed. I wanted the caregivers and the boys to reflect on what was happening, how it came about, and what meaning it had for them. Change had taken place in the lives of the boys, who had previously been living on the street, and they would be co-researchers in exploring the extent that doing hope had brought about this change.

The purpose of this study was to engage in discussion with the caregivers and boys who were willing to talk about their experiences. In deciding on the aims of the study, a narrative approach was used in the conversations (see 1.7.4.3), and a power-sharing relationship (see 1.8) was adopted. The purpose of this was to create an equal partnership to ensure "authentic participation" as advocated in participatory action research, and co-ownership (McTaggart, 1997:6).

I proposed the following aims in the exploration of the research curiosity and these were then negotiated with the participants:

- To explore the influence of socially constructed discourses regarding children who were living on the street, and how these affected/informed the caregivers and the children
- To explore the meanings attached to the experiences of the boys and the caregivers in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* and to give voice to the preferred stories that they were creating
- To explore the notion of doing hope and the role it played in the management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*.

1.7.4 Positioning myself in the research journey

When I set out on this research journey, I was aware of the fact that during my lifetime I had been exposed to different paradigms that had influenced my thinking. I realised that positioning myself, that is clearly stating the worldview that I adhere to, was crucial to the process of conducting research, as it attempts to explain the context of the journey and makes explicit the derivation of meaning for the reader.

1.7.4.1 Describing the Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) describe paradigm as "... the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways". Durrheim (1999:36) refers to paradigm as a system of "interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions". In the analysis of the paradigm, I needed to ask questions regarding these three assumptions. These questions concern 1) the nature of reality, 2) the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the

would-be-known, and 3) how to obtain the necessary knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:108). The paradigm thus influences the nature of the research question, as well as the way in which it will be studied.

1.7.4.2 Beliefs and constructs informing the paradigm

- **Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is a reaction to the previously dominant western worldview, namely modernism. Modernism, according to Alvesson and Sköldbberg, (2000:148) emphasises the notion that there are generally accepted, rational solutions and explanations that ensure development of knowledge. It is generally taken for granted that objectivity, individuality, uniform rationality, and progress characterise the work of the academic and scientific community. Freedman and Combs (1996:20) maintain that they tie together the "objective" facts in an overarching theory that is used to explain the real universe, and which they believe to be representations of general truths that are shared by all. In the humanities this thinking, also referred to as structuralist thinking, is a kind of humanism that seeks to develop grand, sweeping, meta-narratives about the human condition and how to perfect it (Freedman & Combs, 1996:20). We use these beliefs to understand and explain behaviour, verifying existing theories and predicting future behaviour. This knowledge is representative of an objective world, and does not acknowledge the existence of individual minds and feelings (Anderson, 1997:30).

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:148) maintain that in postmodernist terms, these "grand narratives" or "dominant discourses" should be replaced by "micro histories" which are simple, provisional stories of individuals. Waldegrave (1998:405) adds to this by stating that there are no objective meanings or explanations, but rather events that occur in the physical world that are given meaning by people. According to Freedman and Combs (1996:21), modernist views ignore these specific, localized meanings of individual people, and render them powerless in a therapeutic relationship.

- **Social Constructionism**

One of the key metaphysical assertions in postmodern narrative therapy is that the individual or group is an active agent in the construction of his or her world (White, 1997:226). According to Gergen (1999:60), the emphasis of *social constructionism* is on "discourse as vehicle through which self and the world are articulated, and the way in which such discourse functions within social relationships". Gergen (1999:60) differentiates *social constructionism* from *social constructivism*, where the mind constructs reality in its relationship to the world, but is influenced by information gained through individual experiences in social relationships. Freedman and Combs (1996:27) describe social constructionism as the way in which people interact with one another to construct, modify and maintain that which they uphold within their society to be real and meaningful. This view is similar to that of Gergen (1999:60).

In this study, I engaged with the boys and caregivers through conversations. The function of these discourses was to articulate experiences and transport newly created meanings. As Freedman and Combs (1996:22) point out, the realities that are constructed are not absolute truths, but since they are socially constructed and constituted through language, they can be organised and maintained through narrative. One cannot objectively know the 'truth', but one can attempt to interpret experiences, which could be many and varied depending on many factors, such as the person who is doing the interpreting, the context and the focus of attention. As Freedman and Combs (1996:33) remind us, none of these interpretations will be "the true one"; there are many points of view that have different meanings.

Gergen (1999:47-50) delineates several assumptions underlying social constructionism. I found two of these helpful in the process of planning this research journey. The first of these, namely that our future is being shaped by the descriptions and explanations we give of our experiences (p.48), made me realise that by creating an opportunity for the boys to give voice to their life stories, they might recognise transformation in their lives, their relationships and their circumstances. New meanings could be created, and in writing them down, I would be creating even more new meanings, which might, in turn, have different meaning for the reader. Gergen (1999:49) speaks of "generative discourses", which are ways of conversing and

writing that would challenge present understandings and open up new ways of acting and meaning-making.

The second assumption made by Gergen (1999:49) that I found useful was that it is of vital importance to reflect on our understanding. Reflection does not simply mean thinking, evaluating and drawing conclusions about given traditions, because this would be done within the framework of those traditions. Gergen uses the term "reflexivity" (p.50) to explain the kind of reflecting that needs to be done. Reflexivity is "the attempt to place one's premises into question, to suspend the 'obvious', to listen to alternative framings of reality, and to grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints" (p.50). Nothing can be taken for granted. In the study, consequently, I had to doubt anything that I had come to believe as being true, real, important, or essential. I had to invite dialogue with my co-researchers, which would open up new grounds and new meanings through the process of deconstruction.

- **Discourses**

Discourse refers to the process of conversation (Lowe, 1991:44) and the meanings that are constituted through this process. Winslade and Monk (1999:22) refer to discourse as not only that which is exchanged in conversation, but also that which lies hidden beneath the surface of conversations. We live in multi-cultural contexts, and this is reflected in the discourses that influence us. I agree with Weingarten's (1995:10-11) statement that how we story our lives and how we understand these stories are shaped by the dominant discourses of the society that we live in, some of which we are at times unaware of. If, as Winslade and Monk (1999:26) suggest, discourses are *deconstructed*, that is, they are taken apart to reveal their impact on a person's life, then new possibilities for living are raised.

- **Deconstruction of discourses**

Deconstruction, a term described by Derrida (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:153), is the practice of listening for what is not said or what is omitted from the text under scrutiny. It brings forth the hidden contradictions and repressed meanings. It also gives prominence to the knowledges that are initially considered to be meaningless (White, 1991:34).

Writing from a narrative theoretical perspective, Michael White (1991:27) loosely defines deconstruction as "procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called 'truths' that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons' lives". According to White (1991:29-34), deconstruction of narrative mainly occurs through externalising conversations, questioning meanings and reconstructing preferred meanings, narratives or ways of living. Dixon (cited in Grobbelaar, 2001:181) adds to this by stating that research should be conducted in such a way that all participants benefit from the conversations and make significant contributions toward the research process. These contributions should include the knowledges of the participants as well as the co-constructed knowledge that could result from the conversations.

In this study, I was interested in the dominant discourses that influence the thinking of all concerned with working with children who are, or have been, living on the street (these will be discussed in Chapter 2). I was curious about the meaning attached to different constructs and the effects on the behaviour of the adults and children. I was also interested in the process of deconstruction by all involved in this research journey to arrive at socially co-constructed meaning and what Waldegrave (1998: 405) terms "preferred" meaning or meaning that emerges out of values, in other words meaning that is of value to the person according to his/her world view.

1.7.4.3 Research Strategy

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:14) maintain that, whereas the research paradigm involves the principles that combine the beliefs about the ontology, epistemology and methodology of the research journey, the strategy comprises the practical application of the assumptions through the use of certain skills that are necessary to move from the paradigm to the empirical world. The strategy is the paradigm in action, and it provides the methods for the researcher to engage in the research journey.

- **Qualitative Research**

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994:105), qualitative and quantitative are terms used to describe types of methods of being involved in a research journey, and are

secondary to questions of paradigm. Similarly, Gough (1993:176) contends that qualitative and quantitative are attributes of data, rather than of paradigms as such.

According to Merriam (1998:6), one of the essential characteristics of a qualitative research journey is the purpose of understanding the meaning that people have constructed. Qualitative research is inductive rather than deductive, i.e. the parts are studied to reveal how they work together to form a whole, more particularly from the participant's perspective. Patton (1985, cited in Merriam, 1998:6) explains the qualitative research journey as follows:

[It] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding.

This view is supported by other authorities such as Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) and Janesick (1994:210), who state that the aim of the qualitative research journey is not to explain human behaviour, but to describe and understand it and the meaning attached to this behaviour in the participant's own terms. This contrasts with quantitative research that focuses on large numbers of participants, obtaining averages and statistically analysing them without facing them personally.

The caregiver and boys living in the house were involved in creating a unique home for themselves, and each experienced it in a different way, developing his/her own meaning. I was the outsider, interested in the kinds of meanings that they were creating, and I realized that I too was developing meanings from my perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:11) remind us of the role of the researcher in a qualitative research journey as a member of an interpretive community that is influenced by its historical research traditions, and who develops a distinct point of view. By acknowledging my own situatedness within this research journey (section 1.5) I have attempted to clarify this role and bring to understanding my own point of view regarding the research journey.

- **Participatory Action Research**

I was strongly influenced by Heshusius and Ballard (1996:175) who describe the construction of knowledge in research not as a personal response, but as an awareness of life forms beyond the self. They encourage an approach where the researcher sees others as part of themselves rather than separate identities, and emphasise that research should become a "relation rather than an activity ... that acts *in* the world as distinct from a set of methodological practices that act *on* the world" (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996:172). This prompted me to select participatory action research as preferred strategy to guide the research journey.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:315), the departure point for participatory action research (PAR) is participation during all the aspects of the research journey. This view is also taken by Arvin Bhana (1999:230) who emphasises the importance of the full involvement of those who are being researched in every aspect of the research process, and that the researcher becomes an active participant in the process. He describes the relationship between researcher and researched in participatory action research as one where the researcher strives to "know *with* others, rather than *about* them, and to reconceptualise and foster knowledge as something that exists among people, rather than as some sort of barrier between them" (Bhana, 1999:230). This "knowing with" could create what Reason and Rowan (cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:58) refer to as the co-ownership and shared power of the participants. This distribution of power within the research process is another of the reasons for my choosing this strategy, because it fits the postmodern, social constructionist worldview that I hold.

Whyte (cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:61) defines PAR as involving "some members of the subjects of study participating actively in all phases of the process from the design of the project, through its implementation, and including the actions that come with or follow upon the research". Bhana (1999:231) refers to this combination of the design, implementation and analysis of the study within the community as a cyclical process. In the research journey related here, the cyclical nature of PAR was honoured by using the following processes, suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2001:315-316):

- Formulating the research curiosities with the caregivers and boys
- Planning the research journey
- Engaging in conversations, using a narrative approach
- Deconstructing the conversations to co-construct new meanings
- Validating these meanings by having follow-up conversations, reviewing and reflecting
- Formulating action plans to further enhance the management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*

McTaggart (1997:30) maintains that all the participants in PAR are united by a common concern to gain information about and improve a particular practice. In the view of Bhana (1999:235), structural transformation should result from the collaborative relationship between researcher and participants, thus changing the lives of people within communities. According to Bhana this involves the raising of awareness of people of their own abilities and resources, and assisting them in accessing appropriate knowledge from the dominant knowledges generated by their cultures for their own purpose and use (Bhana, 1999:235). In this current research journey, the caregivers and the boys were engaged in a unique attempt at establishing an alternative to living on the streets. This created an opportunity for them to reflect on the changes that had taken place and their active role in the accomplishment of these changes. I was hoping to return to them the legitimacy of the knowledges that they had generated themselves, thereby encouraging them to use these knowledges together with other knowledges gained from 'dominant knowledges' in the management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*.

In planning the research journey, we decided to engage in conversations, in which I, the researcher, would become part of the conversations by "temporarily dissolv(ing) the boundaries of the self, making complete attentiveness to other possible and, in turn, opening up access in new and unanticipated ways" (Heshusius, 1995:121). Heshusius refers to this as a "participatory mode of consciousness" that is a way of freeing ourselves from the burden of objectivity as propagated by the positivistic research paradigm, and requiring an attitude of openness and receptivity. Grobbelaar (2001:176) explains:

A participatory mode of consciousness results from the ability to let go temporarily of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention. It reflects a holistic epistemology that replaces the traditional relation between truth and interpretation in which the idea of truth antedates the idea of interpretation. The issue is not to define levels of completeness of merging, or of interpretation, but to foster a participatory quality of attention.

According to Grobbelaar (2001:173), a common consequence of this type of research is that the research changes the researcher, and that could result in a reconceptualisation of a phenomenon, a complete change of worldview, or a recognition of personal shortcomings. As a researcher I also needed to have tolerance for ambiguity, because there are no set procedures or protocols that can be followed step by step (Merriam, 1998:20).

- **Narrative Approach**

According to Winslade and Monk (1999:22), a narrative approach in counselling is based on the notion that we live our lives according to the stories we tell about our lives and the stories that others tell about us. White (1991:28) maintains that it is through the telling of these stories that people make meaning of their experiences, and because these stories determine what experiences people select for expression, they often shape life and have real effects. Freedman and Combs (1996:20) contend that the narrative perspective is based on the postmodernist worldview based on the notion that reality is not a known fact, but is socially constructed through "knowledge that arises within communities of knowers – the realities we inhabit are those we negotiate with one another".

White (1997:202) states that one of the basic assumptions of the narrative approach is that the individual is the expert of his/her own life, and a context should be created where the consciousness and knowledges of that person is at the centre of the process of consultation. According to Winslade and Monk (1999:30), this consultation is a non-blaming, power-sharing dialogue, where the counsellor brings to the conversations some special attributes, such as the ability to negotiate inclusivity in the conversation, so that the client is able to have a real say in the process.

The role of the therapist is to join with people in exploring the stories of their lives and relationships, the effects these have on them, their meanings, and the context in

which they have been formed and authored (Morgan, 2000:2). However, no person has one single life-story, and re-authoring involves the co-creation of alternative storylines of identity, where events are identified that have occurred in a sequence, across time, and that are organised according to a plot or theme (Carey & Russell, 2003:60–61). These re-authored stories are thickened by identifying incidents where the person was able to exhibit behaviour that represented preferred truths about that person, and by identifying other persons who might bear witness of this preferred behaviour in future (Russel & Carey, 2002:24).

In the thickening of the alternative (preferred) story, questions are asked regarding the "intentional states of identity" rather than the "internal states of identity" (White, 2003). The questions focus on exploring the intentions, hopes, values and commitments that shape a person's actions, rather than the internal "strengths", "resources" or "qualities" (Carey & Russell, 2003:65). The intentional states of identity can be arranged in the following hierarchy to facilitate the asking of questions (White, 2003):

- The intentions or purposes that shape the action
- The values and beliefs that support these actions
- The hopes and dreams that are associated with the values
- The principles of living that are represented by the hopes and dreams
- Commitments, or what it is that people stand for in life.

By engaging in re-authoring conversations with the caregivers and boys living in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, I was hoping to enable the co-researchers to explore the alternative meanings and storylines of their lives since the establishment of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, thus bringing into reality their preferred stories.

1.7.5 Articulating experiences and deconstructing meanings

Following the narrative approach in conducting the conversations, an opportunity was created for the boys and caregivers to story their experiences and to explore the meanings that they attached to these experiences. Freedman and Combs (1996:46) refer to "deconstructive listening" that is a way of listening to people's stories that frees them from the factualness of the narratives, opening space for actively

constructed stories where they are able to explore aspects of the story that have not previously been storied. The meaning a listener makes is often different from the intended meaning. I needed to ask questions to attempt to fill the gaps in my understanding. In this way, as I tried to understand the realities of the caregivers and boys, those realities inevitably began to change in the process. My mere presence allowed for new realities to be created (Freedman & Combs, 1996:47).

In participatory action research, an agenda cannot be set beforehand, but the following questions were proposed for discussion:

- How does each person experience the current situation?
- What are the intentions and aims of the caregivers?
- What are the intentions and aims of the boys?
- How do the intentions and aims of the caregivers coincide with those of the boys?
- What are the greatest concerns of the boys?
- How are these being addressed?
- What other concerns might the boys still have, and how can these be addressed?
- What does each person hope for and what are their wishes for the future?
- What are their hopes and wishes for *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*?

To facilitate the above process, the following methods were used:

- Having conversations with the participating individuals
- Keeping a research journal (documenting my own experiences)
- Negotiating with the participants to keep a journal if possible
- Keeping notes during interviews (with the participating individual's consent)
- Audio taping interviews (with informed consent)
- Narrative therapeutic documentation, such as letters.

1.7.6 Reporting the research journey

One of the goals of qualitative research is to elicit understanding and meaning, and it involves an inductive orientation to analysis and findings that are richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998:11). Denzin (1989a:83, cited in Mouton, 2001:188) describes a "thick description" as follows:

A 'thick description' does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.

To come to an understanding of the meanings attached to experiences, I closely scrutinised the transcribed conversations to identify the problem-saturated stories as well as the preferred stories. I wrote narrative letters to the caregivers and boys, reflecting on these meanings, asking further questions and referring to intentional states of identity. These letters were used as validation of authenticity and would be discussed in follow-up conversations.

In reporting this research journey, I made use of thick descriptions of the stories narrated by the boys and caregivers. I attempted to describe the meanings that were co-constructed during the conversations, reflecting on the extent that hope was being done and a community of support had been created. A draft of the report was made available to all participants for comment on its validity. I also reflected on my own experiences during the research journey as a way of challenging the assumptions of my own discourses. This enabled me to acknowledge the influence I might have had on the process of co-authoring as a result of the specific questions that I asked during the conversations.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical conduct in research resides with the individual doing research (Neuman, 2000:90), and depends on the values and personal moral code of that person.

Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:66) mention three ethical principles, namely autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence to which I would like to add a fourth, namely validity.

The first of these principles, autonomy, involves obtaining informed consent from the participants and ensuring anonymity (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999:66). I approached all the participants individually, explaining the process and obtaining voluntary participation and written consent. An example of the letter of information and consent is attached as Addendum A. The boys chose to use a pseudonym to author their stories, meanings and impressions, and we agreed that nothing would be published without the consent of all the participants. The caregivers chose to have their own names used. All agreed to the use of the name *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, and both Joe and Thuso agreed to have the names of their organisations used. Due to circumstances, written consent was not obtained from the previous housemother. For that reason her name is not mentioned. I gave a firm undertaking that information about the shelter and statistics regarding the children living on the street in Stellenbosch would be used only with the permission of the directors of Youth Outreach, the social worker involved, and other workers at the shelter. The letter requesting this consent is attached as Addendum B.

Closely related to this principle is the issue of power. This is an integral part of the relationship between the researcher and individuals participating in the research. Foucault (in Freedman & Combs, 1996:37-40) regards language as an instrument of power, and maintains that persons have power to the extent that they are able to participate in various discourses that contribute to the shaping of that society. In PAR, and using a narrative approach in conducting the conversations, there is a sharing of power, with everybody participating in the sharing of ideas and meanings. To ensure that this would be the case, we would start a group discussion by reflecting on previous conversations and trying to identify and discuss any imbalance that might have occurred. Michael White (1991:35) suggests a way of deconstructing practices of power by having externalising conversations about them. This allows individuals to become aware of the practices of power and enable them to take a stand and lessen the influence of these practices on their lives.

The second principle, nonmaleficence, means that no harm should be done to participants (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999:66). The narrative approach of externalising conversations and of posing questions that would explore meanings and develop preferred stories (section 1.7.4.3) proved useful in honouring this principle. Participants were invited to share their views, with the assurance that that participation was voluntary, and I would attempt not to give my own views and interpretations, but to maintain a participatory mode of consciousness (see previous section) and to adopt a 'not-knowing' attitude. I would share experiences, but not in a dominating way. If any of the participants required additional support, they were referred to relevant professionals.

Participatory action research by its very nature ensures that the third principle, that of beneficence, is adhered to. According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:66), beneficence means that the research should benefit the participants, researchers, society at large, or all of them. The changes that were occurring within the home (the topic of this research) were to the benefit of the boys and community at large. Documenting these changes could benefit other researchers, and organisations or communities that wished to establish similar homes. The co-researchers also benefited from bringing their lived experiences into reality, and by having someone witness that process.

Concerning the ethical concept of validity, I refer to Altheide and Johnson (1994:489-490) who speak about "*validity-as-reflexive-accounting* (VARA)" (p.489) as an alternative way of ensuring that a research project is valid. It puts the focus on the process of research, and creates a situation where the participants, topic and meaning-making process are all in interaction. This happens through communication, so it is important for the researcher to substantiate his/her own meaning making and interpretations through a process of personal reflexivity. According to social constructionism, meanings are constructed according to participants' perspectives on reality, and this leads to a "multivocality" (Altheide & Johnson, 1994:490) that needs to be faithfully reported, locating the voice of the author as well.

Marcus (1994:572) refers to "situated knowledges" as knowledges concerning communities, not individuals, and these are obtained through location of the self (researcher) within a situation, i.e. being reflexive about subjective experiences.

Marcus (1994:571) identifies this as "positioning" and maintains that "as a practice in feminism (it) is most committed to the situatedness and partiality of all claims to knowledge". I positioned myself within the community of participants. However, in Chapter 5 I reflect on the larger vision from my specific position. I also take the specific positioning of the other participants into consideration in attempting to reflect their stories accurately in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

1.9 REFLECTION

The process of developing the world view that I have put forward has been influenced by physical, emotional, educational, political, communal, societal, and many other factors. Situating myself with regard to my beliefs and values, as well as expanding on the constructs that inform the chosen paradigm aim at providing transparency in the research journey. Using a narrative approach in conducting the conversations fits the post-modernist, social constructivist paradigm that I have described, as well as addressing most of the ethical issues that are relevant in participatory action research.

CHAPTER 2

DESCRIBING THE LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

For me, street children are tremendously exciting people. They question everything and by so doing, they force us to re-examine our notions about family and society, welfare institutions, education and human rights. But most of all they force us to reflect on our notions of childhood.

(Swart, 1990:126)

In the previous chapter I situated myself and the co-researchers within the research journey by explaining what motivated it, how it originated and developed, and what the paradigm is that informed the research journey. In this chapter, I continue the research journey by explaining the context (landscape) of the journey, those ideas and beliefs in society that inform our thinking about and approaches to children living on the street. I use the metaphor of 'landscape' because I see the research journey as following a 'road' that winds through a certain landscape. I regard the existing discourses on children living on the street as the features of the landscape, and by stating these discourses I acknowledge the influence that they have on our perceptions. The extent of this influence on my own thinking will be discussed in Chapter 5, where I reflect on the research journey.

I was curious about what I would find in the existing literature regarding children living on the street. To guide this exploration and to ensure a thorough surveillance of the landscape, I posed myself the following questions:

- How many children are living on the street?
- How is 'living on the street' portrayed in the literature?

- Who are the children that elect 'living on the street' as an option?
- How do children come to live on the street?
- How have communities responded to the decision of children to live on the street?
- How have the government and social services responded to the situation?
- Are the children's voices being heard in the situations that are described in the literature?

In the following sections I explore some of these questions.

2.2 LIVING ON THE STREET

2.2.1 Introduction

On the website of Street Kids for Christ, alarming statistics reveal that at least 100 million children worldwide are believed to live on the street, at least part of the time. In Britain, 156 000 children are homeless every year (Street Kids for Christ, 2003). A report compiled by the Schwab Foundation in the United States of America (Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, 2002) stated that in the late 1990s, between 2,3 and 3,5 million people in the United States experienced homelessness at least once during the year. Nearly 40% of these were children. If one takes into consideration that some of these numbers were quoted a few years ago, one can only speculate on how many more children are now willingly or unwillingly living on the street.

2.2.2 The situation in South Africa

Several authors (Chetty, 1997:3; Lewis, 1998:16) maintain that the number of children in South Africa who are living on the street is not known. In 1993, the number was estimated to be approximately 10 000 (Schurink, 1994:5). According to Lewis (1998:16), there are presumed to be about 1 000 children in the area of the Cape Peninsula, of which 10% are girls. In Johannesburg, the estimated number is much higher, and according to ChildHope UK (2003) there are approximately 2 700 children and youth on the streets of Greater Johannesburg. In Chapter 1, I stated that there are approximately 35 children living on the streets of Stellenbosch.

2.3 DOMINANT DISCOURSES FROM A STRUCTURALIST VIEWPOINT

2.3.1 Introduction

In conducting the literature review, it became apparent to me that most of what had been written on children living on the street had been based on a structuralist way of thinking (refer to 1.7.4.2). This is fundamentally different from the postmodernist, social constructionist approach that I used in this study, but since this was the road the journey took, I will describe the 'landscape' through which we travelled.

2.3.2 Defining living on the street

Rice (1994:26) developed the following definition of a 'street child', which is based on the United Nations' definition of 'street children':

A street child is any boy/girl under the **age of 18** who, in an attempt to **escape** a negative home situation (e.g. rejection, maltreatment, abuse, exploitation, poverty), has resorted to the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) which has become his/her **habitual abode** and/or source of livelihood, and has abandoned or partially abandoned, or been **abandoned** or partially abandoned by parents/family/community, thus resulting in inadequate protection, supervision or direction by responsible adults. (Bold type in original text.)

Chetty (1997:12), however, maintains the view that there is no generally accepted definition of 'street children', but that certain terminology is used to describe different categories of children living on the street. She refers to "homeless children", "runaways", "throwaways" and "pushouts". "Runaways" refer to children who have left home voluntarily, whereas "pushouts" and "throwaways" have not had a choice in the matter, but have been either abandoned, orphaned or rejected by their parents, step-parents, family and community (Chetty, 1997:12-13). "Homelessness", according to O'Connor (1989), literally refers to the absence of shelter or accommodation, but includes the threat of losing it, high mobility between areas of living, overcrowding and/or lack of security, as well as being restricted by unfair means from obtaining other accommodation.

Lewis (1998:17) on the other hand, describes a child living on the streets as "someone under eighteen, who has decided to leave home to care for himself on the streets, unassisted by an adult". According to her, these children do have homes, but are often reluctant to admit to it because they have decided to give up any form of adult control and authority, and prefer to "make it on their own" (Lewis, 1998:7). In my opinion, this description is rather simplistic: it implies that children living on the street are simply in need of care, which does not address all the complexities of the problem.

2.3.3 Race

Some researchers (Chetty, 1997:18-25, Hickson & Gaydon, 1989:85; Swart, 1988:34) regard the phenomenon of children living on the street in South Africa as a result of the racial segregation that existed from 1948 to 1994. Le Roux (1997:16) investigated the backgrounds of street children in South Africa, and came to the conclusion that the backgrounds of children living on the street, despite some differences, are often very similar worldwide. Some problems, however, are unique to South Africa, such as its legacy of Apartheid and the resultant socio-economic problems. According to Ross (1991:70), this could account for the fact that in South Africa, very few white children live on the street.

Jill Swart (1990:57) conducted a study on children (mainly black children) living on the streets of Hillbrow, Johannesburg. According to her, one reason that the children were mostly black is that westernisation has eroded the traditional way of life of indigenous peoples who had previously provided care for children in the form of an extended family of adults. Urbanisation forced these families into nuclear units and the loosening of extended family ties, thus resulting in a loss of support for children who were orphaned or ill-treated (Swart, 1990:57). Other reasons that Swart (1990:57-58) mentions, include the difference in ethos in black townships (that were originally established to accommodate people who were providing services to white communities), township unrest, and gangsterism.

In my view, the children living on the street in Stellenbosch can be placed in a political context as well. The marginalisation of races other than white during the Apartheid-era created socio-economic circumstances that privileged the white inhabitants of the town. Although it would be rather simplistic to ascribe the fact that

there are no white children living on the street in Stellenbosch to one single factor such as the previous unacceptable political system, the latter seems to have had major repercussions which contributed to the situation. The Group Areas Act, which demarcated specific areas of living for specific people, pass laws, inferior education, job reservation and township violence are some of these (Chetty, 1997:18-25). The children from the communities of colour are often still exposed to family, community and societal situations (see 2.3.6) that are non-conducive to caring and supportive environments. Consequently these children resort to living on the street. Swart (1988:34) maintains that the reason for this is that racially segregated institutional care facilities for children were previously disproportionately provided (favouring whites), and living on the street became the option for children of colour whose home circumstances were not ideal.

2.3.4 Gender

All the children involved in this study were boys. In 1.3.2 I mentioned that there are very few girls living on the street in Stellenbosch. Gebers (cited in Le Roux, 1997:14) maintains that the main reason that the majority of South African children living on the street are male is that girls are more domesticated and are needed to take care of other younger children in the home. Swart (1988:34) adds to this perspective. She argues that girls are less often abandoned, and if so, are taken in by friends and family more willingly than boys, since girls help more with household chores and child-minding. Girls are more inclined to become involved in prostitution when they start living on the street, and find accommodation in this way (Swart, 1988:34).

2.3.5 Speaking about "at risk"

According to McWhirter, *et al* (1998:6), the term "at risk" has been used frequently in literature on education, psychology, medicine, social work, economics and the law. Its use in different contexts reflect a lack of consensus regarding its meaning. Often when it is used it is defined specifically for that context. McWhirter, *et al* (1998:6) maintain that, in general, psychologists, social workers and counsellors use it to denote individuals who suffer emotional and adjustment problems, while educators use it to denote learners who are at risk of developing major academic problems, behaviour problems, or both.

Gibson (1997:2) maintains that "at risk" is often used to describe children who have personal characteristics, or who live in families that display characteristics, that are associated with problems at school. McWhirter *et al.* (1998:9) argue that when 'at risk' is used in this way, it points to a deficit model that suggests that the problem is inherent in individual children, adolescents and families. They prefer to use *at risk* to "denote a set of presumed cause-and-effect dynamics that place the child or adolescent in danger of negative *future events*", and view it as a series of steps along a continuum (McWhirter *et al.*, 1998:7). Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990:2) similarly prefer to use "at risk" in a way that avoids blaming the child and points the attention toward environmental factors that need to be addressed. The latter include relationship impairments that create a sense of not belonging, educational environments that create feelings of futility and inadequacy, powerlessness created by over-indulgent or overly strict parenting, and a loss of purpose resulting from lack of social responsibility (Brendtro *et al.*, 1990:8-31).

2.3.6 Factors that contribute to children living on the street

A study of the literature reveals that many factors, such as political factors, urbanisation, unemployment, broken homes, family violence, parental alcoholism, abuse, poverty, and personal reasons can contribute to a child's leaving home and school to live on the street (Le Roux, 1997; Chetty, 1997, Lewis, 1998; Youth Unlimited, 2003). The reasons are not that simple, and the process of becoming a child who lives on the street is a complex one. Richter (cited in Cockburn, 1991:12) argues that the above-mentioned factors alone do not explain the phenomenon of children living on the street, as most of them are not atypical of the homes of many other children world wide that are not living on the street.

In South Africa, the impact of colonisation, urbanisation and apartheid can be seen in the large number of children who are homeless, abandoned or neglected. The spirit of Ubuntu – a spirit of humanity which encompasses a principle of people caring for each other's well being within an attitude of mutual support – that was part of pre-colonial, and traditional South African society was no longer strong enough to protect the children (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1996:7). The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (1996:7) investigated the situation of children in South Africa in 1996 and found that the legacy of

discrimination, breakdown of family life and traditional values, lack of education, disempowerment of women, high levels of violence and an increase in the crime rate had led to the situation in which children currently find themselves.

Swart (1990:57) maintains that rapid urbanisation and industrialisation have led to a disintegration of close family ties, which is largely to blame for the presence of children on the street. Annette Cockburn (1991:13) speaks about conscious political decisions that create circumstances that lead to social "causalities" of human life. She maintains that "In extreme circumstances street children are the neglected, abused and rejected offspring of parents and communities benumbed by the minimal conditions of their lives ... 80% of all children we see have a history of abuse – physical, sexual or emotional". Social factors resulting from adverse conditions, such as poverty, unemployment, poor health care, and inadequate housing and nutrition can contribute to child abuse and neglect, which in turn could result in children opting to live on the street (Swart, 1990:57, Rice, 1994:57). Other societal factors, such as breakdown in alternative care placements, illegitimacy, being orphaned as result of HIV/AIDS, civil strife and township violence can further contribute to children resorting to a life on the street (Cockburn, 1991:13; Rice, 1994:58).

Apart from above-mentioned social and political issues which negatively affect children, Mounier and Andujo (2003:1188) maintain that the children living on the street also suffer widespread victimisation, more so than that of the general population. The sadness in a situation like this is that the children might have resorted to life on the street to avoid the certainty of further victimisation in their homes. Chetty (1997:45-49) mentions factors such as sexual abuse, police cruelty, lack of protective legislation, punitive institutionalisation, illness and other threats of violence and assaults from members of the public as categories of victimisation. As a result of this victimisation, children become suspicious of adults and their intentions, and do not respond well to attempts at engaging them in treatment and stabilisation (Yates, Pennbridge, Swofford & Mackenzie, 1991).

Le Roux (1997:15) refers to "push" and "pull" factors. Pull factors include such things as the excitement and glamour of living in big cities, the hope of raising one's living standards, and independence and financial security. Push factors would be population increase above the carrying capacity (overcrowdedness), cost of living, urbanisation,

search for additional income, child abuse and neglect, family size, and disintegration of traditional family ties. In general, the move to the street could be an indication of the desire to take control of one's life, and to displace old values and conditions with new ones (Hickson & Gaydon, cited in Le Roux, 1997:15).

2.4 THE POSITION OF CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.4.1 Policies regarding children

Much has been done to improve the plight of children in South Africa since the installation of a democratic government. Examples of these are: a range of policies and measures designed to promote the well being of children, such as the Children's Bill of Rights; Mandela's personal commitment to the well being of children; the Inter-ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk that worked towards the transformation of the child and youth care system; a National Programme of Action which was launched to address the problems of South African children in general; and changing policies regarding education (Loffell, in Boikanyo & Donnell, 1997:8). Section 28(1)(c) of the Constitution of South Africa gives children "the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, and social services" (Guthrie, 2003:17).

In 1992, at the Summit on the Rights of Children in South Africa, Jennifer Petersen (then 15) said the following: "[T]o stand up for something which you believe in takes courage and responsibility ... The Children's Charter will secure our place and we will be recognised as human beings, the children and young people of South Africa" (Solomons, 2003:32). The Children's Charter reflects the voices of children on their rights and how they want to be treated. It is a plea by children to be respected and consulted on matters concerning and affecting them, and to be listened to. Article Ten (The Children's Charter of South Africa, 1992:4) refers to "Homeless Children" and states the following:

1. No child should be forced to live on the streets.
2. Homeless children have the right to be protected from harassment and abuse from police, security guards and all other persons and every person has the duty to report any abuse or violence against children.

3. Homeless children have the right to a decent place to live, clothing and a healthy diet.
4. Street children have the right to special attention in education and health care.
5. Communities and families have a duty to protect their children from becoming homeless and abandoned.
6. All persons should be made aware of the plight of homeless children and should participate in programmes which act to positively eradicate the problem of homeless children.
7. The government has the duty and responsibility for homeless children.

According to Guthrie (2003:17), the Convention of the Rights of the Child, ratified by South Africa in 1995, states, "Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his/her development" (Article 27). This indicates the deep commitment of the government to attend to the plight of children as stated in the Children's Charter.

2.4.2 The work of the Inter Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk

In 1995 an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (IMC) was established by the South African Cabinet to manage the process of crisis intervention and transformation of the Child and Youth Care (CYC) system over a five-year period. "At risk" was defined as "those young people who have their normal healthy development placed at risk because their circumstances and/or behaviour make them vulnerable to having to live away from their community and/or family on the street or under statutory care" (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1998:10).

In November 1996 the Interim Policy Recommendations were published as part of an ongoing consultative process regarding the aforementioned transformation (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1996). In it, the IMC recognised the importance of children and their families as contributors to a "caring and healthy" society, and their aim was to implement a youth care system that would be based on a developmental and ecological perspective (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1996:15). Training of all service providers who interface

directly with young people at risk, such as teachers, social workers, child and youth care workers, psychologists, police officers, probation officers, and magistrates, was undertaken by the IMC in an effort to bring about the intended transformation.

The basic principles of this developmental approach stem from the approach advocated by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990:35), which portrays a philosophy of child development as a circle of courage with belonging, mastery, independence and generosity as the central values of positive cultures for education and youth programmes that foster self-esteem. It is a needs-based approach, where the cycle of discouragement and hurt is linked to the developmental needs which arise when the circle is broken (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1998a:19). The circle is broken when a young person has missed out on the necessary growth experiences which build a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. This leads to that young person viewing himself or herself negatively and being discouraged. This in turn results in behaviours which shut people out or push them away. The usual response from adults is fear, anger, a need to punish and hurt, or to shut out the young person from the very experiences which he/she needs in order to grow. This cycle of discouragement is perpetuated as the young person continues to view him/herself negatively.

The Minimum Standards document that was published by the IMC in May 1998 was aimed at facilitating and guiding the transformation process of the CYC system regarding the prevention, early intervention, statutory process and the continuum of services offered. It adhered to the key principles of the Rights of the Child as set out by the United Nations, namely best interests of the child (article 3), survival and development (article 6), non-discrimination (article 2) and participation (article 12) (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, 1998:12).

2.4.3 Some recent perspectives on the situation of children in South Africa

Lockhat and Van Niekerk (2000:291-302) investigated the situation of children before and since 1994, and concluded that a great deal of concern still remains regarding the position of children in our society, especially regarding social and psychological services for children. Boikanyo and Donnell (1997:6) take a similar view, arguing that "high unemployment levels, escalation in crime, the continuance of widespread

poverty, the spread of the AIDS epidemic as well as an increase in the abuse of women, have all combined to ensure that at least half of the child and youth population today remain 'at-risk' in varying degrees". Chetty (1997:181) maintains that children living on the street are victims of social injustice and as such are a symptom of the many social problems that exist in South African society today. In general, children continue to challenge communities and societies all over the world to honour their "legitimate claim" to be respected and treated like any other human being (Solomons, 2003:32).

2.5 VOICE AND STANDING UP TO POWERLESSNESS

2.5.1 Introduction

Janusz Korczak was a pediatric physician who directed a school for Jewish street children in Warsaw from 1912 to 1942 (cited in Brendtro *et al.*, 1990:56). As early as this period, he was calling for a respect for children and their active involvement in matters concerning them:

We fail to see the child; just as one time we were unable to see the woman, the peasant, the oppressed social strata and oppressed peoples. We have arranged things for ourselves so that children should be in our way as little as possible ... A child's primary and irrefutable right is the right to voice his thoughts, to actively participate in our verdicts concerning him.

2.5.2 Hearing the children's voices

Without language, experience dissolves. Without language, experience cannot be shared and community cannot be formed". (Weingarten, 1997:49)

How then, do we listen to the language of the children, and hear their voices? Weingarten (2000:392) describes voice not only as an individual's expression of self-knowledge, but as the willingness of others to make it possible through listening and understanding.

We are often inclined to stay silent by choice: the husband, for example, fearing poverty but not wanting to upset his family, carries the burden of financial trouble on

his own; the child who is using drugs, afraid he might lose the respect of his parents, silences himself; the child, fearing the abuse and neglect that he/she receives at home, prefers to leave home and live on the street. These silences are attempts not to burden others with our own realities, but at the same time they could lead to an unbearable disconnectedness and isolation. Weingarten (2000:391) refers to the paradox in this: if one cannot share feelings and thoughts with others, one ends up withdrawing. If, on the other hand, one does share one's thoughts and feelings with others, they might be so appalled and upset, that *they* might withdraw from *you*. From this point of view then, it seems that for 'voice' to exist, the silence must be broken and witnessing needs to take place.

2.5.3 Witnessing

We are all witnesses, aware of things happening around us, whether we admit to it or not. We see things happening, whether we want to or not, and we read about and hear things, whether we want to or not. Weingarten (2000:393) maintains that witnessing "fractures language in ways that mirror the fracturing of language experienced by those whose experience is witnessed". This involves spoken and written language, and often when something is captured in words, it allows the person to take control of the event and give it meaning. The silence is broken, and people can enter relationships and reconnect with others. In the conversations with the co-researchers, I was taking on the role of witness, asking questions and giving voice to lived experiences. We were entering relationships, sharing thoughts and co-constructing the preferred story of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*.

2.5.4 What prevents us from hearing the children's voices?

Paternalistic and authoritarian child-rearing practices in the past have not allowed children to share power with their parents. Consequently their voices have not been heard, rendering them powerless (Connolly & McKenzie, 1999:69; Taylor, 1997:15). Chetty (1997:184) maintains that children living on the street have been labelled by society, and even service providers, as being "deviants, delinquents, future criminals, public nuisances". According to him, the Child Care Act and Child Protection Act do not afford these children any safeguards, but rather condemn them to detention in

prisons, police cells, and youth and secure care centres, which may even be worsening the situation (Chetty, 1997:182-183).

Possible dominant discourses that could have contributed to our "not-hearing" the voices of children living on the street are the following:

- *Perspectives on the concept of family*: In the western world, families are generally regarded as either blood relations or legally acknowledged relations. Types of families include the nuclear family (husband, wife and children), childless couples, one-parent families, adopted families, reconstituted families (second marriages), homosexual couples or families, and communal families (Schlesinger, cited in Barker, 1998:14). The "breaking up" of family ties (see 2.2.6.) has been mentioned as one of the reasons for children to decide to live on the street. According to Barker (1998:12), "healthy families" are regarded as those that provide for the material, emotional and spiritual needs of its members. Service providers, therefore, advocate a process of family preservation and reunification, emphasizing the importance of children living with their family of origin (Scott, Anderson & Mnyantsi, 2002:6).

Hipgrave (1989:36) maintains that parenting is not a unitary phenomenon. The ecological perspective as postulated by Bronfenbrenner (cited in Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:33) is based on an understanding of the simultaneous existence and functioning of a multiplicity of systems, both internal and external, within a family. According to attachment theory (Hipgrave, 1989:34-37), positive attachments are those that hold emotional significance for a child, which are an important aspect of a child's development. "Attachments are qualitative phenomena and not predictable by the quantity of time spent in interaction or the salience of particular activities. In short, different children develop different attachment systems, both to adults and to other children, to meet their individual developmental demands. Children may recover from severed attachments, given conditions of stability and continuity" (Rushton & Treseder, 1986:54-56). Therefore, much of what might be considered 'parenting' in a functional sense, might be carried out by different relationships that the child forms with various people, and not necessarily in a 'family' context.

- *Values of children living on the street*: The community regards children living on the street as having different values from those of the general community (Swart, 1990:47), reasons being that the children lacked guidance on the street or had forgotten previously taught moral values. According to Chetty (1997:43), people tend to see the outward appearance of raggedness, bravado and sometimes defiance as depicting different values, and label such children as "bad, delinquent, ruffian, scavenger". The question is not so much one about moral values, but whether the behaviour of these children can be regarded as immoral. Is it not society that is immoral by giving the children money (often to soothe the giver's own conscience) that they often use to buy glue, dagga, cigarettes or drugs? Swart (1990:17) had children do drawings of 'good' and 'bad' to determine the moral values of the children. Physical violence, killing, cruelty to animals, police injustice, and cruelty to children were seen as 'bad', whereas altruism, church attendance and prayer, personal virtues (obedience, courage, friendliness) and kindness to animals were all seen as 'goodness'.
- *Children living on the street have no vision for the future other than vagrancy and criminality*: Swart (1990:13) found the opposite – the drawings that children made depicted happy scenes and many dreams of a very different future. People often regard the children living on the street as waifs in need of care, or pests that need to be removed – in both cases it leads to abuse, either by those who chastise and correct them all the time, or those who dislike them and maltreat them in the hope of "driving them back home" (Swart, 1990:46-47).
- *Children living on the street "give up on any form of adult control, care and supervision, and make it on their own"* (Lewis, 1998:17): This kind of thinking can create the idea that children resent the support and guidance of adults in their lives, thus rejecting any adult authority. The focus might then be on re-establishing adult authority in an attempt to solve the problem, instead of involving children in co-operative solutions.
- *Different perceptions regarding children living on the street exist among policy makers, the general public, those running programmes and the street children themselves* (Schurink, 1994:5). This could result in confusion and lack of co-

ordination between the various programmes and between authorities and those running the programmes (Schurink, 1994:6).

- *A misconception of the general public that the problem of children living on the street needs to be addressed by the welfare and/or criminal justice system* (Schurink, 1994:6). This removes the responsibility from the community, and compounds the problem. Research has indicated that the programmes that are designed to address the problem of children living on the street will only be effective if the whole community accepts responsibility and gives proper protection to the children, treating them with respect and providing opportunities for development (Schurink, 1994:6; Chetty, 1997:189). Chetty (1997:189) emphasises that if communities take on the responsibility and take pride in their work, it will create a sense of oneness, belonging, and social responsibility.

2.6 PREFERRED WAYS OF DOING⁴

Connolly and McKenzie (1999:79) delineated some factors that contribute to the generation of hope, such as confidence, reciprocity and influence. These factors are also present in the Hostel of Hope, Cameroon, where children who have been living on the street are placed with participating families for a period of time to help them find their place in society (UNESCO, 1995:32). Here the guiding concept is that of education, which is done, not only with words but also with the educator's whole being. Confidence is built up through dialogue. The educator has the role of teaching the children about the demands of life and society, while she herself learns how to help the children at the same time. In this way each is influencing the other, thus generating hope and creating a family atmosphere (p.32-33).

Mathye (in Schurink, 1994:8) gives some guidelines for developing programmes to support children living on the street. These would seem supportive of generating hope:

⁴ I use "preferred ways of doing" to indicate those ways of interacting with individuals that could contribute to the development of alternative life stories. Morgan (2000:14) describes the latter as those stories that are free from the influence of the problem and which encourage growth and development of "preferred selves".

- Respect for the children and a positive regard for them as individuals should be at the foundation of any programme, to enable the development of self-esteem
- The lifestyle should be flexible and less restrictive
- Programmes should be varied, to accommodate both a direct, authoritative approach, as well as a non-directive, less authoritative approach
- Good role models should be provided, to compensate for the lack of this in the disorganized/displaced families that they come from
- Intervention should benefit the child, as well as the community in general, and rehabilitation and family reunification should be encouraged
- The children's skills should be acknowledged and developed to enable them to take control of their lives in a constructive way.

Schurink (1994:29-31), in summarising the group discussions of the working conference on the management of street children in the South African context, delineated some ideas that would be in line with the guidelines mentioned above. The working groups concluded that one should avoid a top-down approach, involve the community, and empower and educate the children. Networking between agents is important, and services to children should not alienate them from their communities and families of origin. They also felt quite strongly that children living on the street should be included in the planning of and decision making in programmes. A strong argument in favour of this is that the Children's Charter (Solomons: 2003:32) represents a plea by children living on the street to be respected and to be consulted on matters that concern them. Mbambo (2002:26) speaks of collaborative partnerships where diverse members of a community work together on a common vision for the children of that community. This enables them to have a structure for implementing ideas to prevent and address child abuse and -neglect issues within the community. I would think that the children involved should be part of this collaboration.

2.7 REFLECTION

It is clear from the literature review that the problem of children living on the street is complex and has far-reaching effects on the lives of the children, their families and the broader community. The reasons for the children opting to live on the street are

many and varied, and are often rooted in political and societal factors. Attempts that are made by the authorities, social services and volunteer workers to address the problem are sometimes unco-ordinated, which could render them less effective. Dominant discourses and misconceptions regarding the values, beliefs, hopes and dreams of these children can misinform the public about the capabilities of the children and can contribute to the silencing of the children's voices in matters that concern them. If children are genuinely included in the planning of solutions that might lessen the effects of the problem, and if communities of support are created that generate hope, children might find themselves in a position to stand up to homelessness and poverty.

CHAPTER 3

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT FOR THE BOYS

Vision is the spectacular that inspires us to carry out the mundane

(Chris Widener)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

When I read Kaethe Weingarten's view of hope and how she describes hope as something that people do, rather than as a feeling, I came to suspect that what was happening in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* could very well be a manifestation of the notion of doing hope. As I saw it, the vision that Joe, Thuso and Sophia held regarding the future of the boys encouraged them (the caregivers) to be involved in daily tasks, caring behaviour and supportive actions that spoke loudly of doing hope. In the words of Bons-Storm (1998:15), "[T]his hope nurtures the courage to love, that is, to be open to others and to see the best in them and to cherish them without being afraid". If, in this way, hope is a way of life, it becomes self-generative and results in empowering, nurturing and liberating people. It resists hopelessness by "actively wrestling with all that seeks to deprive us of hope and disempower us" (Ackerman, cited in Scrimgeour, 2002:55). In this sense, hope is directly related to participation in the process rather than hopefulness with respect to outcome.

Bolland (2003:153) has found that feelings of hopelessness are associated with almost all domains of risk behaviour, such as violence, substance abuse, sexuality, and accidental injury. All of the boys living at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* have been engaged in at least some of these behaviours, and doing hope in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* would mean that the caregivers would have to be realistic about the possible feelings of 'hopelessness' of the boys that had come from the street. At the same time they would have to engage with them in such a way that their deeds would express that which they hoped for, creating a space of communal support. According to Joe, this was the

initial aim in establishing *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* (see 3.3.1), but circumstances forced them to re-evaluate the situation, which led to changes in management and personnel. Once the new system was in place, they could investigate the possibility of finding and moving to a property in better condition. According to the caregivers, the house that they had been living in since December 2002, which was located in an area behind some industrial buildings, was in a dilapidated state and far from ideal. In December 2003 they were able to move to the house which they are currently living in, and which they are negotiating to buy.

3.2 THE CONVERSATIONS INFORMING THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

3.2.1 A brief summary of the steps taken in the research journey

My initial contact in June 2003 was with the previous housemother (before Sophia), who introduced me to one of the boys who told me that she had explained the research interest that I had at that time to him. For three months I tried scheduling meetings with him, but I was unsuccessful. In September I realised that incorrect information had infiltrated both my conversations with her, and her conversations with the boy, and that I could no longer pursue my original research curiosity. I decided to change the topic of my study, and conversations with that housemother came to an end.

Sophia had become the housemother in August 2003, and in September I approached her, Joe and Thuso with my current research proposal. They agreed to be co-researchers, and Sophia explained the research curiosity to the boys. Six of them, Flipper, Big Boy, Skipper, Skibo, Cane and Bones, agreed to participate, and became co-researchers.

We engaged in conversations from September 2003 to March 2004. Initial informal conversations allowed us to strengthen relationships, discuss the purpose of the study, sign letters of consent and agree on research questions. During September and October 2003 I engaged in more structured conversations: one with Joe, one with Thuso, two with Sophia, and four with the boys. In February 2004 I had one follow-up conversation with Sophia and one with the boys, during which the time was used to reflect on the letters I had written to them that documented our previous

conversations. During March, Skibo, Skipper and C (a helper at the house) accompanied Flipper and me on our search for and location of Flipper's mother (this was not part of the research journey, but is reported in the Epilogue).

3.2.2 Speaking about the problems in narrative terms

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories that others tell about us are generated through early childhood experiences at home, at church and at school in the surrounding neighbourhood and through discourses that are current in the wider social contexts that we live. Some of these dominant discourses can influence our thinking about ourselves, and cause us problems, as, in the words of Winslade and Monk (1999:35), "problems actually have their origins in the discourses that surround us and get mapped onto our bodies and into our lives". They further maintain that through the naming and externalising of problems, people are helped to locate the problem as separate from their identities, and are able to map the influence of the problem on their lives, as well as the influence that they have on the problem (Winslade & Monk, 1999:8). Speaking about the problem as the problem, and not the person as the problem, opens up ways of discussing how the person is engaged in the task of overcoming the problem and developing the preferred story. In this way, stories are accepted and elaborated upon without challenging the basic integrity of the stories, which can result in the authentication of the story-teller (Weingarten & Weingarten-Worthen, 1997:53).

3.3 THE VOICE OF THE CAREGIVERS

3.3.1 Aims and policy of the *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* project

Huis Rus-en-Vrede was opened on 1 December 2002 at 5 Taylor Street in La Colline, Stellenbosch. Hard Rain Children's Trust and Prochorus Community Developments joined forces to develop a home for children who were living on the street. Their aim was as follows (Prochorus Community Development, 2003:3):

With the house we aim to provide a safe, stable, caring and loving environment where the individual child can develop to his full potential. We focus on the strengths and needs of each individual child, placing special emphasis on their education and the possibilities of vocational training for a better future. Attention is also given to the

family structure and environment from where the child originates, and the possibilities to reintegrate the child back into the family.

According to this document (Prochorus Community Development, 2003), the majority of the children living on the street still had family connections, but spent most of their time on the street, begging, selling goods or washing cars to supplement the income of their families. The remainder of the children actually lived on the street in groups, regarding it as their home. They slept in abandoned buildings, vacant plots, under bridges or in doorways. They are seen in the document as "brave and resourceful individuals with talents and potential rarely recognized, ... young people who have been pushed out of the mainstream by poverty, neglect or abuse" with "the same personal dignity, potential and right to self-determination as others" (Prochorus Community Development, 2003:4).

From the above, it is clear that the children of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* were not regarded by their caregivers as children who had allowed delinquency to take control of their lives, but as children who were encouraged to open up their lives to the care and support of adults who have taken a stand against abuse and neglect. These children had survived the loss of, or abandonment by, their parents, or had been exposed to the tyranny of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse.

There is no miraculous recipe for assisting them in their attempt at escaping the tentacled grip of the street. In case studies that were done by UNESCO in Africa, Asia and Latin America (UNESCO, 1995:47-48), it was suggested that the process be started by providing the children affective security and a roof over their heads, to protect them from harassment (police and general public), and to tend to their educational, relational and health requirements.

3.3.2 Mapping the influence of the problems that were being experienced in August 2003

3.3.2.1 Problems versus needs

Hoghugh (1989:50) contrasts "problems" with "needs". "Problems" are described as 'unacceptable conditions', such as physical abuse or neglect, or situations where the normal requirements of care and support are not met. A "need" is regarded as a

complex concept and is used to indicate the space between "what is" and "what should be". According to Hoghughi (1989:53) needs often involve the adult's interpretation of their own requirements according to cultural values, and can be used to justify doing something with or to the adolescent. I therefore prefer to use terminology such as *problems* to indicate the unacceptable conditions that were being experienced at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* in August 2003.

The collaborative nature of the relationship that exists among the co-researchers in participatory action research allows for collaborative descriptions of problems. Anderson and Goolishian (1988:388) maintain that "a problem is concerned or alarmed objection about something or somebody that someone is trying to do something about". This implies that there is no problem if there is no communicative action regarding it, such as expressing concern or making a complaint. A problem exists only if "alarmed and concerned objection" is described and understood by those involved with it (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:388). In this regard, it was necessary to name the problems that emerged during the initial conversations that we had, so that they could be called into existence and be externalised.

In narrative terms, problems and the meanings that are given to them constitute the problem-saturated story that has become dominant in the functioning of the person (Morgan, 2000:12). It is often not the full description of the person, and entering into conversations where meanings can be deconstructed and other meanings explored opens up possibilities for the creation of other identities of the person. It is difficult to establish criteria of what are acceptable conditions and what not, but when experience is predominantly interpreted and narrated in a way that reflects discouragement and hopelessness, one can assume that the conditions are unacceptable to that person.

3.3.2.2 Joe and Thuso speak their voice of concern

When *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* was started in 2002, Marita and her husband acted as primary caregivers, and were assisted by a housemother who did the cooking and cleaning. Marita's husband was transferred to Johannesburg and they had to move, leaving the children in the care of the housemother and another house manager. The problems that existed in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* in August 2003 had developed over the preceding five months. Both the caregivers and the boys were aware that the

relationship that the boys had with the problems was prompting them to engage in behaviour that would ultimately lead them back to the street.

According to Thuso (CEO of Prochorus Community Development), Marita and her husband had created a caring environment that had encouraged the boys to remain at the house. I recall a remark that Marita made about entrances in her personal journal at that time. She said that during those first days and weeks, it seemed that **the street was 'calling' to the boys.**⁵ One of the rules at that time was that once a child had gone back to living on the street, he would not be allowed back into the house. Marita would often find Skipper at the gate, clutching on to the bar at the top, trying to control the urge that was enticing him to leave. She would assist him in this struggle, by reminding him that if he once left, he would not be able to return to *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. With her support, he managed to reduce the urge to manageable size, and remained at the house.

When Marita and her husband left for Johannesburg, this environment was invaded by **distrust**, which developed as a result of the actions of the housemother who had taken over their responsibilities. She was allegedly privileging a certain boy, hiding clothes that had been donated, not providing enough food for the boys, and not paying them their pocket money, saying that Thuso had not provided her with the money. Her devious ways included **falsifying information**, and she started using Thuso's name as a threat, telling the boys that he would "kick them out" if they misbehaved. According to Thuso, this was not true. He preferred to engage them in conversation, allowing openness and honesty to prevail in an attempt to deal with the problems.

The seeds of **discouragement** flourished, and the boys introduced the kind of behaviour that they had engaged in while living on the street. These behaviours, such as **absence from the house, stealing each other's clothes, stealing items from the house, smoking dagga, using drugs and staying away from school**, put further strain on the relationship between them and the housemother. Thuso had the difficult task of protecting the housemother, because he feared that distrust would eventually gain the upper hand and lead the children back to the street. He therefore wished to support the housemother, whilst assisting the boys at the same time. **Communication**

⁵ Bold type is used to indicate the problems that were being experienced at the house.

was not very clear, and information that reached Thuso was unreliable and differed from that which reached the community.

Joe was becoming concerned about the time factor, as the situation in the house was "on the brink of disaster" according to him, and he realised that something had to be done quite urgently. He identified the following problems that were thriving in that context:

- **Physical neglect** was leading to deterioration of health and hygiene
- **False information and deviousness** were breaking down the communication between the staff and management
- **Crisis management** was dominating the provision of food, clothes and other items of necessity
- **Distrust and discouragement** were exerting their influencing, strongly affecting the behaviour of the boys

Finances were a grave concern for the caregivers, and they spent many hours planning and working out a budget. During the months prior to August 2003, there had not been control over expenditure. All necessities were acquired through appeals to the public or businesses for donations, or by crisis management, and the boys often only had bread for a meal. The graveness of the situation was brought to Thuso's attention in July 2003 when Flipper paid him a visit at his office in Kayamandi, informing him that there was no food at the house, and some of the boys had left the house and had gone to Cloetesville.

3.3.3 Creating a different context that could diminish the influence of the problems

Concern regarding the problems that were gaining power in the house prompted Joe to engage Sophia in doing the necessary work that would diminish the influence of the problems. He shared his intentions and purposes with her, hoping that she would be able to incorporate these in the management of the house. The immediate concerns that had to be addressed in standing against the problems were the following:

- The outstanding accounts had to be settled
- The co-operation with Prochorus needed to be improved
- Food needed to be managed in a more organised manner, not according to crisis-management
- Basic rules for the house had to be negotiated with the housemother and boys.

Thuso, Joe, Sophia and the boys held regular meetings to discuss the above-mentioned problems. A budget was compiled, personnel were involved in assisting in the management of the house, and basic rules were set up. Gradually a situation was being created that would diminish the influence of the problems. According to Joe, the theft of each other's clothing decreased, health and hygiene improved and the boys gradually reclaimed their lives from the devastating grip of drug and alcohol abuse.

3.3.4 Sophia speaks her voice of concern about the boys

3.3.4.1 The work of inferiority

One of the main problems that Sophia encountered when she started working in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* was identified as **inferiority**. She described the crippling effect that she perceived that inferiority was having on the functioning of the boys. According to her, it was persuading them of their inability to act according to their newly stated intentions and purposes, and they became very defensive when admonished. This coincides with research findings (UNESCO, 1995:40) that indicate that children living on the street have a negative vision of society and a low image of self, making it difficult for them to accept authority other than that of peer groups.

Inferiority was being fed by circumstances such as living on the street, little or no educational background, being left in the lurch by previous caregivers, and not having decent clothing. Findings (Laguisma-Sison, online 2003) have shown that children living on the street long to be nurtured by a significant adult and are often insecure about their abilities and in what the future holds for them. Regarding the boys at the house, inferiority was invading their values and beliefs about themselves, convincing them that they should engage in behaviours such as stealing, staying away from school and abusing drugs and alcohol. Sophia described an incident where the children had difficulty in coping with the outcomes of certain of their behaviours, and

how they would just "walk away" from their problems instead of acquiring new ways of dealing with them.

3.3.4.2 *The work of uncertainty about the future*

Sophia explained that the children's vision of life had been clouded by a concern for the immediate:

Sophia: *Look, a child living on the street does not have a vision of tomorrow. What is important to him, is the 'now' – where will he find food, that is why he steals. His immediate needs are important. You cannot talk to him about tomorrow ...*

Now, however, they had developed the understanding that they did have a future, but that understanding was invaded by **fear and uncertainty**. Sophia described an incident that demonstrates the influence of uncertainty, and how it can dictate ways of acting and speaking. Her understanding was that if confrontation occurs in the relationship, then it invites in anger and defensiveness, which prompts attack and retaliation. Mounier and Andujo (2003:1188) take a similar view. They maintain that because of maltreatment and victimisation, children living on the street acquire the habit of defensiveness in their daily functioning, which makes it very difficult for anyone to engage with or assist them. Trivino (online, 2003) maintains that if children living on the street are sexually abused, they develop either an evasive or passive way of dealing with conflicts, and generally feel disempowered when faced with problems.

One of the new, younger boys had been smoking dagga, and when Sophia confronted him, he told her that some of the older boys were also smoking dagga, although this was not allowed at the house. The older boys knew that they could be removed from the house if they engaged in this kind of behaviour, and the fear and uncertainty prompted them to confront Sophia. She described it as follows:

Sophia: *Yes, we had an incident on Tuesday, but it is a result of the uncertainty that they feel. On Tuesday, two new boys arrived here, and I explained the rules and regulations to them. They are not here officially yet, but on probation. I told them they were not to go back to the streets under any circumstances, and so forth, but I saw that one was still going out into the street. He told*

me he goes to Khayamandi. When he comes back, his eyes are yellow - these yellow eyes, it comes from smoking 'dagga'. Then I told him that it is totally unacceptable. I know it is difficult for him to stop smoking 'dagga' immediately, but there are ways that we can help him here. Then he told me about the bigger boys that also smoke. I saw this past holiday ... about another one that was quite mixed up. I don't know, the holiday was a bit long, and one has to keep them occupied the whole time. There were about three of the boys that gave trouble. I get very angry, because I cannot bear to see a person destroy his life, because that is what drugs and alcohol do: they destroy your life.

When I confronted the older boys, one of them said: 'How can auntie do this? We trusted you!' (They were accusing me of asking the younger boys to spy on them and to come and tell me if they smoked dagga.) It is this feeling, the uncertainty, the fear ... It was bad, they shouted at me, these things I said ... I tried to remain calm, but I saw that the calmer I tried to be, the more they screamed at me. Then I told them how I felt and that what they had done ... It is my right to say, I may do certain things. I may tell the new and younger boys what they are allowed to do, and what they are not allowed to do. I do not see a problem with that, I may do it. They then said that their problem was that they could not trust people.

Fear and uncertainty **concerning the future** were also fed by the absence of a supportive family and lack of educational opportunities. The caregivers shared this concern with the boys, and were aware of the difficulties involved in securing a safe position for them in the community. Sophia so aptly described it when she said:

Sophia: *They are realising that there is a future and what about the future and such things? Where are they going when they leave here? The uncertainty...they want to get away from that.*

3.3.4.3 Hesitation to speak about emotional, spiritual and relational concerns

Sophia expressed her concern that the boys would hesitate to speak about emotional concerns they might have, relationships with girls, their past experiences or spiritual matters. She regarded these as an essential part of their life stories, and realised that

their lives could be further enriched by attending to these issues. She herself felt ill-equipped to address them, and was hopeful that a mutually beneficial programme could be developed and implemented in co-operation with the boys and caregivers that could create opportunities for discussion.

3.3.5 Sophia speaks her voice of concern about herself

The incongruity that had previously been dominating the management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* resulted in **staff shortage**, because most of the people, who had been helping there, had left. When Sophia was appointed, she was on her own and had to work for long hours, often until ten or eleven o'clock at night. She had to do the cleaning, washing, shopping, cooking and physical and emotional care of the boys. Sometimes feelings of **frustration** would overwhelm her:

Sophia: *When I have been working until 10 o'clock for three nights in a row, and they just want more, and they are just messing up: 'Auntie, where are our cigarettes? Auntie where is this ...? Auntie where is that ...?' And I ask them to be up and dressed for church and I arrive here to find them all 'soos pap snoeke' (like 'corpses') lying in front of the television ...I become quite frustrated and agitated.*

She was often overcome by **tiredness**, and **could not find the time** to do the necessary administrative work, or keep a journal. Lack of funds prevented Joe and Thuso from immediately appointing more personnel, but in October 2003 a second person was appointed to do the cooking and cleaning, which created more time for Sophia to be involved in other matters.

Uncertainty was invading Sophia's life during the first few months at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, and this, together with the lack of time, was interfering with the **management of her own life and home**. Her son was struggling to regain control of his life from drug-abuse, and she was contemplating sending him to a place of rehabilitation. The alcohol-abuse of her male companion was having a disturbing influence on their relationship, and she was longing for someone to speak to, to be able to voice her concerns, and to share her intense involvement in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. Uncertainty was convincing her that nobody appreciated the work that she was doing, and that her companion and her family might see her as a woman who rarely smiled, but 'nagged'

all the time. She was developing ideas that everybody around her was drawing energy from her, and that they were unaware that tiredness had drained most of her energy and was causing her "knieë om te knak" (knees to bend). Uncertainty was also influencing her relationship with the boys of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, as it was making her question the openness and frankness that she was employing in the quest for co-operation and trust.

Anger was constraining Sophia from coping with incidents at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. Anger would invite in self-blame, which eroded efficiency and self-confidence. She explained the anger that she would experience when she realised that the boys had been smoking "dagga", and that she did not know how to handle the situation because anger would cloud her vision. The same would happen if the verbal responses of the children "cornered her" and she felt trapped.

3.4 THE PREFERRED STORY OF THE CAREGIVERS

3.4.1 Undermining the work of inferiority

Brian Gannon (2002:5) describes self-esteem as "the good-enough awareness that I am here, worth enough to be noticed, listened to, heard, responded to, respected ... and from here on allowed to participate, interact, and take my own chances". The focus is not on a "positive inner sense of self", but a sense of self that is in a preferred relation to other selves, and that can rely on other selves to do caring and supportive work. If these relationships are interrupted at a young age by circumstances that rob a person of his or her childhood, he or she can become stuck at an emotional level younger than their chronological age (Gannon, 2002:5). Sophia's awareness and understanding of this prompted her to create a homely atmosphere where the influence of inferiority would be undermined. She spoke about the vision that she had for the boys:

Sophia: *It has been impressed upon my heart to ... It is a ministry for me, to help these children become whole again, to give them a vision. They have very low self-esteem. What I tell them the whole time, is that they do not have to stand back for anybody. They are no worse than the others out there, or the ordinary teenage boys. They are like ordinary teenagers that just did not*

have a place to stay, and now they have an opportunity to experience a homely atmosphere.

3.4.1.1 *Creating a homely atmosphere*

Sophia set about creating a homely atmosphere with the intention of undermining the work of inferiority. She was hoping to cultivate an improved sense of worth and self-assurance with the boys that could assist them in taking a stand against feelings of inferiority. Other people that visited the house commented on the 'wonders' that she had achieved in the creation of a homely atmosphere. For Sophia, a homely atmosphere meant more than physical appearances. It meant creating a structured context where openness, honesty and trust could be harboured through a process of consultation and co-operation. She knew that by listening to children and valuing what they say and do, she was creating an opportunity for the development of self-esteem and confidence (Solomons, 2003:33). She described it as follows:

Sophia: *I feel it has already improved a lot in the past two months. I won't notice it myself, but people that come in here tell me that I have achieved wonders. I mean, I know what it was like in the past ...*

Meryl: *How did you manage to do that?*

Sophia: *The first thing is: they were not allowed to physically have money with them. We buy everything for them, even their cigarettes. Discipline – I think that every child is looking for a bit of orderliness and discipline. Honesty – I am absolutely honest with them, and I expect the same from them. And trust – this they can now see, and they are also starting with it.*

Meryl: *What do you mean when you say "they can now see it"?*

Sophia: *My shopping – I take them with me wherever I go. And the budget – we sit around the table and all plan together. I tell them exactly how much money we have to spend, and how we are going to spend it. They give their input as well. They realised that there was not enough money for videos and pocket money, so they decided to cut back on the videos, so that they can save their pocket money. They have learned to save, so that they can buy a*

tracksuit, shoes or spray. They were surprised to see that I keep every receipt, and I told them that I have to report to Joe and Prochorus, and I have to provide every cent that we spend. Yes, they see the responsibility. Every donation is written up, and clothes that are received are displayed on the bed for each one to choose what they want. Nothing is put away or hidden – it is open and honest.

I noticed the homely atmosphere in the physical appearance of the house. The furniture had been arranged differently, it was lighter in the house, the kitchen was clean and tidy and a delicious aroma of cooking filled the air. The garden had been weeded, and the flowers created a welcoming atmosphere. Sophia's intention was to manage the house like a family home, where caring, structure, consultation and mutual decision-making would loosen the grip of inferiority.

3.4.1.2 *Creating a sense of belonging*

Developing a personal sense of identity involves experiences of feeling wanted and loved within a secure environment, and of being perceived by others as a worthwhile person (Aldgate, Stein & Carey, 1989:69). Brendtro *et al.* (1990:58) refer to the synergistic power of human relationships and maintain that the quality of the latter may be more influential than specific techniques or programmes of intervention. In traditional Native American societies, kinship was not regarded purely in terms of biological relationship, but rather as a way of those sharing a community of residence. In this sense, kinship was determined by behaviour, not by blood: "[Y]ou belonged if you acted like you belonged" (Brendtro *et al.*, 1990:37).

Sophia engaged in caring behaviour and involved the boys in the decision-making and other activities in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. She realised that the greatest concern for the boys was to find someone that they could trust and with whom they could enter a trusting relationship. This was demonstrated by what resulted from the incident of confrontation that was described in 3.3.4.2:

Meryl: *Did anything else present itself as a result of this confrontation?*

Sophia: *Something good came from it. One boy wrote me a beautiful letter that made me cry so much yesterday. He acknowledged that he had been wrong,*

because I had told them: 'If you have a problem, yes, I will make mistakes, I am not perfect'. This one thing (the letter) made me feel that there was a little bit of trust again.

In this way Sophia was creating a space where the boys could experience a sense of belonging. Her concern about the abandonment and disappointment that had previously so often visited the boys encouraged her when the boys tested her commitment. Statements such as: "Auntie, you are not going to make it" and "Nee wat, daar 'kalf' sy (No what, she is giving up)" reminded her of how necessary it was for them to know that abandonment would be kept at bay. When I asked her why she never gave in to the temptation to leave the house at times when weariness overcame her, her response indicated her sense of commitment: "Who is 'gonna' (going to) care for them?"

3.4.1.3 Education and providing skills training

A study done by Lindsey and Williams (2002:19) indicates that children who are living on the street have a very positive view of the importance of education in their lives in spite of their former school-related behaviours and choices. The strategies that the caregivers of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* employed regarding education were intended to curb the influence of inferiority. The aim was not for them to necessarily complete Grade 12, but rather to obtain useful skills that could assist them in obtaining work at a later stage.

Sophia consulted with the boys regarding their own interests and abilities that could be further developed to enhance a feeling of competence. Street Kids International (online, 2003) maintain that the best way to be of assistance to youth living on the street is to approach them as independent actors with their own aspirations and goals, and enable them to plan and frame their solution to how they might best address their own challenges. Once the boys identified an area of interest, Sophia would employ the services of the plumber, mechanic or any person who was in a position to offer training, and who was willing to spend some time explaining to and teaching the boys. She encouraged the boys to become involved in these activities by taking them on a visit to one of the boys who was working as a security guard:

Sophia: *We visited the boy last night, with three of the children here. And showed these guys ... 'See, this is where you can be, this is as quick as you can do it'.*

Meryl: *What was his reaction when you visited him?*

Sophia: *He did not allow us inside the building. He was so cute. They wanted to go in, but he was very humble ... he just said 'no, hm-mn'.*

3.4.1.4 Encouraging school attendance

Reluctance to attend school can easily be misunderstood. Sophia explained that one of the boys, Skibo, had been saying that he did not want to attend school. She suspected that his reluctance was because of non-attendance in the past. Skibo was 17 years old and had not attended school at all, which meant that he had not acquired the basic skills of reading or writing. The frustration that could result from classroom experiences was prompting him to choose school refusal as the best way of coping. Sophia discussed other options with him, and together they decided that attending a 'school of skills' could be an alternative way of obtaining educational qualifications. Sophia then consulted with the school and started the process of applying to attend a school of skills.

Skipper had developed a concern about the fact that although he was 17 years old, he was only in grade 7. He felt that he was too old to be in that class. Sophia said that he was doing well at school and encouraged him to continue his schooling by mentioning that she and I were both much older, and we were still studying. It was important to her that Skipper should know that the problem he was having at school had been identified and was being attended to.

3.4.1.5 Physical care, food and clothing

Providing a homely atmosphere as an antidote to inferiority included the physical care of the boys. The financial situation had been stabilised, and a budget had been worked out according to which food, clothing, sporting equipment and other requirements were being bought and attended to. The boys were part of this planning, and were developing a sense of involvement and empowerment, which decreased the hold of

inferiority. A housekeeper had also been appointed to do the cooking and cleaning, and regular meals were served with everybody seated around a table in the kitchen.

3.4.2 Mapping a road for the future

Joe was aware of the fact that discouragement had created distance between the boys and the caregivers. He hoped that providing stability, care and love might reduce the distance and allow the boys to be close to the caregivers again. His concern was not to be authoritative, but to provide the boys with a 'road-map' that could guide them in their attempt at re-negotiating their relationship with the problems. Solomons (2003:34) encourages adults to allow children to become involved in problem solving activities and negotiation, stating that in this way they develop values such as respect for others and responsibility, democratic principles, and skills such as critical thinking. Joe was hoping to create an environment where co-operation instead of confrontation would thrive, and where knowledge could be shared about the kind of behaviour that would be acceptable in the house. The proposals for a code of behaviour included the following:

- The caregivers were taking a stand against the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and would not permit the use of it in the house.
- Non-distribution of pocket-money in the form of cash would be used to support the boys in their stand against drugs and alcohol. All items of necessity would be bought for them and debited against their savings account.
- The boys considered smoking cigarettes as an ally in their stand against drugs and alcohol, so cigarettes would be made available (instead of giving them money to buy their own cigarettes). They could, however, decide not take the cigarettes, but have their worth in money credited to their savings account. This would be added to their other savings, thereby building up enough to buy clothes or something useful when they wanted to.
- Time would be allocated for activities of their own interest, such as playing soccer on an open field close to the house, or just spending free time out of the house. They would, however, have to spend time doing homework and other related activities for a few hours after lunch.

Negotiating the above was an ongoing process, and weekly sessions were held where matters of concern could be discussed and solutions worked out together. Thuso, Joe, Sophia and the boys were all present at these discussions, and other persons were invited to join in the conversations if they were involved in projects or other activities.

Part of mapping a future with the boys would involve the implementation of programmes of development, such as a mentor programme where an individual person commits to lifelong involvement with a specific boy. This involvement would require the person to be in contact with the specific boy on a regular basis, and to support him during his life journey. Both Joe and Sophia were working toward the implementation of such a programme, and were involved in negotiations with relevant persons.

The caregivers were committed to a 'moving on' of the boys, where they could successfully negotiate a re-entry into the community as fully participating citizens. This would require that they be equipped the necessary skills to obtain work and earn some money to take care of themselves. Flipper, for example, would be completing his training at the school of skills at the end of 2003, and finding work for him was one of the concerns of the caregivers. Sophia described her hopes for the future and for *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* as follows:

Sophia: *My hope for the future? It is that every single one of the boys just gets a job. That in the end each one, when he is 20-22, will have a job to be proud of. That he will have a place he can call his own, have a wife and children, and have a home.*

And my hope for the house? That we can have about ten boys finishing here and moving on. Settled. And then ten more in – there will always be boys that are coming in.

Re-establishing contact with family members and friends in the community was an important part of the planning, and the boys were encouraged to pay them visits and spend some time with them, especially during weekends and holidays. Parents were welcomed at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* when they were able to visit the boys.

3.4.3 Developing self-care

Sophia had spoken about concerns regarding herself, and during the conversation we reflected on ways that she could develop self-care. Some of the ways included finding extra people to share the workload, having some time to herself when someone else would carry the responsibilities, and making use of supporting friends.

3.4.4 Standing with the caregivers in doing hope

3.4.4.1 Community involvement

Joe and Thuso envisioned a situation where the community would become involved "by taking responsibility for what was happening in the community". The way in which they thought this could happen was to have presentations at various churches and other organisations to inform people about the situation of children living on the street and about *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* in particular. They would invite commitment from community members by asking for more permanent donations, such as taking on the responsibility of paying the electricity bill, or sponsoring the salary of one of the caregivers. Their concern was not only for the children of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, but for the children who were still living on the street. By creating opportunities for community members to become involved, the notion of actively doing hope would be extended to include the broader community.

3.4.4.2 Spirituality as support in doing hope

Joe spoke about the spiritual beliefs that inform the approach that was being used in the management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. Preaching was not regarded as an ally to spirituality, and neither was "searching for the right people to manage the house". He believed that God would send the right people to work at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, people who uphold the similar spiritual beliefs and who were prepared to work for the benefit of the child. Being a role-model and being available to accompany a child on his life-journey were of great importance to him. This would require that the caregiver should be in contact with the child and spend time with him.

The support that her belief in God gave Sophia in her everyday functioning is clear from the following:

Sophia: *Gosh. I should actually keep a journal. My experiences here ... (pause). As I told you Meryl, I felt that I had come home. I feel so at home here, I feel I don't mind going to my home at half-past seven, half-past eight, half-past nine – this weekend I went home at half-past nine. I can see where the children ... they more or less came out of the dark. I was sitting here the other day, and the house appeared to be so light. I was sitting in the kitchen, and looked across the living room, and I told C: "Look at how light the house is, where previously it had been so dark!" And the children's faces! If you just look into Skipper's face, you can see how excited he is. And Big Boy ... He has been asking since he came here – there is this one song of Eminem, called "Mama" which he sings all the time, and then he tells me how much he misses his mother. It is two years since he last saw her. He used to live under a bed with some other people, they say. At one stage he was living in the roof of his brother-in-law's house. He did not know where his mother's house was. He only knew his mother lived in Eersterivier, that was all. Then, a while ago, one of the other children's grandmothers phoned and invited him to a party in Eersterivier. I told the boy that it was holiday and that he should take one of the other boys with him. I said: "Big Boy, you are going to Eersterivier". He jumped at the opportunity, and on Monday the grandmother phoned and told me that Big Boy is with his mother. I cannot tell you what it meant to me. I do not know how it could have happened. I mean, she said the party had not been far from his mother's house, and he had started talking to some of the children at the party who happened to know his mother ... and Big Boy stayed with his mother for the whole holiday. I get cold shivers when I talk about it.*

On Friday two other boys who had been visiting in Belhar phoned me to come and fetch them. I told them we needed to find Big Boy as well. I only had the name, Heather Park, and a number 27, which the grandmother had given me. I do not know that area at all, there are so many places and names, but I just went. And I said: "God, now you must direct me". They said it was close to Shoprite. I went there, and the people directed me to Heather Park. Again I said: "God, now you must show me the way again". I prayed the whole time that I was driving. You see, I do my whole life in

prayer like that. Meryl, I went into Heather Park and turned right at the first street. When I reached the third house, I saw Big Boy standing there – in this great Eerste River! That was my experience. And it was fate that I had found him standing there, because it was not his mother's house. When he showed me where his mother lived, I realised that I would never have found it. And the joy on his mother's face ... that cannot be described! She had a wrinkled face, you could see, there was nothing clean on her face any more. Big Boy was so proud of his mother!

He had spent a week with them. His stepfather had a job, and the farmer had arranged for them to live in the house. It was a well-built house, and very tidy. They did not have any furniture, but everything was very tidy, with pieces of material thrown over boxes. The mother said that she would bring Big Boy back to Huis Rus-en-Vrede on Sunday, but Big Boy said that it would cost too much, and that he would go back with me that day. He hugged that mother so tightly, and she hugged him. I just stood there and cried. It was just too much.

CHAPTER 4

THE VOICES OF THE CHILDREN

*Different selves come forth in different contexts,
and no one self is truer than any other.*

(Freedman & Combs, 1996:35)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The unpredictability of participatory action research became apparent to me as the conversations progressed over time. I had hoped that the caregivers and boys could all come together in an interactive conversation, but as the research journey developed, I realised that it was not going to happen. The availability of Joe and Thuso made it difficult for me to arrange meetings with them, and when they were at the house for meetings with the boys and Sophia, I was not included in the discussions. I respected this arrangement, as we were co-researchers and I was not in a position to dictate the procedures. The conversations with the boys, Big Boy, Flipper, Skipper, Skibo, Cane and Bones, were conducted over a period of two months, with one follow-up conversation in February 2004 in response to a letter I had written in which I had summarised our conversations. A further development is reported in the Epilogue, which describes our search for Flipper's mother in February 2004.

4.2 ENTERING THE RELATIONSHIP

Negotiating and developing relationships are important aspects of participatory action research (section 1.7.4.3). In her account of working with children living on the street, Heather Lewis (1998:41) names "low trust levels" and "over-developed *sense of independence*" as the two personality traits that create barriers in an attempt to develop relationships with children who are, or have been, living on the street. When I arrived, the boys in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* would greet me in a friendly manner, but distrust would rob them of confidence to engage in conversation, and they would disappear soon after I entered the house. This continued for many weeks, but after

Sophia had explained the project to them, they agreed to become co-researchers and we arranged a formal meeting. Even after we started engaging in conversations, they would wander in and out of the room. Sometimes only the one person involved in the conversation with me remained. Sometimes I would arrange appointments, only to arrive at the house to find them off somewhere, playing on the field, or in town. I had to adapt my way of doing things, by being flexible and by adjusting the pace at which I was working. Gradually a situation developed where trust started replacing distrust, and they were able to relate their experiences, hopes and intentions.

4.3 MAPPING THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROBLEMS FOR THE BOYS

Whereas the caregivers focussed on the problems that were exerting an influence on the functioning of the boys in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* in August 2003, the boys themselves were more concerned with speaking about the problems that had been part of their lives before they started living on the street and before they moved into *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. At first they kept to the questions that we had formulated to inform us about the situation in the house as they experienced it, but during subsequent conversations it became apparent that they wanted to relate experiences they had had before coming to *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. They also referred to the changes that had taken place since then. They each related their own story, with the others listening without interruption. Some of the problems that were named were similar in all the stories, but some were unique in the lives of specific boys. They spoke about the following:

- Being lured or driven away from home, or not having a home
- Not having adults in their lives to care for them and be good role-models
- Not having food, clothes or shoes and being cold at night
- Not attending school
- Allowing rude manners, stealing and violence to typify their behaviour
- Being haunted by the drug monster.

4.3.1 Being lured or driven away from home, or not having a home

Cane, now 17, said that he had attended a reformatory school for one year when he was 11 years old. He had lived on the street for two years before deciding to join *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. He related how his mother would fetch him from the street to take him home, but how he would stay for only two to three weeks before the lure of drugs would be too strong, and he would return to the street. He explained that the relationship that he had with his stepfather was not supportive, and when his stepfather was speaking with the voice of alcohol-abuse, he would insult and belittle him.

Cane: *At first I stayed on the streets, and then I went home again, to our house. My mother would fetch me, and then I go back, but only for about two to three weeks, then I slide again.*

Meryl: *And what happened then, when you were at home for the month?*

Cane: *Then I don't get drugs and glue; there is not a chance with my parents there. At home I stay busy. Then I go to the streets again to find drugs. It is the only way to find money for a living. My stepfather... My stepfather that I have was living with my mother. My mother left my own father. My stepfather and I did not have a good relationship. If he told me to do something, I had to do it. But he never told me the right things to do. He speaks the right things when he is sober, but when he is drunk, he treated me like a dog. It hurts to speak about it...*

Big Boy, aged 18, mentioned that his mother did not have a home, and that she slept at other people's homes, not with them. He had been living on the street since he was 14 years old, and moved into *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* during 2003. Before he started living on the street, he often used to sleep outside the door at his stepfather's house because the latter locked the door at half-past five in the evening. If he was not home by then, he would have to sleep outside. After that, he started living on the street.

Flipper, aged 19, was the oldest of the boys and assumed a leading role in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. He grew up on a farm as the youngest of eight children, and various factors contributed to his decision to leave home:

Flipper: *I was okay; I grew up on a farm, see. And as I told you, my father was really terrible with my mother. I am the youngest in our house – we were eight children. And my father was very mixed up – he beat my mother every night if he did not... I felt I had to stand up for myself.*

I had not seen my father in twelve years. I saw him for the first time last year, and he was very happy to see me. My father and mother were not married, but I have my mother's surname. My mother has another boyfriend, and my father took another wife. Now they are no longer together. I have not seen my mother since I was ten.

But as I said, I have been through a heart sore thing. There was a time that a white man abducted my sister when she was thirteen years old. I always told her not to go with him, and such things. The man told her: 'Come with me, I have lots of money'. Then she went with the man. But there was a girl with them, but she escaped. It was a white girl; she had green eyes and long hair. I thought the 'boer' (white man)... As I grew up, I thought that the 'boer' had taken her to another country.

Meryl: *Is she still gone?*

Flipper: *She is still gone today. I was not yet nine years old. But she was the closest to me, because she was the second youngest. I cried a lot when she was gone. I had a younger sister too, but she died. My father and mother were fighting, and I was sitting outside, alone with my little sister. I was eight years old. I have to take the baby, and then they can... I am only me, alone. But I covered her nicely with a blanket. The next morning they were busy again, and the baby slept behind her (my mother's) back. And there the baby died. It was not nice for me. That is why I say...*

Bones was the youngest, 15 years old, and only came to *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* in September 2003. The alcohol abuse of his father, as well as the presence of other women in his father's life, contributed greatly to his electing to live on the street. Begging had become a way of life for Bones:

Bones: *My father does not work every day. He does not want to go to the trouble. If he leaves the wine, then surely he can work? I also give to him when I beg. And I keep some for myself, and give to my sister too. It is not that I beg for her (my sister) – she is not my boss. It is just that she is older than me; she has to tell me what to do. And she told me to go and beg. I just went with them. The other time I parked the cars. But my father is one – he does not work every day.*

Meryl: *Who else lives in your house?*

Bones: *I live here now (Huis Rus-en-Vrede) because my real mother is not at home. It is another woman who lived at our house, and I did not want to go there. I told that to my sister, and she said that I must stay here. So I stayed here. Then I heard – she also drank – then I heard that she was not drinking anymore. I went home, to see... My father is keen on women; I do not like stepmothers in our house. That woman was at our house the other day, and she borrowed stuff and the stuff does not come back to us. My mother is gone... Our house was clean when she was there, but no, it is not so clean anymore.*

Meryl: *Do you know where your mother is?*

Bones: *My mother is in Cape Town, with another man and his family. I do not see her anymore. I have been there; I know which station to get off at to get there.*

4.3.2 Absence of caring adults as role-models

Cane referred to the fact that love had never been present in his life, and there were no adults who could guide and support him:

Cane: *Love has not been for me. There is no one who stood in front of me and who could give it to me. I just did what I wanted to do. It is bad luck for you – you don't say and you don't ask.*

Flipper agreed with him, and referring to the way his father treated his mother, spoke about the way being unloved influenced his own behaviour:

Flipper: *My father was not a role model to me. He was not a good example. When I got older, I also beat my girlfriend – I could not stop myself from doing it.*

Bones badly wanted his father to give up the drinking habit. He realised that his father's character was diminished when he gave in to the temptation of alcohol:

Meryl: *If he drinks wine, then he does not work?*

Bones: *It is not that he cannot work. He can do his work. I keep on telling him not to drink – because it is not worth it. I say that my father could have put in the windowpanes long ago – he could have fixed the door, because it is broken. My father does not want to do it.*

4.3.3 Physical requirements

In our conversations, the boys referred to the fact that they often had to make do without certain things, such as shoes, food, clothing, etc. Comments such as "*I never had the privilege I have now; I never got stuff the way I am now getting it*", served as a reminder of the hardships that the boys had to confront before and while they were living on the street. The latter did not present any solutions either, as the struggle for survival continued:

Big Boy: *It was bad on the streets.*

Meryl: *What was bad there?*

Big Boy: *I had difficulty in getting food into my body, and my clothes were torn.*

Meryl: *What does 'difficulty in getting food into my body' mean?*

Big Boy: *There was no food – I had to look for food for myself.*

Meryl: *How did that feel?*

Big Boy: *I was always lazy, I was... I just wanted to sit and lie down because of tiredness. There was nothing in my tummy...*

Skibo: *And it was cold at night, I slept in a cardboard box.*

These comments resonate with a description of Youth Unlimited (2003:1, online) of what life is like for children that are living on the street:

Life on the street is tough. Every day is a struggle for survival and every day begins with the question of where to get something to eat. Cold and bad weather exacerbate the worries of street youth (kids), especially in the winter. Only few have warm clothing, shoes, and blankets. Most of them have long outgrown their shabby clothing. It is often their appearance alone that gets street youth into trouble with the law. Random arrests and abuse by police and security forces are not uncommon.

4.3.4 School avoidance

The boys did not attend school, and some of them had hardly ever been to school, as Sophia had mentioned about Skibo. Big Boy regarded his not going to school as one of the many things that he had missed out on in life before he came to live at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. Bones explained how anger and frustration had cheated him out of going to school:

Bones: *I was about 13, or 12 years old when I stopped going to school. It was because... We sat at another woman's house that night. And they talked. The children are naughty, and they asked me to look out for them. If I then get angry all day, and beat the children – they don't talk – then I just want to swear at that child. That is why I don't want to go to school there, and talk there.*

He had regrets about not going to school, and wanted to rectify the situation:

Bones: *But I can't work everyday and do little things. And I came back here, and I lived in the street. I told my sister I did not want to beg any longer, I wanted to go to school.*

Flipper, who was in grade 12 in a school of skills in 2003, attended school while he lived on the farm. He went to school at the age of six, and mentioned that he "*was too clever for Sub A, so they put me in Sub B*". He continued:

Flipper: *Then I went to standard 1. I left school in standard 1, because I always wore short pants and I did not like wearing short pants. That was the time*

of the suits; the brown suits, with the grey short pants. And we went to school in bare feet. The frost would lie thick on the grass, and I would have to walk through it. My feet ached, I did not like it. Then I left the going to school.

Meryl: *How far did you have to walk?*

Flipper: *About from here to the valley. (This is quite a distance.)*

Meryl: *So you had very far to walk. And then you stayed at home in the mornings?*

Flipper: *I did not really leave school. My sister was a little bit naughty, man. She broke into the farmer's house, and then they sent her to reformatory school. But because she was close to me, I just decided to go with her.*

The confusing explanations that Flipper gave for not attending school speak of the confusion he might have experienced at the time. I guess that people remember things differently when the reasons for particular events or behaviour are not clear at the time.

4.3.5 "Rude"⁶ manners, stealing and violence dominating the behaviour of the boys

Cane was the first to speak about the stealing habit that was created by hunger, and Skibo agreed, adding that false beliefs lured him into fighting behaviour:

Cane: *You steal every day. You don't want to steal, but to get some food into your stomach; you have to steal so that you can buy something, some food.*

Skibo: *Yes, I also believed I should get money for everything I did. I would argue, and stab with a knife to get my way.*

Big Boy used "vatterigheid" (thievishness) to describe the action that people had come to recognise him by. He spoke about the deviousness that prompted the taking of another's possessions, and how the other significant persons in his life knew about it.

⁶ "Rude" was used by the boys to refer to behaviour to other people that could be hurtful.

Flipper mentioned how his behaviour had changed on the farm as he grew up, and how 'naughtiness' became an unwelcome companion which caused him much grief. He stole the children's bicycles, became 'naughty' with girls, and rode on the tractor without permission. What brought the grief, and with it 'hardness' was that his father would be held accountable for all his actions. The farmer reprimanded his father and subtracted any costs involved from his salary.

Cane also spoke about how rude manners dominated his behaviour. Consequently he would swear at people if they asked him to do something. An incident that Flipper described illustrates just how uncontrollable what he called his 'rudeness' could be, and how it could lead to victimisation, violence and strong racist feelings:

Flipper: *I was very rude, you see. I stabbed a boy with a broken bottle neck. I think it is since those days... I was a little drunk and I asked the guy for a cigarette, but he refused to give me one. But what made his decision with me was when he told me: "V.. of soontoe, hotnot" (F... off that way, kaffir). One of my friends broke a bottle and gave the broken off neck to me as a weapon. And I stabbed the guy. But as I pushed in the bottle neck, I dragged it. His whole arm was opened up. I did not actually know that it was going to be such a big affair. The guy went to fetch his father who drove a small Mini car. They still live here at the top of the hill. I think that one day when I am grown up, I will go and apologise to him. They then chased me with their little car. My friends, who had given me the bottle neck, could not stand still and explain to the man that his son had been the first to call me names and stuff like that. They ran away, and also hid me behind a bush. I ran backwards and forwards, but the car kept following me. I was small and could easily hide in a bush, and I thought he would follow my friends, but he saw me. He (the boy) had a pick handle with him and beat me over the head until my head was full of lumps. I cried, and as he was beating me, his father also jumped in and beat me. They threw me into the car and took me to the police station. At that stage I was still very difficult and spat the man in his face with blood that was in my mouth. He laid a complaint at the police station, but the police said: "Nee, die's 'n straatklong. Vat hom weg en maak hom dood – 'whatever' julle met hom wil*

maak" (No, this is a street child. Take him away and kill him – whatever you want to do with him). They took me away from there, but fortunately they threw me out of the car at the Braak (town square). I then went back to my mates. Since that day I have been very much against white people.

4.3.6 The lurking monster in the lives of the boys

In the process of co-constructing meanings, all the boys agreed that smoking dagga and using drugs could best be described by using the metaphor of a 'monster'. We explored ways in which the monster could trick them into believing that it was a pleasing monster and meant them no harm, how it was camouflaged and tempted them to follow its ways, and how it used their friends to persuade them to let it into their lives:

Big Boy: *When I went to the street, I had to scramble to find money for cigarettes and those kinds of things. I was 14 years old. I landed up among the wrong kind of friends. I walked with them, and they took me to the wrong kind of places, such as the Kayamandi shebeens. They always used to tell me to take a puff of a joint. I said no, but they pushed the pipe in front of my mouth. I had a small puff and I felt my head going dizzy. Then I said: "Give me another puff". When I first started, it felt good to be drunk in my head. Later on it does not feel so good anymore.*

Cane: *At that time, the friends I had... I decided that it was nice to use drugs and things like that. Everything was immediate. You are tired and you are drunk in your head. You do not mind anymore – things can come as they will.*

Flipper: *(In response to the situation at home, and the beating of his girlfriend.) I thought that if I used drugs, it would calm me down, because all my mates spoke about using drugs and how calm it made them feel. You just go and sit down there and you are calm. However, afterwards you find out what kind of behaviour you had had. Yes, that monster was a camouflage for me. I came to realise that it was making a slave of me, because it was treating me like a slave.*

Once the 'monster' had enslaved them, it would 'take control of their bodies and minds' and expect them steal, to hurt people, to rape, to become uncouth toward girls, to run away from school, and to join gangs:

Skibo: *Those drugs make you feel greedy, so that you just want to go and steal.*

Flipper: *You will just buy more drugs, and you want more money to buy more. The people don't provide if you don't have the money. It also makes you run away from school. You are used to smoking from around 11 o'clock, and if you are at school, those feelings come up inside of you, and you just want to smoke a joint. Then you just run away from school.*

Meryl: *What else does it make you do?*

Flipper: *When it has made a slave of you, you hurt white people – sorry to say – you hurt white people at night. It seemed to me almost like: "Yes man, I grew up on a farm and the farmer did not treat my father properly".*

Skibo: *It makes you talk a lot and be happy...*

Cane: *It also makes you eat a lot. You just say what you want to; you do not care about anything. The monster just speaks from the inside: "Hey, that's an 'auh' girl!", and you talk about her private parts, and personal things just get told in public without caring. All the people do not care.*

Flipper: *In your thoughts, you just want to hurt people. "Jy wil net rok op sien" (You just want to see the dress up). When you have that monster in your body ... Maybe I should first say that we are all boys, and we know when a girl is a slut. We would then talk among ourselves and say: "Hey, look here, that child is not right, look at the way that she is dressed!" However, once you have that monster in your body, you do not care whether she is a slut or what she looks like. That monster just makes you do the wrong kind of things. It is almost like the devil that just wants to break things down. If we had been smoking now, I believe that one of us would want to rape you – that is what the monster does. It almost took me into gangs – it does everything just to break you down.*

4.4 CREATING PREFERRED REALITIES

4.4.1 Taking the first steps on the road to a preferred way of living

In the telling of the stories, it became evident that the boys had started acting in ways that indicated how a sense of responsibility and desire for self-preservation were becoming guiding factors in their lives. The first step that they had to take on their road to a preferable way of living was to approach the shelter. In 2002, when most of them had decided to do that, the shelter was offering overnight facilities, food, clothing and activities such as arts and crafts, games and sporting activities. They would use the available opportunities, sleep there at night, or on the porch if they were late and the door was locked. It was not an easy step for them to take, as is clear from the hesitance shown in Big Boy's description of how his experience of going to the shelter:

Big Boy: *My friends told me about the shelter. I did not know where it was. My friends showed me, but I still did not know. And then one day I went – they showed me again that day where the shelter is – and I went there, but my clothes were torn. They gave me food and clothes. I spoke to Joe and Marita. She asked me if I wanted to go to school, and I said: "Yes, I want to go to school".*

Bones came to live in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* only in September 2003. Shyness almost prevented him from entering the house, but friends and Aunt Sophia persuaded him otherwise:

Bones: *The first time I did not want to come with the others. I was still on the street with my sister. I begged there. My friend brought me here (to Huis Rus-en-Vrede), but I was still too shy. At first I just stood at the wall, and then I went away again. The following day they told me about Aunt Sophia, so I greeted her and I went to fetch my clothes and I came to live here. In the beginning I slept on a mattress. They started talking about my going to school, so I decided to stay here.*

4.4.2 Both caregivers and boys are 'on the preferred road'

The changes that had taken place since the previous caregiver had left convinced the boys that both they and the caregivers were doing things in a preferred way. Flipper gave words to their thoughts:

Flipper: *We are now actually on the right road, and she (Aunt Sophia) is on the right road. She will agree with this. Now that the previous caregiver has gone ...*

Skipper used strong language that expressed the anger he must have felt regarding the ways of the previous housemother:

Skipper: *Yes, things are much better now, now that the 'devil' (previous housemother) has left.*

4.4.3 'Privileges' resulting from a preferred way of living

The meaning that the boys attached to their living in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* was clear from the way they expressed appreciation for the "privileges" that they now enjoyed. Close scrutiny of the privileges indicates that they are actually rights that all children are lawfully entitled to. This includes a right to education and a right to a decent place to live, clothing and a healthy diet.

Skipper: *For me being here means that here, in this house, I get a privilege that I never had, for example to go to school, do something with my life – maybe start a business, finish my studies.*

Flipper: *All I can say is what it means for me to be here is that we are now getting everything that we did not have before: going to school, clothes, food, a bed to sleep in, people that care.*

Cane: *For me it is the same – what I missed and that which I am now getting...*

Meryl: *When you say "what I missed", what do you mean by that?*

Cane: *Going to school, love that wasn't for me. There were no grownups that treated me with honour and showed me the road with respect.*

Bones: *The other day I was angry and I left, but I came back again. When I came back, they spoke about the school again. So a friend and I went to school. Since then I have been off the streets.*

Attending school is not always an easy matter. Bones described some of the difficulties that accompanied going to school, and how he used "looking down" and "writing" as allies in coping with the difficulties. It bothered him that blatant rudeness, misbehaviour, and the use of bad language were not being controlled by the other children or teachers. This spoke of changed values and an awareness of preferred behaviour:

Bones: *The first time you go to school the children look at you in a funny way, as if to say: "Who are you?" I just stared at the wall, or looked down. The girls bother you if you want to work. They are on our case. I don't want to be with them. They just throw letters at you. If they talk to me, I just write all the time. I can't write that well yet, some of the words are too big for me.*

Meryl: *Do they only do it with you?*

Bones: *Yes, and there are guys there that are very rude. They speak ugly stuff about the girls. Then those girls don't do anything. The teachers can't do anything to them (him). They (the teacher's) are afraid of him; he swears at the teachers. He shouts at any child, if the child just asks him something. You know, and then it just becomes very quiet in the classroom – in front of the teacher! I don't want to be rude now, but I am just saying...*

Going to school is something that the boys attach great value to. Flipper mentioned that if school avoidance had not robbed him of opportunities in life, he would have been in a better position now. He showed determination in his efforts of completing grade 12 at the school of skills to enable him to earn the necessary qualification.

4.4.4 Adults as role-models who show the way

In a previous section (4.3.2), it became clear that the boys were aware of the absence of role-models in their lives. Living at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* changed that, and there was

acknowledgement for the role of the adults in their lives, which they experienced as being supportive and as honouring their own hopes and dreams:

Cane: *I am just saying that I am glad that such people are in front of me; people who see that I have a good future and then they can help me to work toward that future. I feel better now that there are people who see the future that there is for me. And I say thank you very much to Aunt Sophia, Joe and Mr Thuso.*

At the end of 2002, after the shelter had closed down and the boys were permanently back on the street again, caring adults became involved and led the way in bringing the boys together in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. Joe and Marita approached the boys, whom they had got to know at the shelter, and asked them if they would be interested in living together in a house. The ones that agreed were taken on a camp for two weeks, after which they moved into the house. At first there were very strict rules, such as not leaving the house, and if a boy decided to go back to the street, he would not be allowed back at the house.

Big Boy: *We had to be in the house the whole day. We watched television and were allowed out for one hour every day during the week. During the weekend we could go out from 12 o'clock until 6 o'clock in the evening. It was okay, but we squealed (moaned) a lot about the one hour.*

Flipper: *Later things changed, and we could go out more.*

Meryl: *Was that good or bad?*

Flipper: *That was good, because they wanted us to take responsibility for ourselves.*

4.4.5 The ways that the caregivers use to show concern, caring and support

The boys were aware of the intentions of the caregivers and related these to their own intentions and purposes. They spoke of the ways in which the caregivers showed this caring and support, and their experiences of the concern:

Flipper: *I will be the first to state my opinion. What I think their aim is – Joe and Sophia and all the people who work here – is to help us to reach our*

dreams, in the future. They would like to see us having our own work, our own little car and place. That is all.

Meryl: *Those are some of the things they mentioned, yes.*

Flipper: *They... we must be able to ... yes, help us get to the Lord, how to handle certain problems, how to say "no" to certain things, such as drugs and dagga (marijuana).*

Meryl: *How do they do this? How do you know it?*

Flipper: *Because they always talk to us.*

Big Boy: *Every night when we get here, they talk to us.*

Meryl: *Yes?*

Flipper: *Someone spoke to me once, and he taught me that if somebody speaks to me, he cares, because then I can see I am doing something wrong. If he doesn't talk to me, then he does not care.*

Meryl: *We spoke about your dreams for the future. Do you feel the people here are aware of those dreams?*

Flipper: *As I, Flipper, can say: a lot of attention is being paid to that. The people here are striving hard to just give us the best so that we can grow up. And they give us love.*

Meryl: *How do they do that?*

Skipper: *We get love in many ways. Such as Aunt Sophia cooking food for us.*

Flipper: *Aunt C washes our clothes, puts in bread for us in the mornings, to take to school.*

Bib Boy: *She goes to a lot of trouble for us in the mornings. She gets our things ready for school, makes porridge, all that.*

Skibo: *They talk to us, read to us from the Bible.*

Big Boy: *Transport us to school, and to town.*

Flipper: *And they often encourage us.*

Meryl: *How do they do that?*

Flipper: *They motivate us. Tell us to go to school, by talking to us.*

4.4.6 New ways of doing that enhance the preferred way of living

The boys spoke about some of the 'ways of doing' that strengthened their stand against homelessness, poverty, violence and disempowerment, and which enhanced their preferred way of living.

4.4.6.1 Different ways of solving problems

- **More effective ways of speaking to have physical requirements met**

Physical requirements, such as shoes, sporting equipment, sporting gear (clothes), and materials for hobbies spoke loudly to the boys in the house. They were aware of this, and had recently come to understand that there was a different way of negotiating for these things. Asking, instead of demanding, was a more effective way of speaking to have physical requirements met.

Skibo *What I want to say, is this: let us ask for what we want, instead of scolding about that which we don't have. And then be thankful for what we get, and for all that we have in front of us.*

- **Talking as preferable to confrontation when dealing with problems**

Sophia had spoken about some of the situations in which confrontation had presented itself in her relationship with the boys, and how confrontation had 'invited in anger and defensiveness, which prompted attack and retaliation'. A situation that the boys described made me wonder if talking about problems was not becoming a new way of handling difficult situations, instead of using the technique of attack. Flipper related how previous arrangements had been changed, and how it has affected them. It was evident that the change was creating dissatisfaction and anger, but the talking had eased some of the intensity of the feelings:

Flipper: *The rule was that if someone ran away from the house, and he wanted to come back, he would not be allowed to. He had to talk to Joe and them, and they would then decide, and we will decide, if he could come back. But now the rules have changed.*

Meryl: *How have they changed?*

Flipper: *No, now you go and come back – almost as if it is the same thing.*

Meryl: *Is that good or bad?*

Flipper: *It is bad. Previously it was not like that. This is not a hotel!*

Meryl: *Has it happened? That someone left and was allowed back?*

Flipper: *It has happened. There is a little guy who ran away. He didn't run away, but he is in jail now. He stole something. Now he is coming back, without having been spoken to.*

Meryl: *Did you speak to Joe or Sophia about this?*

Flipper: *Yes, Aunt Sophia spoke to us, and explained that he is coming back.*

- **Taking control of anger and frustration that lead to violent actions**

The boys spoke about how they had learned to take control of anger and not allow it to have a destructive hold on their lives. Flipper learnt something about this from his experience that I wrote about in 4.3.5, where insulting behaviour had greatly angered him:

Flipper: *But then I came to learn that even if a white person calls me 'hotnot' or 'bantoe' (Bantu) again, then I will lay a charge against him. It is not worth fighting about, because then I might just work my way to jail. See, if I do something back to him... no, I will not do that or use words against him. I learnt my lesson there, even if it was in a bad way.*

Other learning resulted from the behaviour that he had observed when his father used to beat his mother. He was adamant he would treat his wife differently:

Flipper: *Yes, when I grow up, I will look after my wife as if she is a piece of gold, and I will rear my children in a good manner. What happened to me must not happen to them.*

Cane referred to conversations that he had had with someone who had visited the house and had taught him ways of managing anger:

Cane: *C asked me so many things, about the heart, the manners, what do you see, what do you feel. You feel nothing for someone else if you do not give love, and you can't ... If someone throws paper in your face, you cannot... You have to really check yourself strongly – the murder that is in you, and the fight you want to have with him. In that way you have to pull yourself up.*

4.4.6.2 Changing bad habits

Big Boy described how he managed to replace deviousness with honesty:

Big Boy: *I was a "klonkie" (little boy) – I was very "vatterig" (thievish). I was devious, I took what did not belong to me. But that has now changed about me.*

Meryl: *What made it possible for you to change?*

Big Boy: *I thought so myself.*

Meryl: *What was it that you thought that made it possible for you to change deviousness?*

Big Boy: *I thought that if I kept on being thievish, I would get hurt.*

Meryl: *How would you get hurt?*

Big Boy: *See, people do not like it that children scratch in their things. If I am visiting someone, and I just take their things, they might get angry.*

4.4.6.3 *Gentle manners edging out rude manners*

The rude manners that had been evident in the past had made way for gentler ways of interacting with other people. Cane related how kinder ways of being with people had replaced rude manners:

Cane: *My manners changed.*

Meryl: *How did they change?*

Cane: *I was not so rude anymore. I did not speak so loudly, and I no longer insulted people as I had in the past. I was not so ugly with them anymore.*

Meryl: *How did you then become?*

Cane: *Very gentle.*

Flipper expressed the wish to replace criticism with kinder ways:

Flipper: *Because now I want to live in a better way. I no longer want to criticise other people anymore, and all those things such as: 'Hey, what are you doing in my way!' Those are the old days those.*

4.4.6.4 *Shrinking the monster: responsibility and support make a strong team*

Cane related how he made the decision to ban the drug monster from his life, and how thinking about his dreams and values helped him to take the responsibility and to make that decision. Some support from Joe, Marita and his friends helped him to stick to his intentions:

Cane: *I myself decided to leave the drugs. I asked myself where I wanted to be in two or three year's time, where would I be. I rather want a house and children, and I want to raise my children. And I told myself that I am growing up, and I am ashamed when I see the people I know, my family, and I run away from them. I am not that kind of a person.*

Meryl: *Did someone support you in that decision?*

Cane: *Marita and Joe, and my friends who were at the shelter.*

Meryl: *How did they help you?*

Cane: *The whole day, I would rather go out, and then a student would come and keep us busy the whole day, with painting and playing games outside. In this way the time passed and afterwards I did not think about it anymore, and I did not feel like smoking. We played games and everything, to keep us busy.*

Support from the caregivers, in the form of reprimanding, seemed to encourage the boys to take the responsibility of deciding against the drug habit:

Flipper: *As we said, we are at school, and we are given many things. If we do wrong, then we are brought in line again. For example, many times we secretly smoked dagga, and they knew that if we were grown up and we were still smoking dagga, we would not be a good example to our children. So they told us: 'Stop the stuff, all this smoking'. They were admonishing us by telling us to stop.*

Meryl: *Did that change things for you?*

Flipper: *It changed things. Everybody stopped smoking "dagga" and buttons.*

Skibo: *All that I want to say is: I am glad that they reprimanded me. If I am free from drugs and dagga I will look forward in future, and one day I will tell my children what difficulty I had in growing up. I grant them a future. That is all I want to say.*

Flipper was hesitant to say that smoking cigarettes strengthened him against the monster and helped him to keep it at bay:

Flipper: *I am sorry to say, but do you know what makes me strong against the monster? Since I regularly started smoking cigarettes – at first I didn't believe in smoking cigarettes... If I feel like smoking 'dagga', I rather smoke a cigarette to get rid of that feeling. And I rather go to school, because if I stay here at home, then I become like one who wants to run around again, and that is when the monster gets you. But it won't get me again, I have decided now.*

Big Boy described how the monster dictated what he should do, and how he grew tired of giving in to its demands:

Big Boy: *Previously, the monster was in my life and I was very different. It is better now. Before, I always used to run up there after school, to Cloetesville or the Valley, to find "dagga". I just wanted to be stoned. I loved being stoned. But about two weeks ago I decided to stop smoking.*

Meryl: *What helped you to make that decision?*

Big Boy: *I thought it was not worth the effort of running up there every day to get hold of the stuff. It is much better now. I used to cough a lot and had phlegm in my lungs. My head always ached when I woke up in the morning.*

Banning the monster from his life enabled Flipper to come to a new understanding regarding the meaning of the word "boer" (farmer).

Flipper: *When I left the stuff ('dagga'), I learnt the difference between a 'boer' (farmer) and a 'blanke' (white person). I used to see all white people as 'boere'. Now I know that a farmer is someone with a farm and who farms with grapes, poultry or other animals.*

4.4.7 Spreading the news⁷: affirmation and strengthening of preferred ways of doing

Problems can be very successful in ways of separating and isolating people from others, and it is important to open up spaces of connection and reconnection (Carey & Russell, 2003:68). Reconnection creates an audience, which can witness the living of the preferred self. White (1988:10) states that "self" is a performed self, and that new meanings and new ideas are strengthened by sharing them with other people. These alternative knowledges, when shared, provide new ways of interpreting experiences and can be circulated by the members of the audience (Freedman & Combs, 1996:237).

⁷ A term used by Freedman and Combs (1996:237).

The boys acknowledged that their new ways of doing had been noticed by their parents and other people around them:

Meryl: *Who noticed how things have changed for you?*

Cane: *My mother, my father and the people around me.*

Meryl: *How did they notice it?*

Cane: *By my manners that have changed.*

Big Boy described how the change from deviousness to honesty has had an effect on his life and how others have noticed this:

Big Boy: *I am on the way of changing my life.*

Meryl: *Who knows that you are changing your life?*

Big Boy: *My mother and stepfather.*

Meryl: *How do they know?*

Big Boy: *I told them that my life has changed.*

Meryl: *Do they agree?*

Big Boy: *Yes, they can see by how I do things that I have changed.*

Reconnecting can be done with people who are no longer part of one's life, and can help persons make meaning for themselves and feel more settled in themselves (Waldegrave, 1999:179-180). Flipper was still grieving the loss of his older sister and hoped that she would one day return. Reconnecting with her could be done by relating his newly gained confidence to what she might have said about it:

Flipper: *Every day when I travel by train, it seems to me that they are now going to find her. I imagine her getting off the train. And that she has a good life with a husband that cares for her.*

Meryl: *So you are still carrying her memory with you? What do you think she would have to say about you now?*

Flipper: *She will say that I have studied well. I am the only one of all eight children who has made Matric.*

Not only was he able to reconnect with her, he expressed the wish to reconnect with his other family as well:

Flipper: *Yes, and then I want to go and see my other brothers and sisters too. Nobody in my family has seen that this 'klong' (boy) has been giving his best. Other people have noticed, but I want my own family to see. I want to tell them that I am in Matric. I know what they will say: "Flipper then never went to school!" There are many things I want to do.*

Meryl: *How will you be able to tell them that you are in Matric?*

Flipper: *If only I could... That is why I have to go and look for them. If once I get to them, then I will be proud to tell them that I have finished school and am going to get a good job. What are they now doing? But they know I am the youngest, they will understand and be proud of me. And they will be proud of me when they hear I can speak English.⁸*

New knowledges are affirmed and strengthened when they are shared with other people. White (2003) maintains that if children are able to teach others about their newly gained skills, then their preferred storyline of identity is thickened. I asked the boys if they had shared their new knowledges with anyone else:

Cane: *I think it is better to speak about it. Tell other about it, so that they do not...*

Meryl: *Who do you think you would like to talk to?*

Cane: *With the people living on the streets – the children, my friends who are still on the street.*

Meryl: *I wonder what you would say to them if you saw them?*

Cane: *"Guys, go home. It is not worth it to lie around here in the streets. I got myself out of it.*

⁸ It was this conversation that prompted us to go in search of his mother, a journey that is described in the Epilogue.

Meryl: *What is it that you would like to teach them?*

Cane: *I will tell them about my circumstances. 'Guys, don't go to the streets, you will do the same. If you steal there might not always be a chance for you to survive. Some time or other they are going to catch you and send you to jail, and then you only learn to be a bad person. They do not teach you to be a better person. Once you come out of jail, you steal again, and in this way you fall into the abyss. You do not learn to improve yourself in there. You learn to become a 26, a 28 (names of gangs). Once you get their stamp, you are a 'big man' and no-one can tell you what to do.'*

Cane's satisfaction with what he had accomplished was clear from the following statement:

Cane: *Today I know I am satisfied with myself, and the people can look up to me and say: "Daai klong was 'n straatklong gewees, kyk waar staan hy nou!" (That little guy was a child living on the street – look at him now!)*

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

Every homeless child needs a good home

(Art on the wall at Kayamandi, Stellenbosch)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

I read the above comment while driving past Kayamandi on the way to Cape Town. It made me think about the research journey that I had engaged in. Influenced by postmodernist thinking, I started deconstructing the meaning of the statement. What and who is a 'homeless child'? What are 'needs'? What is a 'good' home? What is a 'home'? So many meanings could be made from these few words, and I realized once again that the taken for granted 'truths' that we so often assume to be reality as we engage in conversations with other people are 'truths' that have been constructed from our own experiences. I read a quotation in Freedman and Combs (1996:284), who cited Maureen O'Hara (1995), that resonated with the feelings that I experienced while traversing the research journey:

Far from despair, the idea that each of us recreates reality with each encounter fills me with wondrous hope, empowerment and community connection. If there is no absolute truth "out there" to create pristine "expert systems" that can somehow solve our problems mathematically ...[i]f we accept that when we enter into dialogue we *both* change; if it is true that we *co-create* reality, which in turn creates us – then we are called to a new kind of community. If I can only ever be part of the creation I must act humbly. I'd take that over being a goddess ...

5.1.1 On the way to understanding

I had set out on this research journey with the intention of witnessing and reporting on events that had impacted on the lives of all involved at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. I had hoped that by deconstructing meanings and co-constructing new realities, we would

be able to come to an understanding of the meaning of "doing hope" and the role it has played in the establishment and running of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. I am, however, reminded of what Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) wrote about "understanding". They maintain that understanding is always a process "on the way" and never fully achieved. We cannot understand events, only the descriptions and explanations of the events, because there is never a single event to be described, and no explanation can cover all the possible meanings that could be attached to such an event (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:378).

By identifying and externalising problems, using metaphors, and identifying unique outcomes through which preferred ways of doing could be constructed, we were hoping to develop an understanding of the events as described by the boys and the caregivers. In view of social constructionism, I realised that these understandings were unique to *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, almost like a "first generation" story (Freedman & Combs, 1996:23), and not a "general truth". It was in the sharing of the understandings and transportation of meanings that we hoped to enrich the lives of others and possibly influence the thinking of those who come into contact with children living on the street.

5.1.2 Reflecting on the research journey

There are many different ways of viewing events or relationships, and Freedman and Combs (1996:168) refer to the practice of reflecting from different perspectives to bring these views into reality. They maintain that we make meaning of an experience through the experience of reflecting on it, in other words through the experience of experience. Reflecting is not an attempt to reach a single conclusion or engage in structuralist 'truth' discourses. It is rather a way of describing what happened, exploring different meanings regarding the experience and uncovering underlying principles, as well as asking questions about how it happened and reconstructing possible new options of experience. Discerning reflection opens up new visions and alternative futures; it is an emancipatory action (Gergen, 1999:63).

To assist me in the process of reflection and articulation, I asked myself the following questions:

- What is our understanding of the impact that homelessness and poverty could have had on the lives of the boys?
- How do I story the process of participatory action research and how has it informed my thinking about research journeys?
- What have we (the co-researchers and I) experienced by participating in this research journey?
- How would I reflect on the research curiosities?
- What barriers were experienced in this research journey, and what aspects can be further explored in future?
- How does this life experience (the research journey) connect with my personal life story?
- What transformative value has resulted from this research journey?

5.2 UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE BOYS

In Chapter 2, I referred to the socio-economic context of homelessness and how poverty can be regarded as one of the contributing factors to children living on the street. Guthrie (2003:16) refers to a dictionary description of poverty as the "inability of individuals, households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living", but maintains that it is more than merely income insufficiency. According to her, poverty is complex and multi-faceted and includes lack of opportunities, lack of access to assets and credit, as well as social exclusion. Children taking part in research projects have described poverty in terms of lack of food, clothing, shoes, water and money, and the absence of education, love and health (Guthrie, 2003:16).

It was clear from the conversations with the boys of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* that poverty had them in a grip that was dictating certain behaviours. It was even dictating their lived identities, in that it was informing them of a sense of inferiority as a result of lack of education, homelessness, poor family relations and dishevelled appearance.

Chetty (1997:183) believes that children decide to live on the street not because they are trying to escape adverse conditions at home, but because expectations and an evaluation of costs and rewards made by them, together with a sense of having to rely on themselves for survival, lure them to the street. The boys related how they had been tricked into believing that they could easily make money if they lived on the street, but that the opposite had been true. While living on the street, they were bothered by hunger, cold, torn clothing and lack of school attendance. They had acquired habits of stealing and violent actions to fend for themselves, and they succumbed to the lure of drugs to escape the effects of poverty and homelessness. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (cited in Le Roux & Smith, 1998), the separation of children from their natural families brings the risk of losing their limited access to basic facilities such as health, education and recreation, and this was evident in the lives of the boys.

Research (UNESCO, 1995:40-41) has indicated that although the stories differ, commonalities exist among children living on the street: they have learned to live from day to day, suffer from isolation, rejection by their families and society, and create gangs where they can experience a sense of security. Homelessness and poverty seemed to have impacted on the lives of the boys of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* in a similar way. They had become isolated from their families, were rejected by society and had suffered victimisation by people in positions of authority. Immediacy had become paramount in their daily existence, and a daily concern for food and shelter occupied most of their time and energy. The fact that the support of the caregivers, both physical and emotional, was enabling them to try out different ways of acting was a good indication of the extent of the deprivation that had dominated their lives.

5.3 REFLECTIONS ON PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

In reflecting on participatory action research, I was guided by the common themes that emerged when McTaggart (1997:6-7) questioned some researchers on the principles that were being used in their respective participatory action research projects. These themes included participation, reflection as collective critique and communitarian politics.

5.3.1 Authentic participation

My intentions were clear from the outset of the research journey: I was interested in involving the boys and caregivers in a research journey that was to be done by them for themselves. When doing participatory research, there is always the risk of co-optation and exploitation of people in order to realise one's own purposes; this is the case where there is "mere involvement" of the co-researchers (McTaggart, 1997:6). Was I 'merely involving' the co-researchers, or were we involved in authentic participation? My awareness of this risk prompted me to create opportunities for consultation with the co-researchers on a regular basis. Although we had agreed upon the research curiosities, as well as the questions that were to be used to guide our conversations, I would nevertheless regularly question them on their preferred direction of the conversations, as well as on the knowledges that were being co-constructed. In this way I was hoping to involve them in authentic participation, which means a sharing in the way that the research journey is conceptualised, practised, and brought to bear on the life-world (McTaggart, 1997:28).

Authentic participation also means ownership and responsible agency (McTaggart, 1997:28). Bronwyn Davies (1991:51) maintains that agency exists if people are in a position where they experience "presence" (as opposed to 'absence') in discourse. Furthermore, they should have the right to speak and be heard, to author their own multiple meanings and intentions, and go beyond the given meanings in any one discourse. This construction of knowledge can lead to improvement of practice.

The question to ask myself was whether the participants were experiencing agency, or whether I was dominating the conversations by asking certain types of questions. During the conversations, I maintained a respectful curiosity in terms of the meaning making of the co-researchers and how they had attempted to improve their practice of management, as well as intended actions in future. By asking questions that would reveal the intentions of the co-researchers that prompted their actions, as well as the values that support these actions, I was hoping to assist the co-researchers in obtaining agency.

Authentic participation and responsible agency can contribute to the sharing of power, which remains a challenge for researchers fulfilling an academic role. Challenging

this academic role in pursuit of equal participation required that "considerable energy must be directed at ensuring reciprocity and symmetry of relations in the participatory action group" (McTaggart, 1997:33). I attempted to meet this challenge in different ways. In approaching the participants, I made it clear that participation was voluntary and there was no pressure to join the group. Some of the boys only joined in the conversations at a later stage, while some preferred not to be involved at all. There were ten boys living at the house, and six of them agreed to participate. One boy initially agreed, but then changed his mind and only returned to the group during the follow-up conversation. Joe and Thuso were unable to take part in a group discussion, and we engaged in separate conversations at their convenience. Thuso did not want to be audiotaped, and we agreed that I would only take notes of the conversation. There were certain aspects of the conversation that he wished not to have reported, and this too I honoured.

I realised that I was the one directing the questions in order to arrive at further understandings of discourses in a narrative way, but I did consult with the participants as to the appropriateness of these questions. I was creating new understandings at the same time, and would reflect on these during the conversations.

5.3.2 Collective reflection

Narrative conversations invite in reflective practices, as they are aimed at co-authoring preferred realities. Collective reflection on the practical management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, as well as on the relationship between the caregivers and boys, was an ongoing process during the research journey. This examination of the experiences of the practical actions could inform future actions, and by sharing these interpretations, agreement could be reached about preferred changes (McTaggart, 1997:6). By examining the practice of shared responsibility that was evident in the running of the house, agreement could be reached on the importance of future involvement of the boys in planning or problem solving. The shared concern for the future of the boys became evident during the conversations, and both Sophia's and the boys' reactions to this reaffirmed the positive intent and recommitment to future support through actions such as mentor programmes. Change in the lives of the boys was encouraged by the involvement of the caring adults, and the acknowledgement of this elicited further support from the caregivers.

5.3.3 Communitarian politics

McTaggart (1997:6) refers to the specific communitarian and equalitarian aspect of PAR in that it involves "people working together toward rationality, justice, coherence and satisfactoriness" in a certain area of their lives. It is political because it is about people changing themselves and informing this change as it happens. Not only were the co-researchers involved in a process of change, but as an active participant, changes were evident in my life as well. I was developing a deeper understanding of the problems that cause havoc in the lives of children living on the street, as well as the extent of the commitment that was required from the caregivers. I was inspired by the dreams of the boys, as well as the active concern of the caregivers to implement change in the circumstances of the boys.

During conversations, specific purposes, values, hopes, and dreams were expressed, as well as commitments and principles of living. These were very personal aspects of those involved in the research journey, not general beliefs and commitments. The boys spoke of their dreams for the future, Sophia spoke about her mission in life and how it was influenced and sustained by her spiritual beliefs. Joe was specific about the spiritual dimension that informs his practices regarding the boys. This disciplined subjectivity stands in direct opposition to objectivity and detachment, which is supposedly apolitical.

5.4 THE EXPERIENCES OF THE CO-RESEARCHERS

New realities are created in the narration of stories, which bring forth different meanings and can influence future actions. One example of this is when Flipper expressed the intention of apologising to the boy that he had stabbed when he was younger. It was in the telling of the story that he realised that different values now determined his actions and that an apology would be an appropriate future action.

Sophia attached different meanings to her experience of the research journey. One of her intentions was to have a programme implemented that could provide the boys with skills and ways of doing that would prepare them for a reintegration into society. We agreed that it would be difficult to incorporate the development of such a programme into the current research journey, but that it could become one of the

future projects for volunteers. Participation in the current research journey did, however, provide her with the opportunity of reflecting on what had been done and she was truly amazed at what had been accomplished.

Sophia: *It was good for me to speak about certain things. I had not realized... it seemed to me as if nothing had been done!*

She was able to re-examine her personal situation, re-affirm the values and beliefs that supported her actions, and to re-member her own support team. This could provide her with the necessary encouragement to continue the work in spite of the tiredness that sometimes threatened to disempower her.

Joe expressed excitement about the changes that he had noticed since the previous caregiver had left. The changes were noticeable in the body language that the boys were using and in the way in which openness had replaced withdrawal. They entered conversations more easily and cooperation was evident in their interaction with volunteers that came to present programmes at the house. The physical health and appearances of the boys had improved as a result of regular healthy meals. Neatness and cleanliness had replaced the disorder and neglect that had previously been evident in the house, which greatly improved the atmosphere. The new house that they had moved to in December 2003 was more spacious, in a much better condition and in a much friendlier environment than the previous one. Sophia was able to move into the house permanently, and had the support of an extra person who took over the cooking and cleaning, and who occupied an outside room.

Thuso saw the culmination of the research journey as a celebration of the completion of my master's degree which could serve as an added incentive for the boys to pursue their own dreams. He wanted to have a handing-over ceremony at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* with everybody present and me in full regalia. They would present me with my degree, and I would present them with the completed report on the research journey. This touched me deeply, as it spoke to me of the serious intentions that he had of truly encouraging the boys by acknowledging the changes that were apparent in their behaviour and by demonstrating to them that dreams could be fulfilled if one actively pursued them,

The meanings that the boys attached to their experiences of the research journey varied. Flipper expressed relief at having had the opportunity to speak about some incidents that had occurred during his life.

Flipper: *It seems as if my heart is clean. Nobody has ever asked me about things. They speak to me, but they do not ask questions.*

The boys mentioned that expressing themselves had now become a preferred way of doing, and that it could bring about further changes in the management of the house, because it would bring these matters into the awareness of the caregivers. Cane referred to this as "talking out the words", a metaphor that fits the occasion of narrative work.

There was general consensus that "listening to each other and listening to Aunt Sophia" had become the norm, and that better behaviour had brought with it "helping each other". Some of the older boys had taken to helping the younger ones with homework, for example.

5.5 MY EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

When contemplating the strategy that would be most meaningful to implement in this research journey, I initially investigated a phenomenological approach, but soon realised that it did not fully meet the requirements I had in mind. I was becoming acquainted with the postmodern narrative approach, and this, combined with the social constructionist viewpoint that I hold, created an awareness of the wealth of meaning that could be generated from narrative conversations. I became excited about the possibility of involving the boys and caregivers in the research journey, rather than reporting on a phenomenon that I have studied. Participatory action research was a more acceptable alternative.

At first I was daunted by the seemingly impossible task of engaging with the co-researchers. "Being in the midst" is a concept described and used in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that I found applicable in the situation in which I found myself at the outset of this research journey. "Being in the midst" is used in the context of being located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal and the social, as well as being in the midst of different stories that are being lived and

told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My experience of this was very strong as I entered *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* for the first time. Negotiating research relationships, explaining myself and finding agreement on research curiosities, as well as maintaining an awareness of the ever-changing landscapes, would require flexibility and openness from me.

Sophia, Joe, Thuso, the boys, and I all had our own entry points at which we started out on the research journey. I was aware of entering the lives of everybody at the house in the midst of their stories – their stories were not beginning then, and would not end at my departure. At first, feelings of awkwardness and discomfort positioned me into withholding interaction, trying to determine what would be expected of me. The concern that I had about being explicit about their involvement from the beginning, and that I would not be dictating the method, pace or way of working, was creating anxiety about which procedures to follow. Sometimes I arrived at the house, to find only one or two of the boys there. I would exchange a few words, but they would soon withdraw from the conversation.

The turning point came late one rainy afternoon. I remember arriving at the house and finding the boys busy with their own activities. Sophia was expecting me, and had lit a fire and made us some coffee. We sat down in front of the fireplace and talked about ourselves, our families, our concerns and our joys. We spent a long time talking, and by the end of that conversation, I realised that my presence had been accepted and a working relationship had been established. We arranged meetings for the conversations with all the participants, and the research journey proceeded on its way.

In entering the conversations, I was reminded of how Anderson and Goolishian (1988:381) had described some of the underlying conditions that define conversations. These included "mutual respect and understanding, a willingness to listen and test one's opinions and prejudices, and a mutual seeking of the rightness of what is said" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:381). Conversations are fluid, and because of this, the meaning and understanding in dialogue are interpretative activities that change continuously, depending on such things as the occasion and reason for the conversation, the relationship of the participants, and what each knows of the situation and intent of the other. As the relationships developed, trust and openness were

instrumental in creating a more relaxed atmosphere where stories could unfold and meanings could be created.

5.6 REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

In chapter one the following questions were posed as research curiosities:

- How do the caregivers and children in *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* stand up to homelessness and poverty?
- How do their stories reflect the notion of doing hope?

In reporting this research journey, I have relied heavily on the process of deconstruction and reflection throughout. By referring to the preferred stories in chapter three and four, much has been said in response to the research curiosities, but a final reflection is warranted.

5.6.1 Standing up to homelessness and poverty

Much has been written about the resilience of children to stand up to adverse circumstances (Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Howard and Johnson, 2000). Resilience does not mean that they are unaffected by their experiences, but that they are able to resist being overwhelmed by the effects of these experiences. The best way to assist children in their efforts of standing up to homelessness and poverty is to provide them with a nurturing environment where they are accepted and understood (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). Children have said that what they wanted is to be talked and listened to, encouraged and supported, and that even if they did not "measure up" to some presumed standard, they would still be loved and valued by others (Howard and Johnson, 2000:335). According to what was said during the conversations, this seemed to be the case for the boys of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*.

The wisdom with which Sophia managed the house and how her values supported the intentions and purposes that shaped her actions impressed me. The knowledges and skills that she was using to deal with the problems seemed to diminish the influence of the problems in the lives of the boys. The way in which Thuso and Joe were managing the administrative side of the house, the regular meetings with Sophia and the boys and the implementation of basic rules in the house – these all contributed to

the creation of a supportive environment where the boys were able to experience nurturance and caring. Bringing financial matters into perspective, gaining community support and providing regular healthy meals all worked together in standing against the crippling effects of poverty.

Sophia's comment that "every caregiver, be it a worker or what, must have a goal when working with the children" indicated the importance of goal setting in the management of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*. For this reason, Sophia, Joe and Thuso would carefully scrutinise any intended involvement from any person before they would accept a project into the house. By setting goals, she was hoping that the boys would experience a sense of accomplishment, which might contribute to a preferred way of living. The encouragement to attend school, for example, was a way of achieving an educational goal, which Sophia saw as a way of shrinking inferiority. So too, by involving the children in working out the budget, she was teaching them the importance of making decisions when there was very little money available.

5.6.2 How do the stories reflect the notion of doing hope?

It has been found that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, children living on the street experience feelings of helplessness in going about their daily tasks of finding food and shelter (Puente, online 2003). Most probably, the only way for them to sustain hope is by focussing on the immediate concerns, and by trying to the best of their abilities to survive in adverse circumstances. By taking a stand against homelessness and poverty, the caregivers and boys of *Huis Rus-en-Vrede* were effectively taking a stand against feelings of hopelessness. The way in which things were being done in the house, the way in which the caregivers were engaging with the boys, and the way in which they demonstrated respect, caring and concern, was in effect doing hope. While reflecting on the notion of doing hope during the conversations, all of the participants were in agreement on this.

In doing hope for the children, the caregivers were making it possible for the transformation of the beliefs that the boys held regarding themselves. New meanings could be attached to experiences, and by having created opportunities where acceptance, positive regard and respect were demonstrated by the caregivers, the boys were able to redefine their own commitments and principles for living. New skills

could be identified that would invite in different actions that were supported by these values. Cane, for example, had learnt the skill of weaving baskets, and took great pride in showing me his finished product, which he was going to sell. Learning this skill instilled the belief about himself as being capable of making something that could be used by others, as well as his belief that there was a different way of generating money, other than stealing. Sophia spoke of an incident that served to demonstrate how the boys had come to value 'sharing' as preferred way to 'wanting'. When the clothes that had been donated were put out on the bed for the boys to select items, she said that they would take up a garment and hold it out to someone else, saying "Maybe this will fit you", instead of claiming it for themselves as they had done previously.

The boys themselves were involved in doing hope for each other, even while they were still living on the street. They regarded themselves as being 'brothers', who were always together and who 'stood up' for each other. This was confirmed by Sophia, who had noticed their way of being together.

5.7 OBSTACLES EXPERIENCED AND FUTURE EXPLORATIONS

As stated in Chapter 1, participatory action research involves the full participation of all participants, and meeting times sometimes had to be rescheduled because of other activities that had to be accommodated unexpectedly. This affected the time schedule that we had agreed upon, which invited in concern and anxiety into my life, as I had set myself the goal of writing up the research journey by a certain date. It was necessary to break the grip of concern and anxiety as they were prompting me to "take control" of the process, which would have disturbed the balance of power.

Other aspects that presented themselves as obstacles during the research journey, involved the language that was being used and the use of metaphors. The language that was being used in the conversation with the boys did not resonate well with them, and I had to make some adjustments. The conversations took place in Afrikaans, and this meant that I had to translate the words, thereby losing some of the original meanings of words as they had been used in a specific context. I tried to compensate for this by sometimes stating the Afrikaans word within the written text, but adding the English meaning as well. The boys constructed sentences in a unique way that

made it difficult to capture the meanings in English, and therefore the translations may sound stilted and unfamiliar to the English ear. The use of metaphors and externalising problems was a way of speaking that was unfamiliar to the boys, and so much of the thick descriptions that are reported in this text is a result of my own interpretations and reframing in narrative terms.

I was aware that some of the boys in the house had decided not to participate in the research journey, and although they never commented on this, I was wondering if it was in any way influencing the relationships among the boys. During the final conversation (when we were reflecting on our previous conversations), two of them joined the group (with the permission of the others), and although they did not take part in the discussion, they agreed with all that had been said during previous conversations.

The concerns that were voiced by both the co-researchers regarding the future of the boys, opens this up as an area of possible exploration. A research journey could be undertaken to explore the feasibility of establishing a centre which could serve as stepping stone between finishing formal schooling and obtaining a job. Skills could be further developed at such a centre, training the young adults for reintegration into society. Other areas that could be explored include the involvement of parents at a centre such as *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*, the implementation of a mentor programme, and the involvement of the business sector in providing job-opportunities and in-service training of the boys in their area of interest.

5.8 A PERSONAL JOURNEY

As the research journey took shape, unfolded and came to a conclusion, I was amazed at the resonance between the stories as narrated by the boys, and the personal journey that I was undertaking. Much of what I was experiencing could be related to the experiences of the boys. This was important to me in the process of witnessing. Together we were creating a sense of community, and the awareness of my own life journey allowed me to truly experience a sense of Ubuntu. This is best illustrated by the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (cited in Krog, 1998:143):

... a person is not basically an independent, solitary entity. A person is human precisely in being enveloped in the community of other human beings, in being caught up in the bundle of life. To be ... is to participate.

To illustrate my reflections on this, I take the following extract from the personal journal that I kept during the research journey:

2004.06.18 *I have almost come to the end of Ch 4, and have been thinking about Ch 5, and what I would prefer to reflect on. I cannot help but see the resemblance between my writing of this thesis and my own life journey – it cannot be coincidence, as I believe that there is relational intent in all things. The personal knowledges that I have gained through the process of therapy, at times very painful, seem to resonate with the personal knowledges of the boys that I have been writing about in Ch 4. I have long been crippled by negative self-talk and self-criticism, and yearned to be free of its vicious grip. I recognised the inconsistencies and contradictions that were evident in my life story when I only acknowledged the existence of the problem-saturated story. I have been re-authoring my own life story, co-creating an alternative storyline of identity with my therapist. I have been learning about my own preferred intentions and purposes, principles for living and commitments in life, just as the boys had. I have been exploring the effect of certain life experiences on my functioning, just as the boys did during our conversations. I have discovered different ways of understanding and interpreting these events, which greatly reduced their effect. I have had to acknowledge that my problem-saturated story is but one aspect of my life, and that there are other preferred "selves" to be re-discovered and re-authored, just as the boys did. I also thickened my preferred story by telling others about the preferred life story, by asking them to be witnesses to it, and to acknowledge it, thereby reaffirming and strengthening that which I stand for in life.*

5.9 TRANSFORMATIVE VALUE OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

... we need to work practically and theoretically to help people analyze their suffering, articulate the conditions that disfigure their lives, and use these processes of enlightenment to help develop social movements that can change the conditions of social life which maintain irrationality, injustice, and incoherent and unsatisfying forms of existence (McTaggart, 1997:22).

The above statement summarises my position on the transformative nature of participatory action research. Any research journey would be unethical if it did not inform our practices and provide us with new meanings regarding situations that people are confronted with in their daily living. It was our (the co-researchers and my) hope that from this journey, not only ourselves, but others would be inspired to engage with children who are living on the street in different ways. We were hoping that the voices of the children would be heard, and that local communities would unite in an effort of doing hope for these children. Partnerships and collaborations at local level could mobilise people and resources to create better opportunities for children and families, and support and involvement from diverse partners could be sought.

I agree with Chetty (1997:181) in the belief that children living on the street is an indication of social injustice and is symptomatic of the many social and economic problems evident in the South African society. The focus needs to be on prevention programmes and policies, but we cannot ignore the plight of these children. As long as they are still living on the street, we have a responsibility to engage with them in ways that would benefit them.

Some of the ideas that Sophia, Joe and Thuso came up with during the conversations that would benefit the children were very inspiring. They envisaged a place, such as a farm, where the children would be able to be accommodated as young adults after their formal education had been completed. They were hoping this environment would provide them with opportunities for further training, such as in specialised skills to engage in specific trades, and to learn the skills necessary for re-entry into society. They were also hoping to find a married couple to assist Sophia in the management of the house, if the necessary funds could be generated.

To capture the essence of the research journey, I add my voice to Sophia's when she says:

Sophia: *Here are too many wonderful experiences. All the changes, the house that is tidy, the boys that are becoming honest, how they are at home more often now, all those things ...* (And then the voice is unable to articulate further meaning, leaving space for further developments in the ongoing process of doing hope.)

EPILOGUE

A RECONNECTING EXPERIENCE: FINDING FLIPPER'S MOTHER

One Saturday early in March 2004, Flipper, Skibo, C (who works at *Huis Rus-en-Vrede*) and I set out in the direction of Kraaifontein, to try and find Flipper's mother. He had not seen her in many years, and wanted to re-establish contact. Flipper knew where his father lived, and seeing that he had had contact with him during the previous December holiday, this seemed a logical place to start the search. His parents were no longer together, and his father was married to another woman.

We arrived at the farm where Flipper's father worked, and he told us that Flipper's mother sometimes visited his (the father's) sister, who lives on the farm next door. As it turned out, Flipper's mother had been there the previous weekend. His aunt could not tell us exactly where his mother lived, but referred us to one of Flipper's brothers who worked on another farm. We had a wild search, and got lost many times, but eventually found the farm and spoke to the manager, who called the brother. At first the latter did not recognise Flipper, because it had been so long since he had last seen him. He asked us to come back the following Saturday, volunteering to take us then to Flipper's mother in Wallisdene, a township in Kraaifontein. At this stage, Flipper was satisfied with the progress that had been made, and we returned home after a quick visit to his father on the way back. They embraced lovingly, and his father invited him to visit during the Easter Weekend.

Two weeks later the four of us, joined this time by Skipper, went in search of the brother again, but he was not at home. The previous time we had not been to the house – we had just talked to his brother on the lands where he had been working – and I was amazed at Flipper's memory. He knew exactly which of the houses was his brother's house and how to get there, although he had last been there when he was nine years old. He also recognized some of the other people living there, as he had recognised his aunt on the previous visit (she had not recognised him). His brother was not at home, but a very helpful, forceful and entertaining man with a loud and

booming voice, whom I shall call Petrus, offered to accompany us to Wallisdene to try and find Flipper's mother. The boys squeezed into the back seat, and Petrus managed to fit in.

Wallisdene is an informal settlement just off the main road at Kraaifontein, and my first response was one of amazement at the friendliness and "geselligheid" of the street that led into town, and in which everybody was walking up and down. We stopped, and Petrus started asking at the shops on the side of the road if anyone happened to know Mrs C (Flipper's mother). One woman kindly offered to take us to Mrs C's house, and we managed to fit her into the car as well (by now there were seven of us!). We slowly worked our way through the pedestrians, turned right onto a very bad dirt track between the houses, and had to travel along carefully, trying to avoid the worst bumps, potholes and rubble. I eventually had to stop at an open space that resembled a square, because there was no sign of any more roads. The woman, Petrus, Flipper and Skipper went off in search of the house, but I called Petrus back and asked him to stay with the rest of us, because we felt rather vulnerable in that area. This turned out to be very fortunate, because he had hardly got back into the car, when he spotted Flipper's mother walking towards us from a different direction that Flipper and the others had taken. None of us would have known her, and she would have walked past us and disappeared behind the houses if Petrus had not seen her.

We all jumped out of the car, some of us calling to Flipper and the others to come back, and Petrus approached Mrs C to tell her that he had brought Flipper to see her. She embraced Petrus, thanking him profusely, and kept on asking where Flipper was. We pointed him out to her, and she swiped at him with the empty bag she was carrying, not believing it was he. She embraced and hugged him, crying and talking at the same time. Flipper was totally overwhelmed by his feelings, and seemed not to know what to do. He hugged her back, saying, "Toemaar, Mamma, toemaar" (*Never mind mommy, never mind*). She stepped back, asking, "Is dit rerig jy, Flipper? Hoekom lyk jy dan so?" (*Is it really you, Flipper? Why do you look like that?*) and then she hugged him again, crying and lamenting all the time, totally overcome with emotion. "My kind, my kind" she kept on saying, and "Mamma wil nie meer alleen wees nie, Mamma woon alleen en Mamma wil nie meer alleen wees nie. Hulle gooi klippers op my dak en Mamma wil nie meer alleen wees nie" (*Mommy never wants to*

be alone again. Mommy lives alone and Mommy doesn't want to be alone anymore. They throw stones on my roof and Mommy doesn't want to be alone any more). The woman who had accompanied us eventually tried to console Mrs C, whose crying had intensified and she seemed unable to stop. I took a photograph of Flipper and his mother, with the latter's tears running freely down her cheeks. Flipper was very quiet, and quite pale, although he managed to smile at the camera.

All of us were quite overwhelmed by the intensity of our feelings at this stage, quite incapable of knowing what to do. Eventually we decided that Flipper, his mother, the other woman and C would drive with me to where we would drop the woman off. Petrus, Skipper and Skibo would walk back there. On our way, Flipper's mother said that she first wanted to pack some clothes at her house, because she was going to visit her sister-in-law again. We stopped, and Flipper, his mother and the other woman went to Mrs C's house, while C and I waited in the car. The woman appeared again after a while, and told us that not much packing was taking place, because Mrs C was crying so much. We then decided to take Petrus back to his house first, and then fetch Flipper and his mother from town again.

Petrus talked all the way back to the farm, in his loud and booming voice, using many unmentionable adjectives, but he made us laugh so much, that we were able to cope with the overwhelming emotions. I kept on watching Skibo in the rear view mirror, and he was laughing so much that I laughed more at him laughing than at the anecdotes that were being told and retold.

We finally left Petrus at his house, after many thanks and handshaking, and went back to town to fetch Flipper and his mother. They were waiting at the taxi rank, and we again thanked the other woman for her kindness and concern. Flipper was already showing concern and commitment when he asked her to take good care of his mother's house. In the car he reproached his mother for having given the other woman permission to use the house in her absence, but it was all rather confusing, and no one was sure of what had been arranged. We then drove around, looking for another brother's house, but ended up in Wallisdene again, having approached it from the opposite direction. This prompted Flipper to call off the search, and we headed home.

During the drive back to the sister-in-law's house, Flipper and his mother, who had calmed down considerably by then, exchanged some conversation, mostly about her life, the fact that she was on her own with no one to take care of her, and that all the documents of the children had been destroyed in a fire. Flipper had explained to her that he was applying for an ID document, so he needed the birth certificate. She seemed to be confused about dates, because she gave Flipper's birthdate as 1989, which would have made him 15 years old. He corrected her, and she then agreed that it was earlier (1984). He also corrected her about his sister's birthdate, after calculating that she was not only 2 years older than him, as his mother had indicated.

We arrived at the sister-in-law's house, and it was time to say goodbye. I took another photograph of Flipper and his mother, but after looking at it (on the digital camera), Flipper said he would prefer his mother to be smiling in the photograph. She was reluctant, saying that she would cry if she had to smile, but she nevertheless made a brave attempt, and we took a nice, smiling photograph. She did start crying then, and Flipper hugged her and told her not to cry, because that would also bring his tears. We got back into the car, and waved goodbye to the sad, lone figure standing under the tree, but with the hope in our hearts that they would soon be in contact again.

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ADDENDUM A

INLIGTING

Geagte

Ek is besig met 'n navorsingsprojek oor die belewenisse en verwagtings van die volwassenes en kinders wat betrokke is by die vestiging van 'n alternatiewe tuiste vir kinders wat voorheen nie 'n huis gehad het nie. Ek sou graag wou hê dat jy saam met my aan hierdie projek werk. Ek is geïnteresseerd in die betekenis wat jy aan jou belewenisse heg en die soort tuiste wat jy verkies om te skep, asook enige idees wat jy het rondom die projek.

Die storie wat jy vertel (aan my of in die groep) of idees wat jy het, sal op video-en/of oudio-band opgeneem word, maar wanneer dit geskryf word, sal dit onder 'n skuilnaam wees indien jy dit so verkies. Die verslag mag dalk gepubliseer word. Ek werk onder leiding van 'n supervisor, Dr Rona Newmark, van die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Die navorsingsprojek vorm deel van 'n Meestersgraad in Opvoedkundige Sielkunde aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch.

Baie dankie dat jy bereid is om deel te hê aan hierdie projek.

Meryl Smuts

Tel: 021-8082229

MAGTIGINGSVORM

Ek het bogenoemde gelees en verstaan. Ek is bereid om deel te neem aan die projek. Ek gee verlov vir video en/of oudio-bandopnames en dat die verslag gepubliseer mag word.

Naam :

Handtekening :

Datum :

Geteken te (dorp) :

Meryl Smuts :

ADDENDUM B

7 Chenin Blanc
Kleingeluk
Stellenbosch
7600

16 April 2004

The Chairperson
Youth Outreach
P.O.Box 4068
Idas Valley
Stellenbosch
7609

Dear Prof Hattingh

I am currently doing my thesis to qualify for the course MEd Psych at the Stellenbosch University. I have completed the academic year and the internship.

The title of my thesis is *Doing hope with children who have been living on the street*. I have approached the care-givers and children of Huis Rus-en-Vrede to be co-researchers with me in this participatory action research. I am using a narrative approach and the aim is to witness the development of a community of care that is doing hope for the children living in the house. We have formulated questions to guide us in this study, and I have obtained written consent from all the participants. The children have requested that we use pseudonyms, and they have named themselves accordingly.

I believe that some of the children are in state care, and am therefore applying for permission to continue this study involving these children. I have written consent from Joe de Beer (Hard Rain Children's Trust) and Thuso Kewana (CEO, Prochorus Community Developments) for this study.

I am also requesting permission to use the following information that was obtained from Peter Silverstein at the Shelter:

- statistics regarding the number of children living on the streets in Stellenbosch and the number, sex and ages of the children registered at the Shelter
- some of the activities that are being presented at the Shelter
- very concise history of the Shelter
- use and description of words "stroller" and "street child"

The above information about the Shelter will be used in the introduction, and is for informative purposes only.

I am including a copy of the Consent Form and part of my introduction for your information. A copy of the completed thesis will be made available to you.

I hope to receive the necessary consent from you.

Kind regards

Meryl Smuts

2004:05.28: Telefoniese gesprek met Elize le Roux, aansoek goedgekeur.