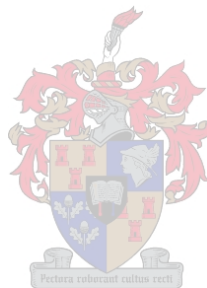


**AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A  
DIVERSION PROGRAMME FOR JUVENILE  
OFFENDERS**

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**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of MPhil in Youth Development and Policy at the University  
of Stellenbosch**

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## **DECLARATION**

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

## **SUMMARY**

This study focuses on the implementation of, as well as identifying problem areas associated with the YES-programme offered by NICRO.

This specific programme was chosen because most of the young offenders referred to NICRO complete this programme. Young offenders are referred to the programme by the magistrates' court. These are youth that have been arrested for petty crimes such as shoplifting, damage to property and possession of drugs. This programme is also aimed at first time offenders but it became evident throughout the study that these youths might have been arrested once but seems to have been involved in crime at some level prior to being arrested. Youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years are accepted into the programme, with exceptions sometimes made for nineteen year olds who are still attending school. Participation in the programme is strictly voluntary, but there must be an admission of guilt on the part of the youth before he/she will be considered for this kind of diversionary alternative. The programme attempts to involve both parent and child in the process of learning and therefore parents are required to attend the first and last sessions with their children. Sessions attended by parents focus on the improving relationships and communication between parent and child.

The programme is viewed as an alternative sanction, and will enable youth to be punished for their crimes whilst at the same time learning new skills, and most importantly, not gaining a criminal record. The programme stretches over eight weeks with weekly sessions that focus on self-concept, decision-making, children's rights and respecting both themselves and those around them.

The researcher formed part of the process through both facilitating sessions as well as observing sessions. For these reasons the research methodology focussed primarily on participant observation and interviews.

## OPSOMMING

Die studie fokus op die proses van implementering en die identifisering van probleemareas binne die YES-program wat deur NICRO aangebied word.

Die YES-program was spesifiek gekies omdat meeste van die jeugdige wat na NICRO verwys word hierdie program voltooi. Jeugdige word deur die hof verwys na die program wat dien as 'n afwentelingsprogram. Hierdie jeugdige word meestal gearresteer vir geringe misdade soos winkeldiefstal, beskadiging van eiendom, en die besit van dwelms. Diè jeugdige word ook aanbeveel vir die program omdat dit hulle eerste arrestasie is, maar tydens die studie word dit duidelik dat alhoewel dit die eerste keer is dat die jeugdige gearresteer word, dit nie hul eerste oortreding is nie.

Die program word beskou as 'n alternatiewe sanksie, en dit poog om die jeugdige te straf vir sy/haar daad maar ook terselfdetyd nuwe vaardighede aan te leer, en meer belangrik te voorkom dat die jeugdige 'n kriminele rekord kry. Die program strek oor agt weeklike sessies wat fokus op self-konsep, besluitneming, kinderrechte en respek. Jeugdige tussen die ouderdom van dertien en agtien jaar word verwys na die program, maar uitsonderings word ook soms gemaak vir jeugdige van neëntienjarige ouderdom mits hulle nog skool bywoon. Die program poog om beide ouer en kind te betrek in die proses, en dus word ouers verplig om die eerste en laaste sessies saam met die jeugdige by te woon. Die sessies wat deur die ouers bygewoon word fokus veral op die verbetering van verhoudings en kommunikasie tussen ouer en kind. Deelname aan die program is vrywillig maar die jeugdige moet skuldig pleit voordat hy/sy inaggeneem kan word vir die afwentelingsprogram.

Die navorser het deel van die proses uitgemaak deur beide programme waar te neem sowel as programme te fasiliteer. Die navorsingsmetode wat dus benut was, was deelnemende waarneming sowel as onderhoudvoering.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The youth of South Africa should be a focal point, particularly in the process of government legislation, because they make up such a huge proportion of the population and are also more prone to get into difficulties with the law in their attempts to experiment and find their own unique identities. This chapter will focus on the motivation for the study, provide a brief description of the methodology used and provide a layout of subsequent chapters.

### 1.1 Motivation for the study

The National Youth Policy (1997) estimates that approximately 39% of the entire South African population can be classified as youth, thus their needs should be viewed as urgent. In countries all over the world, links between crime levels and age demographics have been found –which makes the plight of South Africans so serious. Schönsteich (1999: 27) emphasises that South Africa faces some serious challenges because of the high proportion of young people in the population. Gray (1999: 375) explains that if South Africa were to prioritise any area of crime prevention, juvenile crime would be the logical place to start, as nearly 11 million people in South Africa are between the ages of sixteen and thirty years and of these, 3 million are estimated to be unemployed and large numbers drop out of school.

The terms youth, adolescence and teenagers are often associated with negativity in many societies. Rebellion, offending, gangs, violence, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse are all issues that are linked to youth (Veeran 1996: 248). According to Wyn and White (1997: 56) these terms are all signals that young people are being objectified, categorised and judged. Therefore, in general, youth are already being labelled as a homogeneous group.

Schönsteich's (1999: 22) study found that juveniles and young adults commit crimes "... far in excess of their proportion of the general population", and these rates seem to be similar all over the world. He also points to conviction figures that show that young males in South Africa are at greater risk of being convicted for a wide range of crimes, than older males or females of any age group. However, not all young offenders are convicted, and in South Africa NICRO (National Institute for Crime

Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders) offer some alternatives for young offenders which ensure that they do not get criminal records.

According to NICRO's annual 2001/02 report, 5 788 young people in conflict with the law were channelled away from the criminal justice system into a range of diversion options in the Western Cape alone. Direct services were rendered to 17 370 young people, which shows a 26% increase in comparison to the previous year. According to their records 78% of their clients are male. The race profile shows that 62% of the clients are African, 28% are coloured, 7% are white and the remaining 3% are Asian. The offence profile indicates that 74% of crimes are property crimes, with 14% being for crimes against the person and the remaining 12% for victimless and other crimes. The YES programme serves the largest number of clients with 8 371 clients in the period 2001/02. NICRO provides different programmes for all types of offenders, examples thereof being: petty theft, vandalism and sex offences. One of the aims of the organisation is to reintegrate youth offenders back into 'conventional society'. It implements numerous programmes that enable deviant youth the opportunity of becoming assets within their communities.

Re-entry into the community can be difficult, and would typically entail a gradual process involving a sequence of adjustments (Higgins & Butler 1982: 221-223). They explain that re-entry into society which entails withdrawing oneself, would require the delinquent to withdraw him/herself, his/her commitments and time from deviance. Then new commitments and a new identity have to be formed within conventional society. Higgins and Butler (1982: 221) identified three stages in the re-entry process:

- moving from the deviance
- moving back into the conventional world and
- an attempt toward reintegration into conventional society.

Moving away from deviance and breaking old ties could prove to be a difficult task for young people who now have to leave behind not only deviant behaviour, but also old friends and "hang-out" places. Social support from families and peers is important (Higgins & Butler 1982: 222), and through this support the deviant youth can be encouraged to leave behind old habits and feel accepted by conventional society. Moore and Tonry (1998: 20) argue that the involvement of the community is pivotal in preventing youth from both becoming and staying involved in deviant behaviour.

Yet getting the community involved can be a difficult task, because adults in the community are often so preoccupied with employment issues and trying to keep afloat in the midst of excruciating poverty, that there is often little or no time to give youngsters the attention and support that they so need and desire.

Youthful offenders may be stigmatised due to the reactions of the community towards crime and deviancy. The attitude of the community towards youth offenders can have a tremendous effect on the degree of reintegration into the community. The stigmatisation or labelling of youth as criminal or deviant can lead to the youth returning to more crime (Muncie 1999: 118). According to Curran and Renzetti (1994: 230) a negative social reaction may result in many legitimate avenues of interaction or opportunities being closed off to the deviant, and this may leave the labelled person with no choice but to seek out deviant associations and pursue deviant or criminal opportunities. For these reasons community support is of great significance.

## **1.2 Research problem, design and methodology**

In view of the above it was decided to undertake a study of the implementation of and identifying problem areas in a diversion programme presented by NICRO. The NICRO diversion programmes are an example of attempts in South Africa to reintegrate young offenders in conflict with the law back into conventional society without the negative implications often associated with the criminal justice process.

A qualitative design will be used in the study. The primary goal of this approach is to describe and understand human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 270). Qualitative designs aim to provide an in-depth description of a group of people or community (Mouton 2001: 148). Qualitative research attempts to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 270).

The units of analysis are youth offenders between the ages of 13 and 18 years, the social worker and/or facilitators involved with the programme and parents and/or guardians of the young people. Thus every participant of the programme could possibly form part of this study. However this meant that the participants would not represent any meaningful population, yet this does not matter because the purpose of the study is to explore rather than to describe or explain in any definitive sense

(Babbie 1998: 248). In order to collect data, as the researcher, I made use of participant observation as well as interviews.

The important terms in this study are youth, youth offenders, and diversion programmes. In the literature review and subsequent chapters these terms will be discussed in greater detail.

### **1.3 Chapter layout**

The following chapter focuses on a discussion of the relevant literature regarding delinquency and the different theories used to explain delinquency. The chapter will also examine the justice process and the alternatives to punishment, and discuss NICRO's role in terms of diversion programmes. Chapter three will be a discussion of the methods of research that were used in this study. In chapter four findings of the study will be presented. These findings are discussed and interpreted in chapter five, which also includes some conclusions and recommendations regarding the implementation of the YES-programme.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Muncie (1999: 3) recognizes the difficulties presented in creating boundaries for the term youth. Youth is generally viewed as the bridge between childhood and adulthood. Though no one is certain of where childhood ends and adulthood begins (Muncie 1999: 40), in many cultures adulthood is usually synonymous with gaining independence through employment (Wyn & White 1997). Epstein (1998: 5) characterises adolescence as a period of alienation from the self and social institutions. This is because of the tension that exists between the freedom of childhood and the responsibilities inherent in adulthood. Barton, Watkins and Jarjoura (1997: 491) explain that adolescence is a challenging period for both young people and all the people associated with them. They describe adolescence as a dramatic change in physical growth, sexual development, cognitive abilities, and identity development (Barton, Watkins & Jarjoura 1997: 488). It is therefore not surprising that youth are involved in questionable activities as they try to make sense of their lives and try to be independent. Thus delinquency is an important aspect when focusing on youth. This chapter discusses delinquency as well as ways of managing the situation in terms of restorative justice.

### 2.1 Delinquency

According to Cohen (1967: 137) those things occurring within society that people perceive as being socially unacceptable becomes a social problem. Therefore the deviant is not deviant until he/she is defined and treated as such by the community. Stumphauzer (1986: 1) found in his studies that the term juvenile delinquent only developed in 1899. During this time adults started to realize that young criminals needed to be treated differently from adult criminals.

Lewis (1989: 4) suggests that perhaps there is no such single entity as a juvenile delinquent, but that there are many different kinds of delinquency. This is made apparent through the many different definitions and explanations that researchers associate with delinquency.

#### 2.1.1 Definitions of delinquency

According to Muncie (1999: 45) in the case of youth, the concept 'delinquency' extends the parameters of crime to include a host of trivial 'nuisances' and 'misconducts'. Smith and Stern (1997: 383) define delinquency as a legal concept,

referring to a wide range of behaviours that young people engage in that are against the law. Smith and Stern (1997: 383) also emphasise that delinquency can refer to status offences, which are acts that are only illegal for young people (like running away from home or buying and drinking alcohol). Lewis (1989: 3) agrees and states that, according to one school of thought, a juvenile delinquent is a minor who is guilty of an act that would not be considered criminal if he were an adult. Therefore he recognises that there are a number of delinquents who are punished for acts that are socially acceptable among adults (such as possessing alcohol). Stumphauzer (1986: 1) states that delinquency should be understood as behaviour occurring in particular environmental circumstances, which can be changed in order to prevent or decrease the delinquent behaviour.

### **2.1.2 Factors leading to delinquency**

Crime amongst youth, as with any criminal act, can be attributed to many factors. The negative influences of the community, low socio-economic status of families, dropping out of school and, single-headed households, are but a few of the reasons that could contribute to youngsters turning to crime (Moore & Tonry 1998: 9). Nixon-Ponder (1998: 56) suggests that youth not attending school has a great deal to do with them turning to criminal activities. She goes further to say that adolescents drop out of school because there is a discrepancy between the cultural values and beliefs of the adolescents' home and that of the school. Schurink (1994a: 47) agrees that schooling plays a role in delinquent behaviour, and identifies poor school achievement, truancy and conduct disorders as primary causes of youth offending. Adolescents are also exposed to violence and crime in their environment and therefore may accept it as a way of life.

The factors contributing to youth getting involved in crime are diverse and contradictory. Gilbert (1986: 18) argues that social class has been a major element in both structural and cultural interpretations of delinquency since the 1950's. He found in his studies that many juvenile experts in the war periods believed that the problem was rooted in the family (Gilbert 1986: 28). Family disruption through warfare, mothers joining the labour force to sustain their families and families being split up, led to children being subjected to more pressures, which led to misbehaviour and even delinquency. Smith and Stern (1997: 383) argue that chronic delinquency can often be linked with disruptions in the adolescent's life, such as substance abuse, gang activity and dropping out of school.

Gilbert (1986: 130) notes that as society changed, older explanations, although still relevant, made way for a new concept of "subcultures" that stresses the cultural environment of delinquency. Theories on subcultures and its impact on delinquent behaviour seem also to put an emphasis on lower classes. Theorists believed that the legitimate routes of mobility such as education were blocked off to many lower class youth who therefore fell into permanent conflict situations, crime and defeatism (Gilbert 1986: 139). Stark (1979: 669) argues that status in society is a poor predictor of future delinquency and adds that young people from wealthy homes are about as likely to commit acts of delinquency as young people from poor homes. Matza and Sykes (1961: 113) agree that juvenile delinquency does frequently occur in the middle and upper classes. This causes a problem for theories that depend on status deprivation, social disorganisation, and similar explanatory variables.

In a study done by the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council) (Schurink 1994b: 29) adolescents were asked to identify factors that they perceived as causes of youth offending. Those mostly cited were family dysfunction, such as broken homes, child-parent relationships, absent parents, drug and alcohol usage by parents, and less common but also cited as reasons for offending were poverty, lack of meaningful utilization of leisure time, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse (Schurink 1994b: 29).

## **2.2 Theories on delinquency**

Matza and Sykes (1961: 113) state that juvenile delinquency is not a unitary phenomenon and therefore no one theoretical approach will be adequate. Schurink (1994b: 28) also cautions that the behavior of adolescents cannot be predicted by one single factor, and that in most cases there are multiple factors involved in the offending behavior. Gilbert's (1986: 128) studies reflect that the theoretical bases of delinquency studies changed from a cultural emphasis to concentrate on issues of race, drugs and poverty. Small empirical studies then replaced the sweeping generalisations of previous decades. In Howes' view (1993: 373) most of the theories regarding youth offenders have viewed the offender as a victim of his biological, psychological and social circumstances. These theories have thus been the foundation of treatment models that aim to change and rehabilitate youth offenders.



### **2.2.1 Strain theory**

According to Elliott, Ageton and Canter (1979: 277) some theoretical statements view delinquent behaviour as a result of socially induced pressure. This body of theory is referred to as strain theory because it assumes that humans are basically conforming beings who violate normative expectations only as a result of external social pressures. Strain theorists would argue that a sense or anticipation of failure could lead to an adolescent offending (Schurink 1994b: 25).

Robert Merton's notion of anomie (derived from Durkheim's study on suicide) seems to be the most significant strain explanation (Higgins & Butler 1982: 163). According to Merton (in Higgins & Butler 1982: 163-166) everyone in almost every society believes in the same success goals, and therefore youth are socialised to want to achieve those success goals. Yet, because access to the legitimate means of attaining these goals are not equally available to all, some people live in an anomic state. Which means that there is a gap between the goals they want to achieve and the legitimate means of achieving those goals.

Agnew (in Curran & Renzetti 1994: 173) argues that the lack of correspondence between expectations and actual achievements can induce more strain than the lack of correspondence between aspiration and achievement. He also identifies the removal of positive stimuli and the introduction of negative stimuli as sources of strain. There are numerous ways of reacting and adapting to these sources of strain. Agnew believes that whether or not individuals' reactions are deviant or delinquent depends on internal and external constraining factors. These constraining factors include the individual's coping skills, what kinds of social support is available to the individual, association with delinquent peers, and environmental variables such as money.

### **2.2.2 Subcultural theories**

The central argument in subcultural theories are that the opinions, behaviour and lifestyle of a group differs from that specified by the dominant culture of that society (Van Aswegen 1988: 26). Many subcultural theories that explain delinquency integrate effects of strain theory. An example being Cohen who did research on the cultures of gangs in Chicago.

He viewed gangs as subcultures with a value system that differed from the mainstream, and further argued that forming these gangs were working-class youths' way of reacting to a dominant middle-class society (Muncie 1999: 163). Cloward and

Ohlin similarly explained gangs in terms of culturally prescribed high aspirations (Muncie 1999: 163). Another example of a subcultural explanation of delinquency is that by Miller (1958). He hypothesizes that delinquent behaviour by members of the lower class is motivated through a positive effort to achieve status and conditions or qualities that are valued within their cultural milieu (Miller 1958: 5).

In defining delinquency most subcultural theorists focus on the lower classes. Subcultures were viewed as negative groupings that motivated youth to engage in delinquent behaviour. Matza (in Hagan 1991: 569), however, argues that teenage subcultures are also found in upper classes and could sometimes curb serious delinquent behaviour. This could be because subcultures provided the youth with an opportunity to experience acceptance and status from their peers. Kaplan (1975: 87) agrees with this statement and adds that delinquent subcultures provide the adolescent with an opportunity to engage in activities that are rewarded and through which a positive self-attitude could be gained.

### **2.2.3 Control theory**

The control perspective views delinquency as a consequence of a lack of internalising normative controls, a breakdown in established controls and/or a conflict in rules or social controls (Elliott et al. 1979: 280-283). Control theorists thus agree that delinquent behaviour is a direct result of weak ties to the conventional normative order. Hagan (1991: 567) seems to agree with this control theory and found in his studies that adolescents who are less controlled by parents, and have little involvement in their communities are more likely to be involved in delinquent acts. The most important contributions made to control theory is that of Hirschi (see Van Aswegen 1988: 33) who viewed the individual as bound to the conventional order, and saw the lack of commitment to a conventional social order as a possible reason for offending. Reckless (see Van Aswegen 1988: 34) on the other hand viewed positive self concept as insulation against youth crime. Warr (1993: 248) cites the work of Sutherland and Hirschi who argue that parents who spend time with their children may reduce the likelihood of delinquent behaviour, either by reducing the time spent with delinquent peers or by maximising their effect as positive role models. According to Schurink (1994a: 48) their studies show that adolescents who are not “attached or bonded” to their families are more likely to associate with delinquent peers and therefore also get involved in criminal behaviour. Schurink (1994a: 48)

therefore suggests that the family, school, and community work together and aim to develop a social support network for the youth. Barton, Watkins and Jarjoura (1997: 486-489) also suggest that young people who are exposed to violence, who have little or no attachment to their parents, whose behaviour is poorly supervised by their parents, lack commitment in school, have little attachment to their teachers, have a higher number of delinquent peers and reside in high-crime areas are more likely to become chronic violent offenders. They further theorise that youth who engage in delinquent behaviour tend to be "multi-problem" youths'. These youth are therefore exposed to more risk factors and fewer protective factors in comparison with their non-delinquent peers.

According to Hagan (1991: 567) adolescents who do not experience control exercised over them through parents and school are more likely to develop mild or more serious deviant subcultural preferences. Friday and Hage (1976: 178) focus more on the interaction of youth than on the control exercised over them and find that youth who are involved in relationships (with parents, school, family, etc.) are less likely to get involved in criminal acts: Their chances of becoming criminals are lessened the more adolescents engage in relationships with parents, schools, family, etc.

In Friday's (Friday & Hage 1976: 184) study of Swedish adolescents he made use of self-reporting that entailed asking the adolescents how many times they have been guilty of theft. In his study he found that those adolescents who had greater interaction with their families had a lower frequency of serious theft and the greater the interaction with teachers or an employer outside of school the less the self-reported theft. According to Smith and Stern (1997: 383) most of the current studies focus on the causes and explanations of self-reported delinquency rather than official delinquency. This can be due to the fact that a broader range of information is made available about causal influences through self-reporting. However, self-reporting could cause difficulties because adolescents might report doing things just to improve their status amongst their peers.

Smith and Stern (1997) list studies that have aimed to explain delinquency through focusing on families. Studies focusing on parenting processes and delinquency (Smith & Stern 1997: 383) focus on the role a supportive family can play in preventing delinquency and asserts that supportive families can protect children even in hostile and damaging external environments. Studies that focus on parent-child affiliation (Smith & Stern 1997: 384) asserts that, where family ties are loose a stage is set for

deviance, because children lose the sense of their parents' presence and feel free to misbehave. Parent-child conflict and problem solving studies (Smith & Stern 1997: 385) found that serious parent-child conflict and the inability to resolve conflict through constructive communication, also lead to delinquent behaviour.

Smith and Stern (1997: 387) therefore conclude that there are clear links between specific parenting practices and delinquency but do emphasise that there are external factors that can both support or disrupt effective parenting. Smith and Stern (1997: 406) recognize that the family is only one of many causes of delinquency but emphasises it because of the family's importance in the development and early control of aggressiveness, which is one of the strongest predictors of delinquency.

#### **2.2.4 Neutralization theory**

Sykes and Matza (in Curran & Renzetti 1994: 222-226) pointed out that if traditional positivist theories of crime are correct, some individuals would never deviate. They observed, however, that even the most active delinquents spend most of their time in noncriminal pursuits. They were especially critical of the notion of the delinquent subculture that, as we noted earlier, depicted offenders as having a value system at odds with that of the dominant culture. Were this the case, Sykes and Matza argue, delinquents would show no remorse for their behaviour and would not view it as wrong. When detected and apprehended, though, delinquents typically exhibit guilt and shame over their behaviour. Rather than viewing delinquency as a product of the lower class, Matza and Sykes (1961: 113) argue that all youth are part of a leisure class, always seeking fun, adventure and excitement. They further argue that much of the delinquent behaviour in adolescence is an attempt to achieve the values of this leisure class, and because all adolescents want these values, delinquent behaviour is prevalent among all rather than confined to the lower classes (Matza and Sykes 1961: 114).

According to Sykes and Matza (1957: 102) juveniles learn techniques of neutralization that turn them into delinquents. They identified five major techniques:

- 1) 'The denial of responsibility': When the delinquent can distance himself from taking any or little responsibility for his actions. The disapproval of others is reduced in effectiveness as a restraining influence.
- 2) 'The denial of injury': The link between acts and the consequences are broken as the delinquent argues that his actions do not hurt anyone.

- 3) 'The denial of the victim': The delinquent might argue that his actions were a form of rightful retaliation or punishment, and therefore there were no victims.
- 4) 'The condemnation of the condemners': By attacking others who disapprove of his violations, the wrongfulness of the delinquents' own behaviour is more easily repressed or lost to view.
- 5) 'The appeal to higher loyalties': Deviation from certain norms may occur because other norms may be more important to the youth.

Although these techniques are after-the-fact justifications for delinquent behaviour, Sykes and Matza (in Curran & Renzetti 1994: 223) argue that these techniques are used prior to the deviant act and serves as a means of motivating deviation.

### **2.2.5 Social learning theories**

According to Smith and Stern (1997: 389) disadvantaged neighbourhoods, economic hardships, stress and depression, social isolation and support, and family disruption may all lead to adolescents turning to delinquent behaviour. The environment in which youth find themselves also contribute to their offending/criminal acts. Howell and Hawkins (1998: 274) suggest that delinquency and violence in adolescence is spread in social contexts (peer groups, school, youth gangs, etc.) where adolescents interact. Stumphauzer (1986: 183) argues that programmes that are aimed at changing or preventing delinquency should take place in the community, because in his view delinquency is learned in the community and also occurs in the community.

According to Howes (1993: 373) there are also theorists who do not view the offender as a passive victim of his circumstances; rather the offenders are viewed as rational beings who make choices. The underlying assumption of these theorists is that behaviour is learned and that therefore unacceptable behaviour can be unlearned. Behaviour-modification models therefore aim to help youthful offenders to learn acceptable behaviour and eliminate unacceptable behaviour (Howes 1993: 373). Sykes and Matza (1957: 99) support this view and state that delinquent behaviour is a social behaviour, and is therefore learned in the process of social interaction. This view can also be linked to the cognitive theories identified by Howes (1993: 373) that focus on human thought and the cognitive abilities that people have to change and control their behaviour through their thought processes.

### 2.2.6 Labelling theory

According to Gilbert (1986: 13) the volatile reactions of the public only compound the complicated problems of interpreting teenage behaviour. The youth culture that adolescents adopted as a way of forming and shaping their own unique identities were viewed by the hostile community observer as criminal, they felt that lower class values were being glamourised (Gilbert 1986: 212). These reactions of the community can be attributed to their ignorance and also, because the community may not fully understand the needs and thought processes of adolescents. Wheeler et al (1968: 2) therefore suggests that the later life of adolescents is not only a product of their delinquent histories, but is also closely linked to the actions taken toward them by conventional society/their community.

According to Cohen (1967: 137) deviants tend to define their situation in terms of the public's reaction. Therefore if the community reacts negatively towards adolescents they may internalise these reactions and define themselves as deviant. Wheeler (1968: 2) agrees and states that the character and identity assumed by adolescents are at least partially a function of the labels assigned to them by conventional society, and through the way in which organizations, designed to control their behaviour, operate. The youth also sometimes have a negative view of institutions and may fear the effects of any help. Stumphauzer (1986: 13) claims that these youths can resist therapy because they fear being viewed as "crazy" by the outside world.

According to Elliott et al. (1979: 281) many labelling theorists have suggested that the experience of being apprehended and publicly labelled a delinquent initiates social processes. This can limit one's access to conventional social roles and statuses, thereby isolating one from participation in society and forcing one to assume a delinquent role. Sykes and Matza (1957: 100) disagree with the view that delinquents are potential criminals and warned that the gross stereotyping of juvenile delinquents as "hardened gangsters in miniature" should be avoided. Stumphauzer (1986: 4) stresses that youth rather than their delinquent behaviour is too often labelled and further states that this can worsen the situation. He terms this 'iatrogenic' labelling.

Stumphauzer (1986: 5) also emphasises that arrests or other official processes may sometimes act as a reward by increasing their status among peers instead of acting as a deterrent. Elliott, et al. (1979: 293) theorise that the impact of negative labelling is more severe for middle class youth. However for most youth, especially those who do

not have a high regard for conventional society and who are apprehended and officially processed, the effects of labelling are very weak.

Garrett and Short (1975: 368) find in their study that police officers base their judgements of youth on their experiences on the street and mainly see lower class boys as more likely to be involved in delinquent conduct than boys from other backgrounds. Studies conducted by Piliavin and Briar (in Garrett & Short 1975: 369) concluded that the factors that influenced the police to approach any boy was his resemblance to a delinquent stereotype, which was characterised by an unkempt appearance, resentment and lack of respect for the police.

### **2.3 The justice process**

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (in Consedine 1995: 7) says that crime and the problems associated with them are visible throughout the world. He adds that often these problems are dealt with by focusing on retribution and punishment, with imprisonment being the most used method of getting the message across. Yet the crime rate seems to rise regardless of these methods of deterrence (Consedine 1995: 7). Prisons are filled to the brim and the cost of retributive justice is astronomical.

According to Wright (1996: 11-21) crime and punishment have been associated with each other through the ages. Through this view of punishment, victims have not been treated well. Until the eighteenth century victims were required to set in motion their own legal proceedings, at their own expense. Now the state handles this, but still the victim is left on the sidelines. At the same time offenders are also not given the opportunity to make amends or repair the damage they have caused. Wright is of the opinion that the emphasis on conviction and punishment of offenders is distorting the justice process. He also argues that the focus point of crime should not be that it is punishable; rather, that it is harmful to people, the state or community, animals, or the environment.

However where children and youth are concerned issues surrounding crime and punishment have been dealt with in many different ways since the nineteenth century. There the realisation originates that children accused of criminal behaviour should be treated differently from adults (Sloth- Nielsen 2000: 283). Adams (1986: 97) is of the opinion that since then professionals, the lay public and the media have been debating the problems of juvenile crime and the best ways of responding to them, coming up with a variety of possible solutions ranging from tougher custodial measures at the

one extreme and non-intervention at the other with a variety of supervisory or treatment schemes in between. Hughes (2001: 258) reminds us that the history of punishment has not just been a story of the prison, but that imprisonment as mode of punishment is a recent and modern invention. He adds that there is a long and troubled history of the attempts made to reform and rehabilitate youthful offenders as well as adults of less serious offences, through a mix of justice and welfare-based approaches outside of prison.

Muncie (1999: 253) adds that although the dominant strategy towards juveniles originally was punishment, but in such a way that young offenders were separated from the adults, so as not to be contaminated, this approach was challenged by those critics who believed that there should be a focus on the young person's needs instead of his deeds. According to this so-called welfare model, intervention should be designed to help offenders and secure their reintegration into mainstream society. The offending behaviour is viewed as stemming from a specific individual or social pathological condition. Therefore criminality is viewed as a sickness or weakness that requires treatment, protection and care (Hughes 2001: 265).

Muncie (1999: 253) notes that this approach and rehabilitation institutions were later criticized for being "stigmatising, dehumanising, expensive, brutalising" rather than rehabilitative agencies. Both Hughes (2001: 265) and Sloth-Nielsen (2000: 384) explain that welfarism came under attack because it was viewed (by its critics) as an approach that was too soft on crime. These critics thought that juveniles would be better served if there were to be a return to the principles of legality and due process to the youth justice system.

This moving away from welfare marked the return of the 'back to justice' movement. And alongside this movement diversionary strategies also came to the fore (Hughes 2001: 271). Examples being community-based programmes like photography classes, the main aim of which was to divert young offenders from prosecution and custody. However, critics of diversion still felt that this method further eroded the youths' right to due process (Hughes 2001: 272). Diversion will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Another approach used to deal with young offenders is the restorative justice model, which focuses on alternative informal and communal means of conflict resolution, which will also be discussed in more detail in the next section (Hughes 2001: 282). It



is thus clear that there are distinct, yet overlapping, approaches to the juvenile crime situation.

### **2.3.1 Restorative justice**

According to Consedine (1995: 7) crime is a complex problem involving every individual in a community. Therefore everyone should be involved in the justice process. Archbishop Tutu also goes further and adds that imprisonment should be restricted to that minority who are too dangerous to live in the community. Consedine agrees with the archbishop that constructive and non-violent options that allow offenders to take responsibility for their actions and help victims could be a better option. Therefore he promotes restorative justice in his book. Wright (1996: 30), who also promotes restorative justice, found in his studies that something other than punishment is being put forward, replacing the negative message of deterrence by reaffirming accepted values rather than condoning the crime or excusing the criminal. Individual offenders would be given the message: You have caused harm to someone else and you have to repair the damage. However, if you need help in making reparation to the victim we will help.

Consedine (1995: 56) states that among British teenagers 92% of offenders re-offend after being released from detention, therefore in his opinion, detention (retributive justice) does not work and diversion should be given a chance. Within a study done in Canada due process is implemented which is aimed at teaching deviant youth responsibility for their actions by means of punishment. This approach endeavours to curb the occurrence of youth crime. However, Leschied (1989: 180) argues that a deterrence-based response to juvenile crime does not reduce juvenile crime. Leschied (1989: 181) further adds that this response to crime may neglect intervention that is in the interest of both the young person and his community.

Consedine (1995: 105) also considers the involvement of the parents and families of the offenders as a crucial concept. Very often these young offenders are a part of families who have run out of ways to control his/her behaviour and the process of diversion can therefore serve as a resource as they help each other. Consedine (1995: 18) believes that good law aims to create a strong, safe, healthy and just society; and must provide protection to the community and reparation to the victims. He argues that this is not being accomplished in retributive justice. Wright (1996: 39) also focuses on the positive value it can hold for the youth to come before a magistrate that

considers diversion as an option. Wright (1996: 39) cites different authors who agree and state that the judge can penetrate the youth's way of thinking and feeling. It can therefore be therapeutic and lead to a desire for reparation on the part of the delinquent. These authors also emphasise the importance of having and keeping parents involved. As parents see the magistrate being understanding towards the juvenile, parents will also adopt this strategy in dealing with the youth.

An influential theory currently used to bolster the arguments regarding restorative justice is Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming. In the case of reintegrative shaming, the offender is viewed as someone actively making choices, in the midst of societal pressures in the form of shaming (Braithwaite 1989: 9-12). For Braithwaite reintegrative shaming is shaming that still maintains the bonds of respect, love and forgiving the person yet condemning the criminal act. It is hoped that in using reintegrative shaming, as opposed to labelling the person, criminal subcultures are made to look less attractive, because it is usually these subcultures that the offender turns to as a way of coping with labelling or negative shaming by the community (Braithwaite 1989: 14).

The process of restorative justice entails that offenders take responsibility for their actions and also take responsibility for making amends and restoring a belief in them. The goal with restorative justice is that offenders will be part of a process of mending the wrong and again become a part of the law-abiding community (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 420-421). A fundamental part of restorative justice is that all the role-players (offenders, victims, family, community) are actively involved in meaningful participation.

In a study done by Griffith et al. (1989) on youth justice in Egypt, they found that traditional negotiative systems of social control are still operating in villages that only refer more severe cases to courts in town. According to Griffiths et.al (1989: 140-147) these systems appear to be more effective in addressing the issues of all concerned: the deviant youth, the victims and the community. The community and extended family support networks are used extensively to assist in this traditional method of justice. The primary objective of the system is to restore harmony and order to the community rather than just assigning blame and imposing sanctions. Braithwaite (1989: 8) suggests that crime can be better controlled if the community of law-abiding citizens are the 'primary controllers through active participation', creating ways of

reintegrating the offender into the community. Wright (1996: 52) also found that reparative justice offers a way for victims to be involved and compensated and, it is hoped that this would encourage them to report crime instead of taking the law into their own hands. Therefore Wright (1996: 59) states that restorative justice is not to be seen as a new form of punishment or rehabilitation, but rather as a principle that aims to repair the damage and hurt caused to victims and communities. For Wright (1996: 143) restorative justice can be summed up as follows: support and reparation for the victim, the offender should be active in this reparation for the victim, co-operating in rehabilitation and detention only if necessary. Wright (1996: 143) further assumes that this could lead to the community becoming involved and participating in the process, as it is their right to do so. The major change with restorative justice is the primary focus of the courts; instead of punishment for the offender, focus should be on the restoration of the community and the victim (Wright 1996: 144).

The logic of restorative justice asserts that the key task of justice is to 'heal wounds' rather than punish offences. It is argued that this is more likely to succeed if the offender remains 'in' and 'of' the community with the emphasis being placed on reintegration rather than expulsion of the wrongdoer (Hughes 2001: 285). According to Wright (1996: 133) punishment needs to be re-evaluated: Is it an appropriate response to crime and should the process by which this response is decided be adapted?

In a survey undertaken by Schönteich (2000) to assess the attitudes towards punishment in the Eastern Cape, he found that almost two-thirds of the respondents felt that juveniles should be treated differently from adults. This view was especially prevalent among rural respondents. People felt this way because they thought that young people were easily influenced and therefore more susceptible to peer group pressure. Just over a half (51%) of the respondents were also more in favour of caning juveniles, and in the case of serious offences detention rather than prisons. This can also be linked to the view of respondents that prisons only breed crime and serves as a "school for criminals".

Wright (1996: 134) is also concerned with the ethical considerations when punishment is the chosen response. He asserts that the appropriateness of punishment does not only depend upon whether it achieves its purpose but also on whether there are unacceptable side effects. Wright (1996: 28) adds that punishment makes the

offender think of himself/herself rather than the victim and repairing the damage. It can also hurt the family of the offender further. The majority of Schönteich's (2000) respondents (71%) thought that offenders learned new ways to commit crime while in prison. They felt that juveniles deserved a second chance and the common reason for this was that they felt that young people could be reformed because they were still young and impressionable. In his comparison of punishment and rehabilitation Wright (1996: 135) suggests that punishment provides little opportunity for behavioural changes and may even elicit aggressive behaviour. Rehabilitative measures on the other hand give an offender the feeling of being accepted and a chance for his/her new behaviour to be approved. This acceptance can be seen as a reward that could then encourage the offender to continue with this behaviour.

According to Howes (1993: 371) the increase of juvenile crime in South Africa, and elsewhere, is cause for concern. Wheeler et al. (1968: 32) explain that the separating of juveniles from adults at every stage in the criminal process was justified largely on grounds that the punitive and moralistic framework that dominate the police, court and confinement procedures for adults is inappropriate for juveniles. They further state that separating juveniles from adult criminals is essential, as a balance has to be struck between punishment, justice and deterrence in an effort to help, treat, reform, and rehabilitate. Diversion is viewed as one of the alternative measures to punishing delinquency or criminal acts.

### **2.3.2 Diversion**

Diversion is one of the popular options in an attempt to treat juvenile crime differently. Diversion is seen as a referral away from either custody or the formal court procedures, and has become an integral part of child justice systems in most western countries (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 418). Although referral frequently includes the attendance of a course, performance of community service or restitution to victims in some way it does not necessarily entail the involvement of external agencies. Diversion can include "cautioning, alternative methods of resolving the dispute, referral for counselling or supervision, and a host of other options" (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 418). In a study done by Albrecht and Karstedt (1987: 316) they found youthful offenders in Bielefeld being "diverted to nothing". These were usually young offenders arrested for minor crimes such as theft and property damage. Therefore it is clear that diversion can and does take many forms. Shapiro (1994: 90) defines

diversion as the “channelling, on certain conditions, of prima facie cases away from the criminal justice system to extra-judicial programmes at the discretion of the prosecution”.

Diversion involves an appropriate intervention in order to bring about a change in the behaviour of the child. Diversion involves giving communities a bigger stake in justice. The guidance of families and communities, supported by professionals and specific interventions, can make children understand the impact of their crimes on others and ensure that they put right the wrong they have done.

Shapiro (1994: 90) identifies some of the advantages and disadvantages of the programme: Diversion programmes allows the offender to repair any damage caused by their actions; it also helps in the process of rehabilitation and education; it encourages offenders to take responsibility for their actions and enables them to be accountable; problems which may have led to the offending behaviour can be identified; offenders will not acquire a criminal record; and it lessens the load of the formal justice system. He argues that the biggest disadvantage of the diversion programmes currently on offer is that they do not offer follow-up sessions or support.

### **2.3.3 Lifeskills**

Many diversion programmes are based on lifeskills training. According to Schurink (1994a: 47) social support is vital to the development of social skills. This support together with a “sense of belonging” can enable youth to, not only accept responsibility for their actions, but also to start acting responsibly. Nelson-Jones (1991: 12) defines lifeskills as “self-help” skills, which entails “personally responsible choices”, being responsible for making your own choices enables you to help yourself. Rooth (2000: 26) agrees and defines lifeskills as those skills that make it possible for people to interact meaningfully regardless of the challenges that might be posed by the environment. Thus there is a focus on the development of psychological skills. Lifeskills are those skills that make it easier for people to realise their potential and be productive units of the community. Nelson-Jones (1991: 5) suggests that today problems are widespread and the world is filled with people who are not living at their full potential. For Candotti et al. (1993: 5) the main concepts of lifeskills programmes are self-empowerment. Lifeskills programmes are based on the model of experiential learning. Rooth (1998: 3) describes experiential learning as learning that takes place through experience and reflection. It is participatory in nature and is a shared activity

where everyone has something to teach and something to learn. The assumption is that participants are more likely to believe in knowledge that they have discovered than in knowledge that others have presented (Rooth 1998: 3). Thus such programmes should aim to equip participants with skills that will enable them to do things for themselves and also be able to assist those around them. Nelson-Jones (1991: 11) views the primary aim of skills to be the ability to make and implement choices in order to achieve a goal. He further explains that skills should not be viewed as either-or, but a person should be thought of as someone who possesses “skills strengths” or “weaknesses”. In effect people are then trained to be “better choosers” (Nelson-Jones 1991: 12)

#### **2.4 The juvenile justice in South Africa**

Article 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) determines that no young person that gets into trouble with the law should be detained in prison or police custody, and that detention should only be used as a last resort. If the young person is held in detention, it should be for the shortest possible time. The Constitution also makes provision for the fact that steps taken against young people should always be in their best interest. Relevant articles in the South African Constitution coincides with the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that states that the best interest of the child should be paramount in all actions taken on their behalf. The child has the right to participate in making decisions that will affect his/her life. He/she has the right not to be discriminated against and has the right to survival and development (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 387).

Unfortunately, Nilsson (2000: 1) found in his studies that these constitutional requirements are not always met. According to Nilsson (2000: 3) young people who get into trouble with the law, and therefore get detained will be turned into criminals especially if they spend long periods in detention because of being labelled as a criminal and being in interaction with ‘hardened’ criminals. According to Shapiro (in Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 12) young people are not held accountable for their actions within the criminal justice system, and therefore are mostly not in a position to apologise, repair the damage or make plans to prevent re-offending. Instead the experience leaves the youth all the more hardened and willing to repeat his/her offending behaviour.

Sloth-Nielsen and Muntingh (1999: 1) discuss new provisions designed in draft legislation (entitled the Child Justice Bill) that can separate the procedural system for children charged with offences from that of their adult counterparts. The proposed legislation is also in favour of assessment and diversion procedures, which will now receive statutory recognition.

Diversion programmes should, however, meet certain requirements so that the human rights of the individual cannot be violated. It is also important to note that the protection of the rights and interests of the child should be balanced against the protection of the community (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 387). Therefore diversion can only be arranged with the child or his/her parents' consent to their involvement. Thus, the programme should protect the child from harm, exploitation or disproportionately severe outcomes in relation to the harm caused by the offence.

According to this Draft Bill diversion will serve the following purpose: it will encourage the child to take responsibility for the harm he/she caused. It will also create an opportunity for the victim to express his/her views, encourage restitution, and promote reconciliation. It will help in reintegrating the child into his/her community, prevent stigmatisation and prevent the child from acquiring a criminal record. Consedine (1995: 105) agrees that diversion or restorative justice does have its advantages, and that young people are better made accountable for their anti-social and criminal actions through these processes.

### **2.5 The YES-programme presented by NICRO**

As stated, diversion programmes are viewed as an alternative way of dealing with a young person in trouble with the law. Thus he or she is diverted away from the criminal justice system into a programme that would make him/her more accountable for his/her actions. Therefore diversion programmes should not be seen as a means for the young offender to 'come off easy'. Rather diversion is recommended in those cases where it will be in the interest of the offender, victim (if present), the criminal justice system and society if the offender is not prosecuted or convicted (Muntingh 2001: 6).

NICRO offers diversion programmes to young people caught up in the criminal justice system. It was introduced in 1993 in an attempt to curb the problems associated with deviant children defying the law. A NICRO study in 1998 showed

that 75% of children attending diversion complied with programme requirements, and that the recidivism rate for the sample was 6.7% (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 419). These services offered by NICRO are guided by the policies of restorative justice and people centred development. NICRO believes that it is through restorative programmes that young people in conflict with the law can learn to take responsibility and return to society without a negative stigma attached to them (Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 10).

Participants are selected for the programme by the prosecutor, investigating officer and social worker of the court. Identified youth offenders are then presented to the senior prosecutor for approval (Darling 1996: 38). Adolescents who are selected for the programme, as well as their parents, should be made aware that participation in the programme is completely voluntary and that successful completion of the programme would mean that their case would be officially removed from the court roll. Participants are generally between the ages of 14 and 18 years, although under special circumstances older or younger participants are allowed to do the programme. The programmes offered at NICRO - the youth empowerment scheme (YES), pre-trial community service, the journey, family group conferences, victim-offender mediation - are drawn up for the specific needs of the participants.

The YES-programme is a life-skills training programme aimed at helping the youth take responsibility for his/her actions and correcting the wrong done (in Mapping the future-the facilitators' manual). Pre-trial community service lends the offender an opportunity to do community service instead of being prosecuted, thereby also taking responsibility for his/her actions. The journey is an intensive and longer running programme for those youth most at risk and works towards constructive and independent living. This programme also focuses on lifeskills training. Family group conferences involve the family and friends of the young person together with the victim, in a process that aims to restore the balance of the community and prevent re-offending. Victim offender mediation brings victim and offender together so as to reach an agreement that could satisfy both parties (Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 4).

This study will focus on the YES-programme because it is the programme most used by NICRO. This relates to the finding of Muntingh (2001: 8) that the majority of children are charged with minor property crimes such as theft, shoplifting and malicious damage to property. Initially the programme was designed and used as a pre-trial option to prevent youth from getting a criminal record at such a young age, but it can also be used as part of their sentence (Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 15). The



YES-programme normally deals with first time offenders of less serious crimes such as shoplifting, theft and common assault. However juveniles do not have to be first time offenders to be included in the programme. The programme is most suited for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years, but prosecutors may use their own discretion to include juveniles of 19 years who still attend school. NICRO further requires that the youth have a fixed address. This ensures that there is a certain degree of control that can be exercised over the whereabouts of the youngster. The youths' parent/guardian must be present at the court and commit to attending the first and last session of the programme because the programme also aims to open up communication between parent and child. The young offender must also admit guilt, before he/she can be admitted into the programme (Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 16-18). This could be viewed as part of taking responsibility for the crime. Both young offenders and their parents should be made aware of these requirements for attending the programme through the probation officer. The fact that attendance of the programme would lead to the charges being withdrawn and that attendance is fully voluntary should be stressed.

After completion of the programme the offender returns to the court with an evaluation from the programme facilitator. This document is discussed with the senior public prosecutor and further action is taken. Usually the case will be withdrawn and any other recommendations from the facilitator are considered.

Through this programme youth are encouraged to behave within societal norms in order to prevent further criminal activity. It also gives the youth an opportunity to reflect on his/her behaviour and the consequences of his/her actions (Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 15). The underlying philosophy of YES emphasizes taking responsibility on the part of the young person and correcting the wrong that has been committed. With this programme NICRO aims to:

- provide young people with the skills that will help them to understand themselves, to relate to others and to take responsibility for their actions
- provide young people with an opportunity to express their ideas, opinions and feelings in a constructive way
- provide young people with the skills to cope with the challenges in their environment
- open up communication between young people and their parents/guardians

- encourage self-respect, self-worth and respect for others based on a human rights culture
- encourage and foster parental responsibility (in Mapping the future, The Manual).

To accomplish these goals the programme consists of weekly sessions of two hours for eight weeks, concentrating on lifeskills. The sessions normally consist of 15 to 25 participants (Muntingh 2001: 7).

In these sessions the consequences of the youth's behaviour are discussed: the crime; the consequences and seriousness of the offence and the consequences of a criminal record; the importance of a positive self-concept; the importance of being assertive rather than aggressive; conflict management and responsible decision-making. The course also helps parents and children understand each other fully (Muntingh & Shapiro 1997: 19). The programme also relies on interactive and experiential learning techniques, such as games and role-play (Muntingh 2001: 28). This helps to make the programme more accessible and the youth can better grasp how these skills can be applied in their daily lives. It also requires of the young people to perform tasks in preparation for each session, so that the programme does not become a two-hour session per week but rather something that the young people have to work at continuously thinking about their actions and plans throughout the programme. One of the tasks that they have to perform is writing a letter of apology to the victims of their crime. This helps them to accept responsibility for their actions and also realise, to a greater extent that they are not the only ones affected by their actions.

The first session, where both parents and juveniles are present, focuses on crime awareness. This session aims to inform and create awareness of: the aims of the programme, the nature and causes of crime, the effects of crime, the seriousness and consequences of a criminal record, the experiences and feelings resulting from involvement in crime and the criminal justice system and parents' experiences of the offence. After this session parents will only join the juveniles again at the last session. The second session focuses on self-concept. The objectives of this session is to: broaden the juvenile's self-knowledge, create awareness of factors that influence self-concept, allow juveniles to reflect on how their contact with the criminal justice system influenced their self-concept and to promote and motivate self-acceptance and a positive attitude towards oneself.

The third session on assertiveness helps the juveniles to differentiate between aggressive, passive and assertive behaviour, create awareness of the advantages of

assertive behaviour and to provide an opportunity to act out ways of improving assertive behaviour.

The fourth session on decision-making helps the young people to become aware of the importance of responsible decision-making. This helps them to make the connection between decision-making and crime, self-concept and assertive behaviour. They are able to examine the influence that peer pressure has on decision-making and begin the process of constructive decision-making and planning for future goals.

The fifth session focuses on rights and responsibilities. This session aims to make the youth aware of their rights, but also that these rights are linked to certain responsibilities on their part. They are encouraged to assert their rights and also respect the rights of others.

The sixth session focuses on norms and laws, and aims: to examine societal norms and their influence on daily life, to highlight the consequences of societal norms being ignored and to promote an understanding of the law and the legal system which attempts to protect societal norms.

The seventh session focuses on gender, stereotyping and socialisation. In this session youth are encouraged to challenge stereotyping and the role that the media plays in their socialisation. The session also aims to promote respect and gender equality.

The last session, where the parents are once again involved, focuses on the parent-child relationship. Through this session it is hoped that both parent and child become aware of the demands, problems and emotions prevalent in every stage of life. The facilitator tries to encourage communication between parent and child so as to help the two parties better understand each other. The session is also used to evaluate both the parent's and the child's attitude and experience of the YES programme.

Throughout the programme the participants are encouraged and invited to think of how their actions have affected their lives and those around them. They are made aware that their deviant behaviour does not only affect them and their families but many others in the community. They are encouraged to share their experiences with their fellow participants and also to start applying the newly learned skills in their lives. Parents are also helped to understand the views of the youth instead of just concentrating on their hurt and frustration brought on by the deviancy. It is hoped that both parent and child would be able to communicate better after the programme and be able to support each other in preventing the deviant behaviour from occurring again.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study will make use of qualitative research methods in an attempt to describe and evaluate the implementation of the YES-programme. This chapter provides an overview of the different methods that will be used in the study.

### 3.1 Evaluation research

The purpose of evaluation research is to evaluate the impact of social interventions (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 334) and it relies on many methods inter alia surveys and experiments. The key element of evaluation research is the intervention or programme being studied (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 335), which in this case will be the YES-programme offered by NICRO.

Evaluation research is done for the purposes of making judgements on the merit or worth of programmes, to improve programmes, and to generate knowledge (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 337). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 338) the study should thus focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, the implementation of the programme and the response of participants to the programme. This type of evaluation is called a process evaluation, involving three main methods of gathering data: through records, observations that refer to unstructured forms of participant observation and self-reports that refer to all forms of interviewing (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 347). For the purposes of this specific study, programme evaluation focuses on possible improvement of programmes, the generation of knowledge on the working of the programme and the personal experiences of participants within the programme.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 357) qualitative or naturalistic evaluation approaches generally share the same fundamental epistemological and methodological principles of qualitative research. They further add that naturalistic evaluation is best used when it is desired that the insider perspective be integrated into an evaluation design; where the focus is on describing the implementation rather than on the impact of an intervention; also when the purpose of the evaluation is to provide feedback to improve the programme being evaluated rather than judgement-oriented; and when it is possible to make use of unobtrusive methods such as observation in a manner that is ethically acceptable (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 357). Therefore in this study I will make use of qualitative methods to gather and analyse data.

### **3.2 Qualitative research**

This study will rely on qualitative research and its techniques. Qualitative techniques, usually resembles what happens in everyday life in everyday settings. Because of this, qualitative techniques can produce a holistic view of the behaviours, actions and attitudes of the participants (Kane & O'Reilly-De Brun 2001: 198). Qualitative research attempts to study human action from the perspective of the social actors, describing and understanding rather than explaining human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 270).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989: 46) because of the strengths of qualitative research, it is best used in studies where the emphasis is on the exploration and description of events. This study focuses on the context in which things happen as well as the subject's frame of reference. Silverman (2001: 25) also suggests that when studies are concerned with exploring life histories or everyday behaviour, qualitative methods should be favoured. The main concern is to understand the action in the context that it is happening, instead of attempting to generalize to a theoretical population (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 270). Maykut and Morehouse (1995: 2) also add that qualitative research examines people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely, and therefore through this kind of research you can more closely sketch the situation as experienced by the participants. Stern (1979: 26) agrees and adds that qualitative studies often suggest theory and raise questions that lead to further research.

Therefore the present study will be exploratory because it aims to provide a basic understanding of the implementation of the YES-programme through a description of the sessions and youth involved in these sessions thereby determining priorities for future research (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 80). Kane and O'Reilly-De Brun (2001: 34) view exploratory research as part of descriptive research and explain that the aim of this kind of research is to get a picture of a situation, behaviour or attitude, to encourage future research.

#### **3.2.1 Strengths of qualitative research**

When qualitative methods are used there are more opportunities to use probing and in-depth exploration of the social world being studied, and therefore they are also more capable of capturing the "insider" perspective of those participants who are a part of the study.

There are many things that can be studied through observation. This study will focus on the YES-programme and specifically the kinds of discussions held at each session, and the effect this had on the participants. This can fall under Denzin's physical location and language behaviour that he identifies as the major types of observable data (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 294). The others are exterior physical signs, expressive movement and time duration.

### **3.2.2 Weaknesses of qualitative research**

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 80) warns that the most important shortcoming of exploratory studies are that they are seldom representative of any given population and therefore only hints at answers to research questions instead of being able to provide satisfactory answers. According to Kane and O'Reilly-De Brun (2001: 37) this approach tries to discover the ideas that shape people's behaviour and how they see things. The youth in this study will most likely have special experiences that other youth in different communities do not experience. Kane and O'Reilly-De Brun (2001: 39) view this as a great disadvantage of this emic or "insider" approach because the findings will not be representative of a large population but only of a certain group in a community. A representative sample is, however, not a major concern of this study because the focus of the study is on a specific programme, the YES-programme, and therefore will not attempt to generalise certain 'facts' to a larger population.

### **3.3 Qualitative research methods**

Within qualitative research there are several useful methods of gathering data, Marshall and Rossman (1989: 78) identify participant observation, in-depth interviewing and elite interviewing as their best options when doing qualitative research. This study will focus on participant observation as well as interviewing. Participant observation will include sitting in on sessions as well as facilitating sessions. Interviews will be done with the social worker involved and what Spradley (1980) calls informal interviewing which entails conversations with others involved in the process, such as parents, participants, and other facilitators.

#### **3.3.1 Participant observation**

Fetterman (1989: 45) views participant observation as a combination of participating in the lives of the people being studied and at the same time maintaining a professional distance that allows for observation and accurate recording of data. Because all human beings can be participants or observers in any ordinary social

situation, Spradley (1980: 53) identifies six important differences that the researcher should keep in mind so that the study will produce fruitful data. These are that participant observers should have two purposes: to engage in the social situation being observed and also to observe the social situation. The researcher should also seek to be explicitly aware of everything that happens especially those things you would ordinarily not take notice of. The researcher should also take in a much broader spectrum of information (Spradley refers to this as the “wide angle lens”). The participant observer will also experience the situation both as an insider, participating in activities, and an outsider, in observing the situation. The participant observer should also make use of introspection, therefore using yourself as a tool of understanding the social situation you are observing. Finally accurate record-keeping is important (Spradley 1980: 53-58).

In Stern’s (1979: 24-28) view qualitative studies, and especially exploratory studies where there is little background knowledge, should be done through naturalistic observation. He also warns that for this kind of study to be useful it should be recorded carefully in concrete language. Stern (1979) defines naturalistic observation as a method of gathering evidence that relies on the complete and accurate recording of events as they occur without any or minimal interference with the events. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 294) also caution on the vitality of taking accurate notes of the events, adding that the researcher should try and make notes as she observes, but if this is not possible notes should be made as soon as possible afterwards.

Marshall and Rossman (1989: 79) explain that participant observation is a special kind of observation that entails that the researcher be involved with the social world being studied, and immersion into the world of the participants will allow the researcher to experience reality as the participants do. The researcher’s degree of involvement can also vary, at the one extreme being a full participant who participates in the daily life of his subjects to the complete observer on the other end who does not get involved in social interaction, and of course there are an array of complementary mixes along the continuum (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 79). Spradley (1980: 58) agrees that there are different types of participant observation and the main difference between these types is the degree of involvement in the social situation being studied. Spradley (1980) identifies five types of participation: complete, active, moderate, passive, and nonparticipation. In my study both active participation and passive participation will be used, because passive participation entails that the researcher be

present at the scene of action but does not participate to any great extent. This will especially happen in the sessions the researcher will be attending while the social worker is facilitating these sessions. Active participation entails that the researcher do what others are doing. In this research project the researcher will also be facilitating sessions. Therefore to some extent being part of the group activity being observed (Spradley 1980: 60). For this study the researcher will at times be sitting in on sessions facilitated by the social worker which means that the researchers' role will be one of observer, whilst at other times the researcher will be facilitating sessions and thus be actively involved while at the same time observing the events as they unfold.

Marshall and Rossman (1989: 81) also pay attention to the way in which the researcher's role can vary in terms of how much of the facts of the study are made known to the participants. On a continuum full disclosure lies on one end with complete secrecy on the other. For the purposes of this study a middle ground of disclosure will be found. The organisation and social workers I'll be working with will have a clear understanding of the study and will also receive the proposal of the study. The participants in the programmes offered by the organisation will also be getting information on the study but will not be getting a detailed description of the researchers goals. This approach can be explained through the words of Taylor and Bogdan (in Marshall and Rossman 1989: 81) as "truthful but vague".

Further Stern (1979) identifies four rules to be adhered to, to ensure that good data is being gathered: The researcher should make use of complete and accurate recording to ensure that data is scientifically useful. It also eliminates the bias of the researcher only recording what he thinks is noteworthy. Accuracy or concrete language is necessary for the study to be noted as reliable. Notes should also be made of events as they occur; this requires that notes be made on the spot or immediately after, because memory tends to be faulty and selective. The researcher should also make an attempt to be relatively unobtrusive so as to truly study events as they would appear naturally (minimal interference). Since I was unable to take immediate notes during each session (as in many cases I was the facilitator to the group and in other instances I was observing whilst also taking part in the activities presented) I wrote down the proceedings of each session directly afterwards to ensure accuracy.

According to Silverman (2001: 14) "authenticity" is the issue in qualitative research and the aim is to get first hand information on social processes most often in the natural setting. Observation is a good method for creating high construct validity as



well as creating in-depth insight (Mouton 2001: 148), which is needed in a study such as this where the interest lies in the programme and those involved in the programme. Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002: 134) are of the opinion that observation gets you “closer to action” because the collecting of data takes place while things are happening.

### **3.3.1.1 Strengths of participant observation**

Participant observation has many strengths (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 102): Observation lends the opportunity for face-to-face encounters with those people important to a study, which also means that data can be collected in its natural setting. This method is also good for obtaining data on the nonverbal aspects of communication, because you are in a good position to be able to observe the body language and feelings that go with answers or statements of participants. Data can also be collected on the unconscious thoughts and behaviour of participants. This means that there is a great opportunity to uncover the subjective side or the participants’ perspective on the social world being studied. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 294) explain that the greatest advantage of observation is the presence of a “thinking researcher on the scene of the action.” Observation also forces the researcher to familiarise herself with the social world being studied; this allows the researcher to become aware of things that might have been overlooked in previous studies; people’s nonverbal reactions are sometimes more informative than the verbal responses; observation tends to be unobtrusive but even when it is obtrusive the effect wears off relatively quickly (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 294).

### **3.3.1.2 Limitations of participant observation**

One of the major drawbacks of using observation as a method of study is that it may yield information that confirms a specific theory, but this does not mean that any other explanations can be ruled out (Stern 1979: 27). Other problems caused by the presence of an observer is that although every attempt is made for minimal interference there is no way of knowing for certain whether this requirement has been met (Stern 1979: 64). This is what Stern (1979: 65) terms the “on-stage” effect which refers to the way participants might react or “act” when they are aware of the researcher observing them. Apart from the “on-stage” effect of observation, the observation can also lead to more persistent changes that will continue even after the observation, or as Stern (1979: 67) coins it when the participant is “off-stage”.

Marshall and Rossman (1989: 104) also identify other weaknesses of observation. Data gathered can be open to misinterpretation because of differences between the researchers and the participants. The researcher is also dependent on the cooperation of the participants for gathering data. Observation is also fraught with ethical dilemmas, especially because of the amount of disclosure of the study aims that the researcher decides on. These findings will also be difficult to replicate because groups are not always similar, but also because the nature of information gathered is dependent on the researcher's opportunities and characteristics. The data is often also subject to effects brought on by the researcher's presence. The gathering of data is also highly dependent on the ability of the researcher to find and make opportunity and to control bias.

Observations also have certain disadvantages in that the result cannot be generalised and the collecting and analysing of data can also be rather time consuming. However, this will not affect the present study much as the findings are not intended to be generalised to all youth offenders. Mouton (2001: 148) also suggests that the main source of error when it comes to participant observation is the potential bias of the researcher. To overcome this, 'full and accurate' notes will be made (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 271) without choosing what information is worth taking note of and which is not.

### **3.3.2 Interviewing**

Spradley (1980: 123) describes informal interviews as those that occur whenever you are asking people questions during the course of the observation. Fetterman (1989: 47) further explains that interviewing helps to put into a larger context what the researcher sees and experiences and informal interviews, although they sometimes take the form of conversations, have a specific research agenda. Group interviewing is useful because it allows the respondents the space they need to get together and create meaning amongst themselves (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 292). Kane and O'Reilly-De Brun (2001: 210) adds that group interviews are useful in getting a general picture of a place and its needs, as well as finding out what people think about their situation. The researcher should find a few questions that not only interest the participants, but also gets them to talk about those topics that are important to the study (Morgan 1998: 49). Krueger (1998: 21) explains that there are five categories of questions each with its own function:

- opening questions help to get participants acquainted with each other and encourages them to talk openly in the group;
- introductory questions introduces the general topic of discussion;
- transition questions ask participants to go into mere depth about the topic and how it affects them;
- key questions obtain insight into those issues that are of central concern to the study;
- and ending questions bring closure to the discussion and enable participants to reflect on previous comments (Krueger 1998: 22).

According to Kane and O'Reilly-De Brun (2001: 211) the group interaction, rather than the answers to questions, is what produces insight. Krueger (1998: 3) identifies a few guiding principles that need to be considered before and while questions are formulated. Krueger (1998: 3) suggest that questions be formulated in a conversational manner that will create a comfortable environment; questions should be clear, short and understandable; the researcher should seek help and feedback from people similar to the focus group and allow sufficient time for his peers also to review and help; the questions that work should be used even if these questions are viewed by the researcher as inappropriate (Krueger 1998: 4).

### **3.4 The role of the researcher**

Participants for this study were contacted through NICRO. As researcher it was my responsibility to contact their head office in Cape Town and first off gain permission to be able to work with the social worker at the Mitchells Plain branch. After gaining access to the Mitchells Plain branch, meetings were conducted with the social worker in charge of the area I would be working in. Interviews were conducted primarily with this social worker. She also facilitated the programme that I was involved in and, arrangements were made that I would observe some sessions but also facilitate most of the sessions. As previously mentioned NICRO is highly dependent on trained volunteers to facilitate sessions. However, since I have a background in social work and was also observing sessions I was allowed to facilitate. We arranged that I introduce myself to the participants at the beginning of each new programme and explain to the participants and their parents that whilst facilitating I will have a dual purpose as I would be recording data for this study. Informal interviews were primarily done with the young offenders although numerous discussions were also held with parents.

Initially I had decided to make use of focus groups including individuals who were part of the YES-programme and also those who had at some stage of their life been a part of the YES-programme. However, coming into contact with individuals who had been part of the YES-programme was a difficult task because NICRO does not at present have any follow-up sessions. Thus I had no means of getting into contact with such individuals. Individuals who are currently involved in the programme are expected to attend weekly sessions of two hours and it was anticipated that they would not want to sacrifice more time (not to mention money in terms of travelling costs) attending one or more focus group sessions.

An attempt was made to have focus group sessions with a group of youth in Khayelitsha who had attended the YES-programme and now formed part of the 'Diversity in Music Education' (DIME) project. It is a programme designed to help those adolescents who have been through the YES-programme and therefore have also been involved in criminal activities. These individuals meet once a week and learn to play marimba instruments. The project is also set up in such a way that these adolescents have mentors who visit them and serve as a support base. The purpose of the DIME-project is to fill up their time with more constructive activities.

After attending some of their weekly gatherings and having discussion groups with some of the participants in this programme it became clear that these adolescents had other concerns that did not link up with my research questions. Some of these adolescents had been part of the DIME-project since its inception and were now expected to make way for other adolescents to make use of the opportunity. This was only one of the aspects of the programme that they did not agree with and therefore they were looking for a platform to raise their concerns. When probed on the YES-programme and their experience of it, these youth were mostly negative and felt that it did little to help them. Yet it is important to note that these adolescents were at present having lots of negative experiences and feelings surrounding core issues of the project and this influenced how they felt about NICRO-services as a whole. Thus I decided to observe the YES-programme while it was being presented to young offenders.

The programme sessions were intensive discussion groups where participants were expected to share their private thoughts and feelings. Therefore it was decided, by the social worker and myself, that the use of a tape recorder might either inhibit

participants or have the opposite effect of allowing them to 'act-out'. Thus I needed to make use of extensive note taking as a recording method. In those sessions where I was strictly observing, taking notes were straightforwardly done and I was also able to ask questions that were of interest to my research study. It was especially in discussions with parents that valuable insights were gained.

Later sessions where I was expected to facilitate programmes this task became all the more difficult. As facilitator it was expected that the participants would be my first priority. Therefore much of the focus was on getting participants involved and making sure that everyone understood task and assignments, while at the same time observing participants and gaining insights that were of importance to the study. Thus notes had to be taken after the sessions. In many cases this resulted in only shorthand notes being made and then being elaborated on in the following days. Yet facilitating the sessions allowed me to be more involved in the overall set-up of the programme and also to some valuable insights into the lives of participants. As notes were revised themes became apparent and consequently the sessions are discussed in terms of these identified themes.

Through insights gathered from this study it is suggested that future research should attempt to focus on what happens to youth after the eight-week programme. It becomes clear during the programme that most of these youth need more than just the eight weeks and therefore future research should focus on what can and should happen after the completion of the programme. Research should perhaps also be directed at the contents of the programme. Some of the topics are of no concern or importance to the youth and therefore they do not take much notice of it during sessions. This also has a bearing on the rate of absenteeism that is another important aspect that needs to be addressed.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Meeting with the NICRO social worker**

I had a meeting with the NICRO social worker in charge of the Northern Suburbs, Cape Town, which includes Parow, Milnerton, Bellville, Goodwood, and Brackenfell. The goal with this meeting was to find out more about the programme, and determine how I would be able to participate in the process. This was an opportunity for us to work out dates and times and clear up difficulties that may arise.

The aim of the research study was discussed with the social worker, and it was also agreed that the organization would receive a full research proposal. Because of the nature of the study participants also needed to be aware of what was going on. Therefore we agreed that participants would be briefed on who I was and what I was doing at the start of each eight-week programme.

The participants were all referred to NICRO by the courts and are required to complete an eight-week programme. Participants who are referred to the programme are between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years. The other requirement for referral to the programme is an admission of guilt. Parents are also required to attend the first and last session and, depending on the facilitator, also encouraged to stay involved throughout the process. This also means that youth need a fixed address to be referred to the programme.

Groups run concurrently from Monday to Wednesday for the different age groups; Mondays are for the thirteen to fourteen year olds, Tuesdays are for the fifteen to sixteen year olds, and Wednesdays are for the seventeen to eighteen year olds. The following is a discussion of what transpired within the groups.

### **4.2 An overview of the various groups**

The Monday group was facilitated by the social worker and I had the opportunity to observe the participants and interact with them. I only attended sessions one to four, and the last session of this group, because attending the one group and facilitating another the next day proved to be a daunting task. In the case of the Tuesday group I acted as facilitator. During the first session of the groups I was involved in parents and youth are separated for discussions. This gave me the ideal opportunity to communicate with the parents while the social worker spent time with the youth.

Apart from these two groups I also facilitated a third group from the fourth session onwards and these sessions will also be discussed. Special note should be taken that the group sessions will be discussed in conjunction in the presentation of the findings of my study as this makes it more readable.

#### **4.2.1 The Monday group**

These sessions are aimed at youth between the ages of thirteen and fourteen years. Although there were eight boys present at the first session only six of the boys would continue the Monday session as the remaining two are older and therefore need to attend a different group. Amongst these boys there were a variety of offences. One was arrested for damage to school property, one for assault, another for shoplifting, one for robbery and the remaining two were arrested for possession of drugs (dagga/cannabis).

In terms of a race profile of these youth four of them were coloured, one white and one black youth. Three of the boys are still in school between Grades 7 & 8 while the other three had dropped out of school before even reaching secondary (high school) level. In terms of language everyone, except for the black youth who had Xhosa as a first language, was Afrikaans-speaking. It should also be added that although these youths' socio-economic status could not be adequately determined it is important to realize that these participants seemed to have all that they needed in terms of having their basic needs met. In fact some of them seemed to be from homes where more than the basics could be afforded. Also all of the participants in this group were living with one or both of their parents. As noted earlier parents are required to attend the first and last sessions with their children. In this group there were 7 parents, one of them had two sons who needed to attend the programme. The presence of the parents could be an indication of their commitment to helping their children.

#### **4.2.2 The Tuesday group**

The Tuesday session is aimed at participants between the ages of fifteen and sixteen years. It seems however, that parents are unaware of this because adolescents of all ages are turning up. This suggests that there might be some miscommunication between the courts and the organization. This perceived miscommunication is confirmed because weeks into the programme adolescents are still attending for the first time only because that was the date that they were issued by the courts. These adolescents are then sent away and have to wait for the start of a whole new

programme two months down the line, which also means that their court cases will not officially be withdrawn from the courts' register for another three months.

This specific group consists of fifteen participants three of who were girls. All three girls were arrested for shoplifting. Of the boys three were arrested for shoplifting, two were arrested for possession of drugs (dagga/cannabis), two for assault and one for damage to school property. In terms of a race profile of the group five of the participants were black (including two of the girls), nine were coloured (including one of the girls), and one was white. Out of the fifteen participants only seven are attending school and all are between Grades nine and eleven. The remaining participants had all dropped out of school and for the most part only had enough skills to write their names. In terms of first language, five of the participants had Xhosa as a first language and only two of these five could also speak fluent English. Six of the participants are Afrikaans first language users and have limited use of the English language, while the remaining four participants are English first language users who are also fluent in Afrikaans.

#### **4.2.3 A third group on Tuesday**

This group consisted of nine participants, between the ages of fifteen and sixteen. Of the nine, six had been arrested for shoplifting and the remaining three had been arrested for assault. Five of the participants attended school (this included the females) while the rest had dropped out of school more than a year ago. In terms of a race profile of the group one of the participants were white (one of the male participants) and the rest all coloured. Two of the participants were female, while only two of the participants had English as a first language (they could also communicate fluently in Afrikaans). The rest had Afrikaans as a first language.

#### **4.3 First session: Who am I?... Introduction**

The first session is basically an introduction to the programme. Before this meeting neither the parents nor the children really have any idea of what the programme is about, therefore they are understandably anxious when they come for the first meeting. This introductory meeting is a time to set everyone's mind at ease as information on the programme is shared. Also parents and youth are given a chance to meet the facilitator and all other participants. Both parents and youth are made aware of what would be expected of the youth in terms of arriving punctually, coming to



sessions prepared for the discussions as well as their behaviour. Apart from introductions the administration also gets done in this session, as this is the first contact that the social worker has with these adolescents. Therefore a considerable amount of time is used for the registration of the adolescents. A couple of forms need to be completed and this task is made more difficult by the youths' inability to understand some of the instructions.

After an introduction the parents and adolescents are split into separate groups to discuss the expectations they have about the programmes and its outcomes. I facilitated the discussion with the parents, while the social worker facilitated the adolescents' discussion. This is an opportunity for the adolescents to meet with each other and find out more about the participants that they will be spending eight weeks with. This is also the time when both participants and the facilitator lay down some rules for behaviour within the group. The parents get an opportunity to speak to other parents who are experiencing similar difficulties with their children. This discussion helps parents to share their burden with a peer group that won't judge them, exactly because they are in the same situations and therefore have first-hand experience. It also aims to give parents a chance to speak about their feelings and for adolescents to become aware that their families were also touched by the whole ordeal.

#### **4.3.1 A discussion with the parents**

Parents are angry but also disappointed and scared for their children, with all parents agreeing that they just want the best for their children. For all the parents in the Monday group it was the first time that they had to appear in court, and they felt that their child was dragging them into something that was bad and embarrassing. They wanted their children to realise that they were not the only ones affected but that their behaviour was affecting their whole family. Some parents of the Tuesday group have a different scenario because most of these parents have already been in and out of the courts for some time now. Yet these parents share the same feelings of disappointment.

*"Hy moes hof toe. Nou sleep hy vir ons ook saam. Ek weet niks van die hof nie, dus die eerste keer wat ek daar kom."* (a mother on her feelings about her son who was arrested for assault)

*"Ons ken mos nie sulke goed nie!"* (a mother on her first encounter with the courts).

Other parents just could not believe that this had happened to their family. One mother still cannot believe it. Her daughter has always been obedient, she is matriculating from school this year, and then this, shoplifting: *“Ek weet nie van die ander mense nie maar vir my was dit ‘n ervaring! Toe hulle my bel om te sê sy’s daar by die selle... ek kon dit nie glo nie. Nie my kind nie! Daai aand kon ek nie slaap nie, om te dink dat my kind se warm bed hier leeg staan en sy die aand moes deurbring in daai plek. Dit sal altyd by my bly.”*

#### 4.3.1.1 The role of the school

Parents are concerned about their child’s education. They are aware that their children are “bunking” school or getting into trouble when they are at school. Parents share that because of this they have taken their children out of several schools, this was done in an attempt to keep their children away from the bad influences at school, especially because their children are mixing with children that are considerably older. Parents, however, also realise that changing schools is not a solution and are therefore very anxious about the success of the programme. Parents also expressed concern about how their children will be treated at school if teachers and principals found out about their offences and their participation in the programme.

It should also be mentioned that some of the boys have already dropped out of school. *“They expel kids for being troubled-children. My child was expelled for throwing out a window at school and I had to call the department of education to get him back into school. When they know it’s a troubled-child, teachers don’t have any patience with them.”* (concerned mother)

*‘Hy bunk skool en ek weet dit. Hy loop uit die huis soos iemand wat skool toe gaan, en kom weer huis toe met die ander skoolkinders, maar dan weet hy nie dat die skool my klaar gebel het om te sê dat hy nie daar is nie.’* (mother of boy arrested for damage to property)

*‘There’s always trouble at school. The teachers keep on calling, but what must I say?’* (mother)

*‘My kind was by ‘n kosskool. Hy het daar weggeloop en die skool het eers twee dae later uitgevind hy is nie meer in die koshuis nie, en toe vir my gebel. Ek het hom daar uitgehaal en by ‘n ander skool ingesit. Maar is nog altyd dieselfde storie.’* (father of boy arrested for shoplifting)

Parents are therefore unsure of how much information, if any, they want to share with the principals. One parent shares that he was afraid that if things got stolen at school his son would be the first to be accused because the school would be aware of his criminal behaviour. The other parents agreed, they are concerned about their children but also feel embarrassed about the fact that their child was involved in something that wasn't expected, and therefore parents want as few people as possible to know about the incident.

*“Ek is net bang iets raak weg by die skool en dan blameer hulle eerste vir hom.”*  
(father explaining why he doesn't want to disclose the information to the school)

Some parents have already spoken to their school principals with the understanding that it is a confidential matter.

*“I'm worried about what happens if they come here late. My child comes here from Bothasig High and the school closes at 14h00. I don't want to let the school know about her offence. I'm afraid that if something happens at school that they will immediately blame her”* (mother of daughter arrested for shoplifting)

*“Ek het met die prinsipaal gaan praat en gevra dat hy dit privaat hou. Nou kan sy darem vroeër loop van die skool af.* (mother of daughter arrested for shoplifting) In the Tuesday group apart from this one parent, the others have decided to keep their child's actions and participation in the programme a family matter and not to tell anyone, least of all the school.

#### **4.3.1.2 Taking responsibility for their actions**

Despite wanting their children to take responsibility for their actions, and be accountable, parents also put most of the blame on peer pressure and the wrong friends.

*“Hy het so goed gedoen by die skool, maar nou is hy deurmekaar met ouer kinders. Dit lyk my hulle force hom om sulke goed aan te vang.”* (mother of boy arrested for assault)

*“Dus waar, hulle intimideer die kinders. My seun sal nooit op sy eie gedink het om 'n fiets te gaan steel nie, maar toe sê sy vriende vir hom.”* (father of boy arrested for shoplifting)

*“Hulle kan nie vir hulle self dink nie.”* (father remarking on peer pressure)

These parents are not sure whom to blame for their child's behaviour. Some parents feel that their child should have made better decisions, others blame friends, and still

others feel that if only there were more activities in their communities, other than video shops, that maybe things would be different.

*“I can’t say that it’s friends, because they know what to do. But I want for her to not just say I know what to do but also do that. Instead of then doing the opposite.”*  
(mother of daughter arrested for house breaking)

*“He hangs around the wrong places with nothing else to do. You don’t want to just blame friends because some of them also come out of good houses. What then? You can’t just blame them.”* (mother of son arrested for possession of marijuana)

#### **4.3.1.3 The insignificance of the crime**

Parents also seem to downplay the importance of the crime committed, by focussing on the insignificance of the crime, even though they want the adolescents to become aware of the seriousness of the matter.

*“Ek bedoel nou sit hy hier vir... ek kan maar sê niks. Hy steel ‘n ding wat net R18 kos.”* (father of boy arrested for shoplifting)

*“Nou sit hy hier vir nonsense. Net omdat ‘n ander persoon hom gerob het en toe raak hy so die hel in dat hy hom slaan voor die polisie.”* (mother of boy arrested for assault)

#### **4.3.1.4 The trauma caused by the incident**

Parents also fear that this criminal behaviour and the events following - being locked up in police cells overnight, the court experience and their parents’ reaction- could have a negative effect on the child. For some parents the negative effect could be doing something worse next time, for others it is emotional trauma.

*‘Toe hy uit die polisieselle kom toe dink hy mos hy’s streetwise. Jy kan niks vir hom sê nie dan trek hy slim.’* (parent of 14 year old caught shoplifting)

*‘My kind ook elke keer as ek hom skel dan sê hy ek kan hom niks doen nie want hy gaan kla my aan by die polisie vir abuse.’* (parent/father of 14 year old caught shoplifting)

*‘Hy sê sommer straight dus aanranding as ek net aan hom vat.’* (mother of boy arrested for assault)

*‘Hulle het my kind in selle gesit met dieselfde ouens wat hy geslaan het. En hulle is 28’s. Die hele Vrydagaand en moet hy toe daar bly. Hy kan toe eers die Saterdag uitkom. En ek dink dit was baie traumaties vir hom. En since die incident gaan sy*

*skoolwerk agteruit en hy wil net nie daaroor praat nie.*' (mother of boy arrested for assault)

#### **4.3.1.5 Powerlessness**

Even though parents are concerned about their children and fear that this criminal behaviour could become a regular occurrence, parents also feel powerless to stop the behaviour. They feel that they have reached that point where they don't know what else to do.

*'Ek praat en ek praat maar dit lyk my niks kom deur nie. Daai kop is toe!'* (mother on trying to talk to her child)

Similarly parents in the Tuesday group are at their wits end and have tried everything from being 'soft and caring' to threatening with jail time, it seems that nothing wants to work. One very emotional father explains: *"Ek het getry om hom bang te maak, en gesê dat ek hom next time daar by die selle gaan los. Daai het hom nogal 'n bietjie skrik gemaak maar vir hoelank?"* (father of son caught with drugs)

The grandmother of one of the boys caught shoplifting is as emotional. This is not the first time that he has been in trouble but, it is their first encounter with the programme: *"Hy's die jongste kleinkind en die enigste een wat nog ooit voor die hof moes verskyn. Ek is 73 jaar oud, ek kan nie eers reg loop nie, maar ek moet nou elke keer agter hom aan. Die magistraat het nou die dag vir hom gevra of hy nie skaam kry om sy ouma so te treiter nie."*

Another parent shares that his son always has a way of denying everything: *"Hy's ene..., hy stry jou af. Hy kan stink van die dagga dan sal hy nog altyd stry dat hy nie gerook het nie."* A mother who's son is also involved with drugs has a solution for this problem: *"Meneer daar is 'n toets by die chemist wat 'n mens kan gebruik. Jy test hulle urine en al het hulle ses maande terug dagga gerook sal dit nog altyd wys. Ek het dit nie maar, ek het gesê ek het dit net om hom skrik te maak."*

*"Ek weet nie eers wat om te sê nie. Ek voel baie seergemaak, en die ergste is dat een van sy broers is by Pollsmoor. En hy het mooi met hom gepraat en vir hom gesê moenie dieselfde pad loop nie. Nou gebeur dit.* (mother of son arrested for shoplifting and possession of drugs)

#### **4.3.1.6 The miracle cure**

These parents hope that the YES-programme could be that miracle cure that they have been searching for. When asked what they expect from the programme they responded as follows:

*'A good boy who is responsible and obedient.'* (mother)

*'Ek wil hê hy moet meer onderdanig wees. Vandag se kinders wil mos nie meer luister nie en hy wil vir my kom sê in plaas van luister.'* (father)

*'I want him to be more accountable for what he has done, and learn to stop following other children and rather say no.'* (mother)

*' Ek wil hê hy moet ander mense en hul gevoelens respekteer en nie net dink al sy dinge raak net vir hom nie.'* (father)

The parents in the Tuesday group, like the other parents, had feelings of disappointment, anger, fear and serious concern for their children's future. In this group of parents there was a definite hope that the programme would be a 'miracle cure' that would change their children into what they termed a "good boy".

*"Ek weet die program kan nie alles doen vir my kind nie. Maar ek hoop maar nou vir 'n miracle."* (father of son caught with drugs; this is not his first brush with the law)

These parents (Tuesday group) have high expectations for the success of this programme, for some of the parents it is a step in the right direction but for other parents this is the last straw and if their child gets into anymore trouble after this they do not want to know about it or get involved in any way.

*"Ek wil hê hy moet minder aggressive wees. Hy is baie kwaad en dan slaan hy sommer die kinders by die skool."* (Mother of boy arrested for assault)

*"Ek wil net hê hy moet buite wees soos wat hy binne is. Hy is nooit ombeskof met my nie, en hy sal die huiswerkies doen, vee en so aan. Maar lat hy net buitekant kom, dan is dit 'n ander kind."* (grandmother of boy arrested for shoplifting)

*"Hy is nou op daai stadium waar hy sy eie ding wil doen. En alles sal oraait wees as hy net begin om minder spelerig te wees, en nie so by die gameshop hang nie."* (mother of son arrested for possession of marijuana)

*"Hy is te spelerig. Ek wil hê dat hy meer responsible raak."* (mother of son arrested for assault)

*"Ek hoop dat die program maak dat hy nie meer lus is vir die verkeerde dinge nie. Ek en sy ma het hom swaar groot gemaak. Nooit ons eie huis gehad nie maar, nou wat ons 'n plek van ons eie het en ek wil hê ons moet almal saam wees. Nou vang hy al die dinge aan."* (father of son arrested for possession of marijuana; this is not the first time that he has been arrested)

*"Dit was nou die kind van wie ek dit die minste verwag het. Sy was altyd die een wat gehelp het met die huiswerkies en ek kon altyd op haar staatmaak. Ek kon dit nie glo*

*nie! Maar ek gaan haar bystaan , ek het gesê ek sal maar, net die een keer.”* (mother of daughter arrested for shoplifting)

#### **4.3.1.7 Role play**

This session gave both the parents and the youth the opportunity to share their feelings around the events (committing an offence, police cells, the court, and so on) that led them to the programme. Through the use of role-play, where parents are required to play the role of the child committing the offence and youth are to play the role of the parent, both parties get an insight into their behaviour because they get to experience it through the eyes of someone else. In evaluating the session, parents indicate that this was an eye-opener for them as they realise how their children view them as opposed to how understanding and reasonable they think they are. It also made adolescents realise what anxiety their parents must have felt when they got the call to claim their child at the police station.

During the role-play parents had an opportunity to see how their children experienced their reactions when the police called them. This exercise was a means of letting both parents and children realise how they have affected each other.

The Tuesday group was about twice the size of the Monday-group and therefore the facilitator struggled a bit to get everyone to settle down and really get to see the skits performed by the adolescents. Here the parents were not involved in the role play but only watched as the adolescents performed. I would venture to say that their performances had less impact than that of the previous group because the facilitator was unable to get the small groups to settle down and through this give each group a chance to bring across their message.

#### **4.3.1.8 The consequences of a criminal record**

The consequences of a criminal record were discussed, so that the youth can realise that their behaviour could have a long-standing effect on their lives. It will not only affect how people see them but also limit job opportunities, being able to travel the world and so on. While discussing these consequences the parents' main concern was how other people would treat their child.

*‘People don’t care if you’ve been convicted or not. Or whether you did it to experiment or out of peer pressure. They just heard that you steal or do drugs and then they say there goes that skollie or daggakop or whatever’* (mother on people’s reactions)

*'If you pinch people don't like you. They say their goes that ugly boy who pinches or there goes that boys' mother'* (mother, her two boys are part of the programme one for shoplifting the other for theft)

*'Ja hulle is soe... die mense daar waar ons bly praat so'* (adolescent on the people in his community and how they react)

#### **4.3.1.9 A letter of apology**

As part of the process of taking responsibility for their actions the youth are instructed to write a letter of apology to the victim (the letter is part of the assignments which they will have to complete for every session). Parents are encouraged to ask the adolescent about each session and stay involved throughout the process by taking a look at their assignments and maybe helping them as well. The youth were not very excited about the idea of having to do homework, and were more concerned about how long the letter should be.

The letter was to express their sincere regret for the harm they had caused, but also to let the victim know that they were indeed being punished for their behaviour and in the process also learning something productive. This letter also had the further aim of helping the participants own up to their actions and take responsibility for the crime that they had committed.

One of the participants, however, had difficulty with this idea because he didn't feel that he had done anything wrong. He had assaulted a man who had robbed him and his friends, but the facilitator encouraged him to think about all the other actions he could have taken seeing that the police were already at the scene of the crime. He did later hand in a letter. Participants arrested for drug possession also had difficulty in understanding who needed to be apologised to, since there was no real victim involved in their offence. These participants are encouraged to write letters to their parents.

There were, however, few people who handed in these letters at the second session, casually declaring that they had forgotten it at home or in another bag or some other excuses. Most of the letters only came in near the middle of the programme with facilitators having to remind participants about this assignment. The participants were ensured that these letters would reach the victims and that through this process both victim and offender could make peace with what happened.



#### **4.4 Second session: I am... Self concept**

The session was on self-image and negative stereotyping. The aim of the session was to help the adolescents understand themselves, discard negative stereotyping and start to understand that they are the ones who have the power to change themselves and not to adhere to stereotypes. Each session is started off with an “ice-breaker”, this is a game played at the beginning to help the participants loosen up, have some fun and get comfortable with each other. This is usually followed by a “go-around” where all the participants get a chance to recall and tell the others what happened in the previous session and what particularly stood out for them. What was apparent at most of these “go-arounds” each week, was that most of the participants struggled to remember what the previous session was about. Most likely what would happen is that participants would yell out keywords used at the previous session, but when probed about what exactly those words meant they would not be able to explain.

The adolescents in the Tuesday group that I facilitated were more relaxed, most likely because they knew each other. They came from the same areas and some of them even committed the crime together and so were there together. This group was also considerably larger with sixteen participants attending, four of which were girls. From the conversations going and the discussion with the parents the week before, most of these adolescents have been in some or other kind of trouble for a while now.

##### **4.4.1 The animal game: Self-image**

After the “ice-breaker” and “go-around” the activities planned for the session was started. Adolescents were asked to assign themselves an animal they relate to and discuss why they feel they have so much in common with that specific animal. The aim of this activity was to begin talk of self-image and make participants aware of how a self-image is formed. The group was rather quiet to begin with and everyone seemed to explain why they liked dogs. One of the participants got rather excited about his racing pigeons. He trains them for competitions where they sometimes win him trophies and prize-money and they are intelligent enough to recognize his call and come flying towards him, so they are just as competitive as he is. This was a good example to explain how your self-image is formed by certain characteristics like being competitive or intelligent. Yet for the most part, the participants did not grasp the message behind the activity.

In the Tuesday group we also made use of the favourite animals so as to better explain what self-image is. These participants mostly identify with cats: *'want hulle hou van slaap en niks doen nie nes ek'*; *'because like myself they are cute and cuddly but can also be vicious'*; *'dogs are intelligent animals just like myself'*.

#### **4.4.2 The labelling activity**

The participants then moved onto the labelling game, an activity which aimed to explain labelling and make participants aware of the effects that labelling has on individuals, especially negative labelling. Three volunteers were asked to wear a sticker on their backs with a name on it: "skollie", "moffie", and "dronkie". They had to guess what their label was by the comments that the rest of the group made. After the volunteers had guessed what label they were wearing, the group discussed these labels and what it feels like to be labelled by other people. The participants explained that it does not matter what comments people make about you, as long as you know that it is not true it does not really matter.

When prompted to talk on how other people especially friends and neighbours view them, their responses focussed on the positive terms like: *"rustig"*, *"vriendelik"*, *"helpvol"*. These participants were not at all eager to focus on the negative comments that people sometimes make and the effects it has on them. They explained that if people called after them like participants did when they had the labels on they would just ignore it. Especially because they knew that the remarks were not true.

#### **4.4.3 Smiling faces**

In the Tuesday group an argument ensued because the girls wanted to be serious but some of the boys could not stop laughing and poking fun. This resulted in mutual name-calling. This was the perfect opportunity to start the activity of the smiling face (Rooth, 1998). I displayed newsprint with a smiling face on it and explained to them that this was to represent them, I encouraged them to call out those names and comments that they made and that people make about them that were negative. With each negative comment I tore at the smiling face until there was nothing left. The comments most people make when they encounter them on the street on a daily basis are: *"Jy is 'n vark"*, *"Jy rook mos dagga"*, *"Jou ou roker"*, *"Hier kom die skollie alweer aan"* *"Jou skelme vark"* *"Sy hou haar verniet so heilig"*.

We discussed these comments: The participants share that when they were making these comments about someone else like in the labeling game it was fun, but when people make these comments about them, even if they are sometimes not true, it is

still hurtful. But these “tough guys” are quick to remind you that no-one would tell them that to their faces, because they would beat them up on the spot: *“Ek sal sommer gou met hom connect!”* I explained to them that at the following session we would be focusing on conflict and how to resolve it without using violence.

I remind them that even though people believe these untruths about them and made negative comments about them, they are the ones that have to show through their actions who they really are. They should not be tempted to steal or do drugs just because people already say these things about them, but instead they should decide for themselves what they want to do and what they want to become.

#### **4.4.4 The paper bag activity**

Next was the paper bag activity. The participants were expected to cut out pictures that represented how they saw themselves and how other people (friends, neighbours, family, teachers, etc.) saw them. The perceptions of others were to be pasted on the outside of an envelope and their own idea of how they are, were to be placed inside the envelope. The boys in the Monday group were really quiet, and it seemed like some serious thought went into this assignment.

One boy who was arrested for shoplifting cut out a blue monster. He explains that people in his street see him that way, but that it is not really the way he is. *“If they see me at night they think I’m going to hurt them and take their things.”*

Another explained his pictures by saying: *“People think I’m crazy when I do the things that I do but, I’m not as crazy as they think.”*

*“Mense dink net altyd ek wil hulle seer maak en hulle rop in die aande, maar issie so nie, ek wil net ‘n bettere lewe hê vir my ma en my pa en my broers.”* (This particular participant had just joined the group for this session, it was his first time at the sessions and he also had to be in another group because he was already seventeen. But he fitted in well with the others and had shared his thoughts with the group)

*“Mense sê sommer ek rook dagga net omdat ek nou een keer in die selle was en ek rook nie eers nie.”* (boy explains his picture of a pack of cigarettes)

As the boys explained what those people closest to them now thought of them, they became rather serious. They want to be able to disregard these ideas but still have to deal with these attitudes on a daily basis. The facilitator explains to them that they are in control of themselves. Just because people label them as a skollie they don’t have to go out and be a skollie. They have the power within themselves to decide who they are and who they want to become, rather than to succumb to labels.

In the Tuesday group some of the participants had difficulty in understanding the instructions. When they were finished and we discussed it their envelopes were filled up with the positive comments that people make. Some of the participants explain that people would not make negative comments about them because they would become violent. Others explained that the nice things they did were the only things they allowed people outside of their families to see. Later in the evaluation (session 6) it would also become clear that most of these participants went to great pains to keep their criminal behaviour and involvement with the programme a secret from everyone except their parents. Those who did receive negative feedback from neighbours and friends explained how they do not play outside anymore because parents in their communities instruct their children to keep away from 'bad elements'. These participants do not want to focus on the idea of negative labels. However, it is quite clear that they do, at least some of the time, experience negativity towards them especially if you look at the comments that came out at the smiling face activity.

#### **4.4.5 A personal value shield**

The discussion then moved to their "personal value shield". The boys each get a hand-out on which they have to write: My greatest achievements, what I like about myself, three words I would like to hear about me, and what I would need to achieve my future goals. This was taken out of Rooth, E. 1995. *Lifeskills: a resource for facilitators*.

Some of the achievements mentioned by the participants: "360 gespinn met die motorbike" "South African colours gekry vir high jump" "I got medals for cricket and soccer". These achievements and future plans could have been explored further, but time was running out. It is rather difficult to be working with a group where some of the participants understand easily and have good writing skills while others take longer to understand and write with difficulty.

As an ending to the session a summary/evaluation is given of the session. As mentioned before the youth do not have much to say at these evaluations of the sessions. It could be because it occurs in the last five minutes of the session when everyone is looking at the time and wanting to leave.

With the Tuesday group the personal value shield was also done, but due to the time constraints and participants having difficulty in understanding the instructions we could not finish it in time to have a meaningful discussion about it. While walking

around and talking to individual participants it seems that a lot of them could not identify achievements and didn't have any future plans or just have not really thought that they could someday do something meaningful.

#### **4.5 Third session: I respect you and I can say my say:... assertiveness**

The following deals with only the Monday group where I observed, which focused on conflict management and communication. The aim of this session is to help participants come to understand and be capable of effective communication, as well as to be able to discern between aggressive and passive behaviour and be able to explore constructive ways of dealing with conflict.

Out of the eight original participants only four came to the session. The session is started as usual with an "ice-breaker" and the "go-around".

##### **4.5.1 The bus activity**

This group of boys seem to be rather passive when it comes to confronting problems. There is an activity that would help them communicate how they would deal with a conflict situation. Half of the participants are seated the other half are standing, and the facilitator explains that they are in a bus on its way to Durban. It is a long drive taking up to twelve hours and even though they have all paid the same amount of money for their tickets there aren't enough seats for everyone. The participants then have to decide on how to deal with the situation. The ones standing are willing to sit on the floor rather than risk getting into an argument over a seat. After much probing from the facilitator they decide that they might be able to compromise and let everyone have a turn to sit down.

##### **4.5.2 Handling conflict situations**

There is a discussion on what they would do if they bought stale food at a shop: would they take it back or just throw it away? All the participants felt that they would be upset but would throw it away instead of going back to the store and would next time go to a different store.

What about when children hassle them at school? Here the response is different- the boys agree that they would fight because if they do not the person who is bothering them would not stop, and of course through fighting the other children will also see that they are tough and not to be messed with. The social worker also explained the different ways of dealing with conflict, focussing on passivity, aggression and assertiveness.

Their passiveness was also demonstrated in this session, the facilitator pretended not to be listening to them and would ask questions but then just go right on with her own work. Instead of telling her that they did not like this behaviour they got noticeably quiet. They started talking to each other asking, wondering and saying to each other what the use was of talking when no-one (referring to the facilitator) was listening. Minutes later when a discussion was held on what they possibly could have done to direct the facilitators attention to their concerns they could not come up with any good solutions. All problems they seemed to be able to solve were when they got to use their fists to fix the problem. The aim of this activity was to show participants the difference between listening and then responding to what was said instead of not getting all the facts straight and still responding.

#### **4.5.3 The balloon activity**

An activity with balloons was also used to illustrate to the participants how keeping your anger to yourself without dealing with it could eventually lead to bigger problems and more conflict. They were encouraged to blow into the balloon for every expression that made them angry until finally the balloon grew so big that it exploded. The things that made them most angry were when their friends were stubborn and did not listen to reason, people who were 'anti-social and always wanted to turn to violence, people who were mean to you without talking to you or know anything about you, and teachers and parents who 'assumed the worst and were always right'.

#### **4.5.4 Evaluation**

The session was closed off with a summary/evaluation of the session and allowed participants to think about the differences between passive and aggressive behaviour. It should also be mentioned that during this session participants were rather quiet and the session for the most part took the form of a lecture with the social worker explaining the different ways of dealing with conflict. This occurred because the participants did not give their full attention. The session was ended off with a game called 'Johnny Hoop-Hoop'. The game required the participants to replicate everything the social worker was doing and the aim of the game was to make them more aware of effective listening. It took the participants quite some time to figure out what was expected of them, while some enjoyed trying to come up with solutions others just gave up trying.

#### **4.6 Fourth session: I have choices... Decision making**

Fewer and fewer of the adolescents came to the sessions. They seemed to not be taking the whole process seriously and came and went as they pleased.

Due to the public holiday which was on the Monday, the group was larger because both the Monday and Tuesday groups were attending this session. The session starts off with an “ice-breaker” and the “go-around” of the previous sessions. The participants remembered the game with the balloons and also remembered that the session was about managing your anger. They also remembered, in great detail, the game that they had played called ‘Johnny Hoop-Hoop’, probably because it had taken them so long to ‘solve’ the game the previous week.

##### **4.6.1 Decision-making skills**

When asked about how they made decisions on a daily basis it appeared that all the participants were prone to making hasty decisions. We have an activity where they are separated into groups of two and given a scenario, they then have to weigh their options and decide what the best way would be to deal with their specific situation. Some of the situations were:

- What would you do if you and a friend went for a swim in a river and left your clothes on the bank, while you are enjoying yourselves a family comes along and decides to camp-out on the spot?
- What would you do if your house was burning down and you only had time to take two items and leave?
- What would you do if the police accused you of doing something you didn’t do but you knew who did it?
- What would you do if a friend told you, in confidence, that his girlfriend was pregnant?
- What would you do if some friends offered you drugs?

The group who had the last question, on drugs, immediately answered “Yes”. They thought that if friends were going to offer them drugs they should make good use of the opportunity. I encouraged them to think of all possible options before making hasty decisions. The participants had lengthy discussions on what should be done. The aim of the exercise was to make them aware of a process that takes place when they are deciding on things. The formula that they then came up with was to think of all the possible options or decision that they could make and then decide on the best one. The

participants have difficulty in thinking about decision-making in this way. One of the participants exclaimed: *“Ma juffrou, jy gat mossie nog so dink nie!”*

The others agree. I pointed out to them that it was exactly that split second decision making that had landed them in trouble in the first place. With this remark they vehemently disagreed. According to most of them the reason that they are in this predicament is because of lawyers. We start unpacking scenarios again and I try and make them see the different options available to them in any given situation, whether you are deciding on a chocolate at the store or deciding to commit a crime. It is therefore up to them to weigh their options carefully and choose the one that holds the most advantages for them.

#### **4.6.2 Group decision making skills**

Another activity was held to help them make decisions as a group and be able to communicate their concerns to one another. This was a chance for the youth to practice their communication skills in listening to each other's points of view. This enabled them to combine different points in their final decision. The participants were divided into two groups and had the task of deciding which five of the following people would be saved if the world were to be struck by a meteor: an actress, an engineer, a lawyer, a twenty year old pregnant women, an eighty-five year old man, a historian, a teacher and a two year old girl. The five individuals chosen would then be responsible for restoring civilisation and life on earth.

Neither one of the groups wanted the lawyer to be a part of the five. According to the participants lawyers are liars and cheats. Still they assert that it is because of lawyers that they are a part of this programme. The aim of this exercise was to make the participants aware of how they should make a decision. So everyone in the group had to have a say and, the participants were instructed to listen to everyone's argument and then make a well informed choice as to what to do or who to choose. The participants had fun in discussing their options. In discussions afterwards most of the comments centred around the 85 year old man who should not have been one of the five chosen because he had already lived too long. Participants also share that not all their choices made part of the final decision but that at least they had the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Hence we discussed the choices they made that led to them being a part of the programme. This was done so that participants could come to realise it is bad choices that leads to more bad decisions that could lead to a criminal offence.



#### **4.6.3 Planning for the future**

After this the participants were divided into groups of two. They were instructed to imagine what their lives would be like fifteen years into the future, and therefore had to pretend that their partner was a friend that had not seen in fifteen years. They were further instructed to share with this friend what had happened to them within this fifteen-year time frame. Few of the participants had plans or ideas of where they wanted to be in fifteen years time. Some want to become accountants and are already excelling in accounting at school, another plans to become an air hostess, another plans to design his own computer games; these are the participants who are in school. Those who are not attending school or who are not excelling in school are not as hopeful: one participant said that he hopes to have a job that pays “ok”, another decided that he is not able to tell what will happen in the future because you never know what bad things might still happen; another hoped that he would not end up in jail but thinks that he probably will.

#### **4.7 Sessions three and four: Assertiveness and decision making**

As mentioned before, NICRO relies heavily on the help of volunteers. Because of a shortage of volunteers and the social worker going away for a couple of weeks on a different programme I had the opportunity to facilitate another group. Unfortunately I was not part of this group from the first session so I did not get to meet the parents. Meeting the parents or guardians might have given me more insight as to who these adolescents are and what the parent-child relationship is like. The second session, on the self-concept I also did not attend, as I was only approached after this. The participants did not have a third session because the social worker was sick and there was no-one to do it in her stead. Although she managed to call some of them to let them know that the session was cancelled, some of the participants turned up for the session only to find no-one else around. Therefore as the fourth session begins there is a rather tense atmosphere as adolescents are upset about the previous week, but some are also anxious about what this means; will they have to do an extra week or will this in some way count against them near the end of the programme? This fourth session is then a combination of the third and fourth sessions and will thus focus on assertive behaviour (I respect you and I can say my say) as well as decision-making (I have choices).

This group of participants are different from the previous groups merely because they are tougher both in appearance and behaviour. As three new participants join the group they quickly make friends by boasting about what brought them to the group, and mostly their crimes include violence like stabbing but also drugs and alcohol.

The group of twelve participants, two of which are girls, want to make it clear that they do not want to be a part of this session. For the most part this is done through their body language, sitting slumped in their chairs making snide remarks under their breath and shrugging their shoulders when asked a question or burst out laughing when asked to participate. Yet the “braver” participants, who also want to show the other participants how “cool” they are verbally speak out against the sessions. One of the newly joined participants stormed out of the hall and was then brought back by the security guard of the library, later as we evaluated the session he exclaimed: *“Ek het van niks gehou nie, ek hou nie van die hele ding nie. En julle kan niks daaraan doen nie.”* This brave step also gave him the respect of the rest of the group because everyone else was just saying that it was fine and they enjoyed it.

As part of the discussion on conflict and assertiveness the participants were encouraged to divide into groups and do a role-play on a conflict situation and how to resolve the conflict. Two of the groups actually had a role-play while the other group had used the time to discuss other things and then refused to participate in the discussion. The plays focussed on conflict that arises when parents ask them to do something and they decide not to do it. In the one group the young person was instructed to take care of the house while his parents go away for the weekend. He then invited some friends over who later robbed him of all his household possessions. The participants in this specific group were rather funny and everyone enjoyed their play, this definitely made participants more at ease and ready to talk. As the session progressed and we talked on decision making and played some games the participants relaxed a little and allowed themselves to have a bit of fun with the games.

The participants were given the assignment of taking note of the decisions that they make during the week and practise making decisions that would be to their advantage.

Unfortunately there was little opportunity in this group for really getting into the important aims of the session. This can be attributed to the fact that both facilitator and participants needed to get used to each other, but also because there were so many

concerns that needed to be sorted out with the social worker first. Especially because they had now all missed one session, and some were still angry because they had not been contacted about this and therefore had come the week before.

#### **4.8 Fifth session: I have rights and responsibilities: Children's rights**

This session focused on rights and responsibilities. It is important that youth are aware of what their rights are, but the aim of this discussion is to make them realise that those rights go hand in hand with responsibility. And further they are not the only ones privileged enough to have these rights but that all people have rights and therefore they have to respect the rights of others.

##### **4.8.1 A discussion with the third group**

Only nine participants attended this session. The group was less aggressive during this session. This could be attributed to two participants who had to leave early the previous week because of illness. They talked freely and wanted to participate in every activity and because of the competitiveness of the other participants they also started to participate. Also most of the participants who really did not want to be a part of the programme did not attend this session, which meant that participants who associated with them were now forced to adjust to the group and this increased their desire to participate.

As usual the session was preceded with an 'ice-breaker' which allowed the participants to tell jokes and get to know each other. This was followed by a 'go-around' that focussed on the homework. There were a few participants who did the homework and explained what choices they made during the week while the others just simply replied that they didn't feel like doing homework. This led to a discussion on why they are a part of this programme. One of the participants explained: "*I did something wrong, that's why I'm here*"

I pointed out that even though all of them had committed a crime they still had the choice to come here or take their chances in court. The responses on this varied.

*"Ek het gedink dit gan makliker wees om hientoe te kom, dan gan daar mos niks ander goed met my gebeur nie."* (one of the female participants)

*“Ek het nie ‘n keuse gehad nie! Ek was eerste by ‘n klomp ander plekke en toe was ek nou laaste by Kraaifontein en toe sê hulle ek moet nou hier wees.”* (male participants involved in drugs and shoplifting)

*“Ek was dieselfde soos hom. Ons was dan op dieselfde plekke saam gewees!”* (male participant responding on previous comment)

I probed them about what they thought the programme had to offer for them and what they thought they could achieve through this programme.

*“Ek is hier want die ding gaan van my ‘n bettere mens maak”* (male participant on his involvement in the programme) When probed about how he could become a “bettere” person he explained that he already sees changes in himself; *“Ek kan bettere raak hier, ek is klaar anderste. Ek praat hier by die ding met mense wat ek nie voor die mee sal geworry het nie”*

One of the participants who seems to take the programme very seriously and wants to participate explained: *“Ek is hier want ek wil nie meer die verkeerde dinge doen nie en ek wil verander”* When probed about whether he thinks it will be possible for him to change he is rather positive: *“Ja, ek kan dit doen as ek mooi luister hier en doen wat ek suppose is om te doen sal ek kan verander.”*

The other participants are rather quiet and as homework I ask them to go home and write down those things that they want to change about themselves and how they can do that.

#### **4.8.2 Matching rights to responsibilities**

The main discussion focussed on rights and responsibilities and the link that exists between the two concepts. The participants are well informed on the issue of their rights. As they mention those that they are aware of: shelter, food, education, not to be abused in any way, freedom of speech, etc. A game is played where some participants are given rights and some responsibilities and they have to see which rights and responsibilities belong together. Some of the participants readily go about looking for the person with the right or responsibility that goes with theirs while others sit back and wait.

Although they are aware of their rights they are unsure about responsibility. It is explained to them that even if you have the right to education but refuse to go to

school, the right still remains but it becomes your responsibility to go to school and get that education. Having the right does not exempt you from doing anything to get the right whether it is education or the right to shelter or any other right. Responsibility is still a big issue for these participants and they do still not own up to their own behaviour blaming lawyers for their participation in the programme. Participants in the third group, discussed above, understand what their rights are but have difficulty understanding the activity.

#### **4.8.3 Role play**

A role-play activity is done with participants being in two groups. Their task was to sketch a scenario of rights and responsibility going hand-in-hand. The one group decided on the rights of women to decide for themselves about sex and contraceptives. The girl in their role-play decided to have sex with her boyfriend but didn't bring up the issue of safe-sex and later found out that she was HIV-positive. According to this group women have the right to make decisions about their own bodies but also have the added responsibility to insist on things like condoms to protect themselves. The other role plays focused on gangs and fighting, and how demanding your own rights can sometimes hurt other people. Another group focused on the idea of revenge and the lawless state we would live in if there were no rights or responsibilities and everyone therefore had to fend for themselves.

In the third Tuesday group, one group has a role-play on what should happen when your rights are violated and the other group looks at what would happen if you did not hold to your responsibilities. The groups were deliberately divided so that the sub-groups that were forming could be eliminated at least for the duration of the activity and because of this everyone participated in the role-play. The group looking at rights being violated focused on all the ways they could ensure that their rights are upheld and are willing to go to the highest court to make this happen. The group looking at responsibility focussed on the home and the responsibility they have to take care of their property and listen to their parents.

#### **4.8.4 The rights of victims**

Further there was a discussion on the rights of victims and how it must feel to be the victim of a crime. Most of the participants have also been robbed at some stage or had their homes broken into, therefore they knew how it must feel to be the victim of crime. They shared that although you feel scared and nervous, you are also angry that

it had to happen to you. I explained that each individual has the responsibility to respect the rights of others.

In the third Tuesday group participants had to illustrate the feelings of fear and disappointment that the victim goes through therefore another role-play was done. The participants explained that the victims in their plays were afraid after being robbed and therefore started making use of alarm systems and burglar bars in their homes. Victims are also frustrated with the way that the police handle the whole situation and sometimes feel that the law does not respect them.

Closer to the end of the session another 'go-around' focussed on what was done during the session. The participants were eager to respond because this was to be the last exercise before they went home and everyone said something about rights, responsibilities and victims. I also reminded them of the homework but will be very surprised if they actually do it.

#### **4.8.5 Evaluation of session**

The session was then closed with a summary/evaluation of the session. This session was rather quiet with little participation. It could be due to the fact that the adolescents do not really understand the link between rights and responsibility, but more importantly do not see the need for a discussion on rights and responsibilities.

#### **4.9 Sixth session: I am part of ... Laws and norms**

This Tuesday session also focused on rights and norms and how the participants fit into the whole picture of norms and society. But the facilitator did not turn up so we held an evaluation session of the programme.

Our evaluation focused on three key questions and everyone was given a chance to respond. Twelve participants were present for this session.

On discussing how the participants would evaluate the YES-programme these were their responses: *"I enjoyed it, it was good!"*, *"Dit was lekker!"*, *"Dit was fun glad nie soos wat ek expect het nie"*, *"Dit was lekker ek het baie geleer, soos games."*, *"I got to know some nice people and learnt a bit about myself and how selfish I can be"*, *"I learnt about communication and lots of games so it was great fun"*.

When probed about what was most fun or what specific things they learnt these participants could not think of anything but the multitude of games they played and rights that was still fresh in their minds because they had done it the week before.

There were, however, another group of participants who wanted to comment on the substance of the sessions. *“It was fine but I found it rather simple, like it was meant for someone with a lower IQ. It should be more challenging.”*

*“Ja, I agree it was definitely meant for people with a lesser IQ. It wasn't all that stimulating because most of the things about self-esteem and that I already knew.”*

It should also be added that the participants who commented on the level of simplicity of the programme are students in grade ten, eleven and twelve in school, so it is understandable that they would feel this way. The other participants, although they are all fifteen and sixteen years of age, have not even completed primary school and one of the boys have only recently gone back to school and is now in grade eight (standard six).

When questioned about how they initially felt about the programme everyone seemed to agree that they expected something a lot more harsh and difficult. *“I thought there was going to be challenges that I wouldn't be able to handle.”*

*“I was scared and didn't know what to expect, I was thinking that it might be like community service.”*

*“Ek het gedink dit sal moeilik wees om in te pas by die ander mense.”* Most of the adolescents were concerned about how they would adapt, because in their minds they also had an idea of what a ‘typical criminal’ should look like. So their initial fears were based on not being able to fit in with a group of criminals.

Others thought it would be like an army camp where they would be shouted at and would be forced to perform hard labor.

*“I thought I was going to have to do chores, like sweeping and that.”*

*“I thought they were going to treat us rough.”*

*“Ek was bang maar het gedink ek sal dit vat soos dit kom”*

It seems that the participants really did not have any idea of what the programme would be about. When questioned about whether or not they would have agreed to attend the programme if they knew beforehand what it was about; the group agrees wholeheartedly. Even though it was not what they had expected, they do feel that they have gained some insights from it, especially because it has made them think about what they want to do to be better in the future.

When questioned about who all knew of their involvement in the programme, everyone was in agreement that the information was only shared with those that really needed to know about it.

*“Only my family knows about it”*

*“My parents and my brother and sisters know, nobody else was told”*

All the participants agreed that they did not want everyone to know especially teachers, neighbours and their boyfriends/girlfriends.

*“I don’t want my boyfriend to know, because I know that he will be disappointed in me.”*

*“I didn’t tell my girlfriend because I don’t want her to think that I’m a good for nothing and then leave me.”*

*“Those other people are not important, and beside they’ll never forget it - you’ll be flavour of the month”*

*“Exactly! people that you don’t even know will know what you did and look at you funnily.”*

We also discussed what would happen after the eight weeks were over. The participants are not fully informed and have many questions. They want to know what will happen if they have attended all eight sessions. Will they still have a record or will their attendance in the programme be recorded in a way that would put them in a negative light? These are the concerns that they have. Unfortunately the social worker was not present to shed light on these issues. Some of these participants are also doing community service and still have some hours that they need to finish and they are concerned about what will happen next. Hopefully these issues will be addressed at the final session.

#### **4.10 Sixth session: I am part of ... Laws and norms**

This Tuesday session (with the third group) aims to make them aware of the importance of laws and encourage them to respect these laws and those around them.

The session was started off with a game that enabled the participants to relax and get comfortable with each other. The group started off with twelve participants, two of these participants are part of the Monday group but attended this group because the



Monday group was cancelled for the week. The other participant is a familiar face who did not complete the previous programme and needed to attend one more session before attending court. One of the participants who should be a part of this group left soon after his mother had brought him into the hall and he shared with the other participants that the previous week his mother had also come with him but that he had run away before we even saw him. This is the same participant who stormed out at the fourth session and explained that he did not like the programme at all. I think that he does not like the sessions because he does not really fit in with this group. Just before he ran off this week he got really frustrated when he had to write his name on the attendance list, and what made it even more frustrating was that everyone was standing around him and so noticed this. In the fourth session he also had the same kinds of frustrations when certain activities required some reading skills. Although there are many participants who have dropped out of school, this participant seems to have dropped out of school much earlier than most of them especially because he has difficulty in writing his name.

To start off this session we had a 'go-around' to re-cap on the previous session and those individuals who had completed the homework were eager to remind me of the assignment. Although the participants could not explain in great detail what they had learnt the previous week they did mention the keypoints: rights, responsibilities and rights of victims.

I explained to them that this session was going to deal with laws and norms, and we started off with discussing what these terms meant. The participants understand laws to be those rules that apply to all the members of society and breaking these rules lead to prosecution. They understand norms to be those boundaries present in their communities like greeting, or listening to your elders.

#### **4.10.1 The law and appropriate punishment**

An activity was next to help the participants think of the factors that lead to breaking the law and how it can be dealt with. Three groups were formed and each group was given a case of someone who had committed a crime. They then had to decide on an appropriate punishment. The first group had a case of a group of boys all 17 years old who had planned to steal two computers and a fax machine from their school. They wanted to sell the equipment so that they could have some money. After they broke

into the school and had hid the equipment in a garage one of the boys felt guilty and went to the police. They were then all arrested. The group felt that the boys in their scenario was still too young to go to prison and seeing that the equipment had not yet been sold, they felt that the young boys should attend a NICRO programme. The other participants disagreed with this and thought that these boys were old enough to know that what they had done was wrong and that they would have sold the equipment had the one boy not gone to the police. The participants debated about this for a while but then decided that perhaps it would be better for the boys in the scenario to attend a programme because prison would be too harsh a punishment.

The second group had the case of a 16 year old boy who stole a chocolate worth R1.50 from a shop. The boy attends school, comes from a stable home and his family is very rich. The group first laughed at the idea of being caught with a chocolate that cost so little and joked that they would have stolen a more expensive chocolate. Yet one of the participants was rather upset with the boy in the scenario: "*Die kind is mos onnodig. Hy't dan alles wat hy nodig het by die huis dan steel hy 'n chocolate nogals van R1.50.*" The other participants felt that perhaps he had gotten into a fight with his parents and wanted to punish them so he stole. The group decided that this boy should also be referred to NICRO and added that a night in the police cells would probably have scared him enough anyway.

The third group had the case of a woman, aged 37, who was married to a rich, old man who was leaving her a million rand in his will. The woman hires a man to kill her husband. The murder is carried out and they are both arrested. This group felt that both the killer and the woman should be imprisoned for at least twenty years. Other participants felt that the woman should be severely punished but that the killer should not be as severely punished because he was not the one who thought of the murder. After much debate it was decided that the killer had still murdered someone and that this was wrong.

#### **4.10.2 Ranking offences**

We moved on to an exercise that required participants to look at different offences and rate it as very serious, serious or petty. Things like selling drugs, pick-pocketing, robbing a store at gunpoint and prostitution are viewed as very serious. One of the examples is of a girl who walks out of store with change for R 20 after she paid with a

R10. The participants did not view this as serious and felt that it was the cashier's fault for making the mistake. We debated their responsibility to be honest in their dealings but they were adamant that it was not their problem. Another example that they felt was not very serious was a boy asking a girl out, and when she refuses his offer he swears at her. The male participants did not feel that this was serious at all, and the female participants did not argue with them either. I explained that we would talk about that in some detail the following week when we dealt with gender equality.

#### **4.10.3 A crime line**

The final activity for the day required the participants to create a 'crime line'. They were to write down the crime that they had committed and then start identifying different events that led to the crime. When we discussed this most of the participants identified the friends they have as part of the problem, others identified their feelings of anger and aggression, while others felt that their stealing started as a result of the drug use because they needed to feed their habit. This activity gave participants the opportunity to speak to each other about the offences that they had committed. Prior to this discussion the participants were not aware of each others' specific offences.

The participants were given as homework the assignment of writing down a plan of action that could enable them to stop those events that they had identified in the 'crime line'. The session ended here because the participants needed to complete questionnaires for a new project that some volunteers want to start.

There were five participants who handed in the homework assigned to them the previous week. Some of the assignments were hastily written paragraphs about what they thought they could do to gain skills in this programme, but there were a few assignments that seemed to have been done with some thought and effort. One of the female participants handed in a short essay full of colour explaining how she thought she could become a better person and suggested that the completion of the programme could be a good place to start. One of the male participants, who was arrested with assault charges after stabbing someone with a glass bottleneck, went the extra mile by drawing a puzzled boy in court with a big question mark in the background. He wrote a few lines on what he thought he could do to make the sessions more successful, and suggested that he could participate but also encourage others in the group to participate by not laughing at their attempts.

Judging from the homework that I got back I would suggest that giving the participants an assignment is a good idea. Even if only a few participants hand in, it at least means that those few had thought about the discussions and about their own situation for at least a couple of minutes during the week.

#### **4.11 Seventh session: I respect... Gender, stereotyping, and socialisation**

This session dealt with stereotypes and socialisation, and as usual the activities for the specific session was preceded by an “ice-breaker” and the “go-around”. We started off the session with a discussion of three keywords to be used in the session: stereotypes, socialisation and respect.

##### **4.11.1 Stereotypes, socialisation and respect**

The participants did not know the exact meaning of stereotypes, but had an idea that it had to do with “*negative remarks*” or “*being closed-minded about people's actions*” (someone even thought it had something to do with a car radio). We discussed the terms some more and came to the conclusion that the term referred to “*putting people in boxes*” , therefore defining people or their actions in terms of our own preconceived notions of what a specific type of person should be like, for example a blonde girl or a mother.

Participants initially assumed that socialisation referred to having parties with friends. After I had explained it to them, they understood it to be the ideas and values that they learnt at home and later at school from teachers and peers. Respect was linked to the ideal of equality between the sexes, meaning that no matter whether you are male or female you have equal rights and should thus be treated that way.

##### **4.11.2 The baby activity**

The participants were moved into three smaller groups and given a picture of a baby. Two of the groups were told that their baby was a girl (named Carla), while the other group was told that their baby was a boy (named Andre). The group then had to decide: what types of clothes the child would wear (both as an infant and a teenager); what the baby-room would look like; what the child would play with; what chores he/she would do around the house; at what age he/she could start dating and; what career their child would follow. The activity was part of helping them understand socialisation as well as how males and females are treated differently. This made for an interesting discussion. The baby-rooms were pink for girls and blue for boys, and

throughout the child's life he/she wore clothes that was typical of a boy or girl. The participants also focussed a lot on brand name clothing. As for chores the girls were expected to help around the house while boys were charged with keeping the garden tidy and taking out the garbage. Some of the participants felt dating from thirteen was acceptable, but the rest of the group did not agree and thought that sixteen to eighteen would be more suited for a girl, but the group with the boy felt that he could handle himself, so he could go out with friends or date as long as he was in by midnight.

Interestingly the groups did not have high prospects for the child's future careers; they wanted the child to finish school and get a job at a store or any other job. This also links up with their own ideas about their future prospects. What was also interesting was the debate within the small groups on what the girls should wear when they were teenagers. Some of the male participants expected the girls to wear "*respectable*" clothes that was not "*revealing or tight like a tracksuit pants*", while the female participants disagreed and thought that girls should be allowed to wear clothes that made them feel beautiful. One of the boys then highlighted an interesting point, they want their girls to wear big clothes that are not revealing "*but would you rather look at a girl with a tracksuit pants on or the girls with a lekker tight jeans on?*" This made participants think more and the group later decided that their girl would be allowed to wear fashionable clothing as long as "*it wasn't too revealing*".

The discussion helped the participants to understand what is meant by socialisation and also realise how they themselves have been socialised. Also this gave them an idea of what stereotypes are, and how easily they become the lenses that we see people through, instead of finding out about what the person is really like.

#### **4.11.3 The influence of the media**

The discussion then also focussed on the media, especially soap-operas and teen-magazines, and how these mediums affect how they view themselves and others.

The adolescents in this group are mostly wearing the newest brand-names and fashion and admit that these are the clothes that they like being seen in. They are aware that they would not automatically turn ugly or be of less worth to others if they don't wear these fashion necessities but still prefer them. "*I don't wear this t-shirt because it's in fashion. I like it so I wear it.*" This comment got the group talking because the participant who made the comment was wearing a rather expensive t-shirt and he

always seemed to be dressed expensively. The other participants thus did not believe that he wore what he liked only because he liked it. Some of the girls then also came under the cross-fire for being critical of someone when they themselves came to sessions in their best clothes. *“Nou hoekom kom julle nie in julle skoolklere nie, nou maak jy al die moeite om nog eers uitte trek.”* The girls debated that it had more to do with comfort than looking fashionable, but the boys were not buying this explanation.

The discussion leads to talk of fashion at school. The girls wear short skirts to school and the boys maintain that they do this in order to get their attention. *“Hulle wil hê ons moet kyk. Sommige van daai skirtjies is so kort hulle julle goed sit sommer buite.”* The boys in the group are upset that girls want to be treated equally but still go out wearing the shortest skirts, even to school, to draw attention. The girls, who at first contested that the short skirt was all about comfort, agree that they do like to get some attention from the boys but that the boys are sometimes just rude looking up their skirts and treating them badly. *“I like my short skirt, I don't want to be like one of those girls with the skirt up to their ankles that's just stupid.”* We later came to an agreement that even if the girls wear short skirts and like some attention, the boys could flirt with them and give them the attention without degrading the girls or resorting to crude tactics to look under their skirts.

The girls in the group felt that if their parents were not able to buy them these clothes they would get their boyfriends to buy it for them. If the boyfriend cannot provide, another boyfriend (who can provide) will be taken instead. This evolves into a heated debate on the way that women go after only rich men and the others are left behind. *“This is why I will never get a girlfriend”*, one of the boys explained. Other participants disagree with this idea and believe that you should work for your own things instead of having someone else get it for you.

The participants do however all agree that the clothes do not make the person, and find that if you can be self-confident and treat yourself and others with respect that you would be treated that way too.

#### **4.12 Seventh session: I respect... Gender, stereotyping, and socialisation**

The session (Tuesday session of the third group) was started off with an ‘ice-breaker’ that enabled the participants to be more relaxed and willing to participate. A participant who came late and was escorted by a family member, disrupted the session

somewhat. This is the same participant who stormed out at the first meeting I attended and then also did not attend the other sessions. His aunt had brought him and was curious as to how many sessions he still had to attend. I explained to her that he had only attended the one session and therefore would probably have to do seven sessions if the court allowed it. She was furious because his mother had gone to great lengths to bring him to the library each week and an argument ensued. She did bring him back into the hall but he stormed out once again yelling and swearing that he did not want to be a part of the programme. The other participants were however very supportive of him. They knew that he did not want to be at the sessions and therefore made a special effort to make him feel like a part of the group. Before the session had started they had spoken with him outside and some of the male participants invited him to sit with them, but he just did not want the programme in his life. After he had left and everyone had settled down we started the session and everyone was real eager to hand in the homework. Their homework was discussed and everyone was given the opportunity to share their plan of action with the rest of the group. Mostly these participants had decided that they should start picking their friends wisely. Some also mentioned focusing on their school work and those not in school hope to be able to find a good job.

#### **4.12.1 The baby activity**

We started off with the exercise called the baby game. The exercise aims to make participants aware of the how socialisation leads to the different roles of men and women and discuss misconceptions around stereotypes. The participants were divided into two groups and each group got a picture of a baby, the one group had a girl and the other a boy. The groups were then given a list of questions they had to discuss, these questions would determine what clothes their child would wear, what the child would play with or what chores were to be done and so forth.

These groups had decided on much the same as the previous group that boys wear blue, play with cars and can basically take care of themselves, while girls wear soft pink clothes, play with dolls and stay indoors. It was clear though that the participants did not enjoy the activity and that the idea of socialisation was something that they did not understand, but more importantly was not interested in. This resulted in me having to explain the concept to them without any real participation from their side.

The rest of the discussion focussed on having respect for themselves and those around them. While paging through magazines and cutting out those images that they thought were rather fashionable we discussed having respect for yourself and those around you. When asked if they respected others they reply that they do because they are kind to people. *“Respecting people means that you treat them politely”* I pointed out to them that they are rarely polite to any of the group members and wondered if this was the way they also treated their parents. Most vehemently disagreed with this statement. *“Ek sal mossie so praat met my ma nie.”* Yet others thought that what you did outside of the home you probably did inside the home too. *“Ek dink ek is dieselfde met my ma but, net nie so erg soos wat ek buite is nie. As my ma my kwaad maak dan loop ek net of ek vattie nog note van haar nie.”* When questioned about whether they respect themselves everyone agrees that they do not. *“Ek respect nie myself nie want hoekom kyk dan wat doen ek aan myself. Ek kom in die moeilikheid oor nonsense. Ek gebruik alle sort drugs wat my lyf opmors”* This was discussed for the rest of the session. This gave the participants the opportunity to hear each others’ stories and share their fears and hopes. In this session time was limited due to the disturbance at the beginning of the session and the participants’ need to discuss these happenings and how it affected them.

#### **4.13 Eighth session: I commit. Mapping the future**

This is the final session and both the parents and the youth are present. We started off with an “ice-breaker” which gave everyone the opportunity to move around the room and greet each other, after the “ice-breaker” the group was less tense and everyone was relaxed enough to start the session. As usual the discussion started off with the “go-around” which, gave each participant the chance to recall what had happened at the previous session. The participants recalled the discussion they had about the babies and socialisation as well as the respect that they should have for each other.

The aim of this session is to start a dialogue between parent and child, and give both parents and their children an opportunity to talk to each other about those concerns that they do have.

Our first activity required the adolescents to pick up as many chairs as they can hold and keep them in the air for as long as they could. The aim of this activity, was to illustrate to the participants the ‘baggage’ they would be dragging into all their life



situations if they do not deal with the issues surrounding their crime and subsequent attendance of the YES-programme as well as community service for some. The participants were asked to think of what ways they could lessen the burden of having to carry the chairs all the time. The participants explained that they could ask someone to help them carry or they could let some of the chairs go to make it lighter.

In what ways could they in their own lives 'lighten the burden'? Participants suggested that they could ask a friend to help them deal with difficult situations or try and resolve a problem so that it does not affect the rest of their lives. Parents also suggested that their children should come to them if they have problems because they want to help, they don't want their children to struggle with problem all on their own.

Each participant was instructed to sit opposite their parent, in any part of the room, and discuss the actions that brought them to the YES-programme, they should also tell their parents what they plan to do to show their remorse for what has happened in the past. Parents are instructed to listen and then respond by telling their child how they feel and think of things that they can do to help their child make a fresh start. The aim of the activity was to give both parent and child the opportunity to listen to each other and share their thoughts and feelings without getting into an argument. Three of the boys did not have their parents present. One of these boys talked with the social worker while the other two was in a group with a friend of the family who also came with his son (these two boys live with their grandmother who was very sick at the time). Some of the parent-child groups communicated easily with each other, while other groups did not have anything to say to each and still others got into arguments.

One adolescent promised to make coffee for his mother in the afternoons, another plans to keep the backyard clean without having to be asked and another plans to get a weekend job so that he can stay out of trouble. The other participants did not make any promises but said they would try and keep out of trouble: *"Ek gat try om uit die moeilikheid te bly ma ek kan niks promise nie want netnou gebeur daar weer iets."*

A very emotional grandmother who is wheelchair bound after a nasty fall explains: *"Hy sê nou dat hy uit die moeilikheid gaan bly maar ek weet nie. Ek voel al wat ek nou nog kan doen is om te bid en te vertrou op die Here dat hy gaan verander."*

Some of the parents were not impressed either, *'I'll wait and see if she changes her ways because I've heard these promises before'*.

The next activity dealt with trust. The parents and children formed groups of three (to cater for those who didn't have their parents present). Two were to stand opposite each other while one would be in the middle. The two standing opposite each other had the task of catching and pushing away the one in the middle. The one in the middle should stand with his weight on his feet, without balancing himself relying on the two persons on either side to catch him. Some of the participants found it easy to let go and trust the other person to catch him/her while others were a little scared at the beginning but later eased up a bit, and still some did not trust anyone to catch them and relied on their own strength to balance themselves. These observations were shared with the participants after each person had the chance of being in the middle. The feelings and thoughts that went through their minds during the activity were shared with the group. *'I was scared in the beginning, but then it became easier and I didn't worry anymore.'*

*'I was worried because I didn't know if that mamma would be able to hold me.'*

*'I was scared because I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to hold that mamma.'*

The discussion that followed was about the adolescents learning to trust their parents enough to turn to them for help, but also the trust that parents have to regain in their children. The parents want their children to trust them enough to be able to talk to them but do not know if they can trust their children not to go off and do something foolish. *'I sent my child out in good faith and then I got a call from the police to say I must come pick him up at the police station. He'll first have to show me he has changed before I believe it.'*

The parents and adolescents were then free to discuss the programme and adolescents were encouraged to share what they had learnt in the eight sessions. Parents share that they have regrets about not spending enough time with their children and fear that the offence could have been a way for them to get attention that they needed from their parents. *"He needs my attention and this was his way of getting my attention."*

Emotional parents share the sacrifices they had to make to let their children attend the programme, and how they have tried to protect their children from the merciless scrutiny of others: *"His nine-year old brother asked me why he goes to the library every week but doesn't bring any books home. I said I explain it to him some other time. We have such a big family and if they had to know what he did...I don't know*

*what would happen to him, that's why I'm protecting him and if he could only realise it."*

*"Ek het specially vroeg van die werk af gekom sodat ek hier kan wees."*

*"I had to leave my work to be here today"* Parents feel that even though they make these sacrifices the adolescents do not realise it: *'The taxi-fare I have to give could have gone towards other necessities in the home.'*

A grandmother is very emotional; as her grandson has become a regular at the court-social worker. She came to this session hoping that he would have decided to change his ways, only to find out that he had not attended all the sessions. She pleads with him to change his ways but he does not want to make any promises: *'Ek willie my ouma die heelyd seermaak nie en ek wil 'n goeie kind wees. But ek weet mossie wat nog kan gebeur nie, daaroor wil ek nie vir haar niks promise nie.'*

Another one of the participants, also a regular at the court-social worker, and his mother are also having a tough time just talking to each other. Both are really angry the mother feels: *"Ek waste net my tyd met hom! Ek het moeite gemaak om hier te wees vandag, maar hy het nie eens al die sessies bygewoon nie."* The adolescent who is equally angry is quiet and replies that he has nothing to say, apparently feeling that he does not have to apologise to his mother or explain himself to anyone.

Some of the other parents did have some positive viewpoints. *'At first I thought that it was a waste of time. But after coming here with my son every week I can say that it has made a difference in him. I thought he was going to come here and sit around with criminals and gangsters, but I look around me today and I see ordinary, good people worried about their kids, that's all they are just kids.'*

Others parents share that although their children had not changed overnight, as they had hoped, they could see subtle changes occurring. One of the mothers shared how her son, who previously did nothing around the house in addition to not attending school, was now cleaning the house and cooking so that she had nothing to do around the house when she came home from work.

Children offered "peace-offerings" through promising to clean the yard, listening to their parents or asking for permission before going out at night. Most of the parents were not convinced of the genuineness of these offerings and stated that they would wait and see if these promises materialised before getting excited about changes

happening. *“Hy het laas weekend die yard skoongemaak met ‘n ander vriend van hom. Ek sê nog so mooi dankie toe lat hy my verstaan ek moet hom nou twintig rand betaal.”* (angry mother) Other parents agree and want to know why they should be paying if money will only be going into buying drugs. *“Ons bly mos almal in die huis hoekom moet hy betaal word om iets te doen.”* (father)

Even though the third group of participants started off tough and seemed like they did not really care about what happened to them some of these participants really became rather serious about change to the end of the sessions. It was also these participants who wanted help and who opted to do homework and participate in group-discussions who seemed to gain the most from the programme as a whole. When prompted about what they had learnt the responses concentrate on the games played and the friends made, but there are those who show remorse: *“Ek het geleer om nie agter vriende aan te gaan nie, want waar is hulle nou. Ek wil myself likes en wil hê my ma moet my trust om goed te doen”*. Yet others are not sure if they will change: *“Ek wil bettere wees, but ek weet mossie wat nog vorentoe gaan gebeur nie so ek kan nie sê nie.”*

#### **4.13.1 What did the participants learn from the programme?**

*‘I’ve realised what I want for myself and I can’t get it through crime or breaking the law.’*

One of the participants who had been quiet through most of the sessions added: *‘I know what I’ve learned here. I’ve learnt about respect, listening and liking myself’* His efforts are applauded since he always had to be begged to say something.

Another participant, who was arrested for assault, talked on how he sometimes feels like there is no other way out than to hit someone; but he has learnt *“If you don’t like the reaction, don’t do the action.”*

A participant shared how he learned about controlling his urges to make wrong choices: *‘I don’t want to just look at things, I also want to touch and take it because I’m curious as to what it can do! But here I learn that I shouldn’t touch those things. Look for another way to cure my curiousness.’*

At this last session participants were exchanging telephone numbers and making plans to see each other again, so it is evident that some bonds of friendship had formed between these adolescents.

#### 4.14 INTERVIEW

An interview was conducted with a NICRO social worker, Ms Donna (name has been changed), who is the coordinator of programmes presented at Parow library on 10 October 2003. The aim of the interview was to find out what Ms Donna thought of the programme and what she felt could be changed about the programme.

According to Ms Donna about 90% of the youth attending the programme presented in Parow are male, normally there are only about one to three girls in each group.

The areas (in the Northern suburbs) that make use of the NICRO services are mostly that of the coloured community for example Bishop Lavis, Ravensmead, etc. Therefore it is not surprising that 95% of the youth participating are coloured and Afrikaans speaking, as it is the first language of the majority of coloured people in the Western Cape.

Ms Donna shares that language usually proves to be a problem as most of the participants do not have sufficient skills in English and therefore classes are mostly presented in Afrikaans. Yet this causes a problem for black youth whose home language is mostly Xhosa and who also at times struggle with English. There is an obvious language barrier which creates conflict during sessions as both the youth and facilitator gets frustrated as simple things need to be explained at length as not everyone understands immediately. This also wastes valuable time that should have been used for discussion.

The most common offences amongst the youth attending at the Parow library is shoplifting and robbery. Ms Donna estimates that this could account for 80% of the offences. Other offences are assault, housebreaking and possession of drugs (mostly cannabis).

I asked about the procedure for youth ending up in the programme. Ms Donna explained that when a young person is arrested the police would take him/her into custody and most of the youth spend the night in the police cells. She also adds that most of the youth are caught on Fridays and Saturdays, which means that they will have to spend most of the weekend in the cells before they are brought before the magistrate on Monday mornings. When youth arrive at the police cells and all their details have been verified they are required to call their parents or guardians. During this time an assessment is also done by the probation officer. This assessment is what

the senior prosecutor will depend on when he recommends that the youths be sent to NICRO.

Through this procedure youth are referred to the YES-programme and therefore when the youth arrive at the library it is their first meeting with Ms Donna. Ms Donna adds that she feels that parents are not given adequate information at the courts as they arrive at the first session without any real idea of what will happen next. She feels that this adds towards their animosity and the tense atmosphere at the first session, because parents are concerned about whether or not their child will have a criminal record or not. Most parents are still denying their child's involvement in any crime and also feel like they are wasting their time. Ms Donna adds that parents are sometimes concerned about what their child could learn from a young women like herself and have this feeling about most of the facilitators as well, because it is mostly young people offering of their time to facilitate programmes.

What are her views on the programme? Ms Donna believes that it is an excellent programme if it is used correctly. It can teach young people to make better decisions and help them develop skills that they'll need to better themselves. She feels that this greatly depends on the skills of the facilitator. The facilitators should be able to identify with the children and have a passion for working with young people. But she adds that in her opinion the programme could be better utilised as a preventative measure with troubled youth who have not yet committed a crime, than used as a curative measure with youth who have already been arrested. She further explains that although the programme is aimed at first time offenders the reality is somewhat different, because although this is the first time that some of these youths have been arrested it is not their first or only crime.

Despite this Ms Donna does believe that the participants do learn some skills, and she explains that it seems that the things most remembered by the youth is the decision making and gender stereotypes sessions. She feels however, that the most important skills that youth should take from the programme is assertiveness and enhanced self-concept. To her it is important that the young people know themselves and through this knowledge make choices that will be to their advantage.

What problems or difficulties are there in the programme? Ms Donna feels that the skills presented in this programme is actually basic skills that should have been learnt

within the home. Therefore she feels that parents should be more involved. Yet it has also been her experience that some parents seem not to be interested and even though they are required by law to attend at least two of the sessions, this often does not happen.

Most of these troubled youth are not attending school and some have left school as early as Grade five or six. This means that they have difficulty in understanding some terms and especially when they are required to write it is these youth who start behaving badly, in an attempt to take the focus off their inability. This is also problematic for those young people who are still in school, because they are also frustrated when time is used to explain simple terms over and over so that everyone can understand.

Ms Donna is also concerned with the distance young people need to travel in order to get to the library. Parents have to give out large amounts for taxi-fare and sometimes youth use the money and skip the sessions. This also places an extra burden on parents who sometimes cannot afford to send their children but still try to do so.

I asked her about the number of participants who do not complete the sessions and never return to do so. According to Ms Donna this is one of the loopholes in the system. When she sends the assessments off to the courts she does report this issue and recommend that these youth return to complete the programme or do community service but ultimately the decision lies with the senior prosecutor.

#### **4.15 INFORMAL INTERVIEWS**

Although discussions were held with several of the participants, I highlight the following four to illustrate the diverse group of people who make use of the programme offered by NICRO.

##### **4.15.1 Participant 1**

Participant 1 is a sixteen year old coloured boy who was arrested for shoplifting. He stole socks at a big mall while he was there with his friends one evening. He is a rather quiet boy and although he knows two of the other boys in this specific group because they attend school together he does not interact much with the other participants. In talking with him about what brought him to the programme he explains in great detail of how he together with some friends just wanted to have some fun. As he puts it: *“Ons was net lus om stout te wees en toe sê hulle kom ons vat*

*die sokkies en toe sit ek dit in my sak en loop ons uit die winkel.*” He was caught by the security guards who called the police, and he spend a day and a half in the police cells before his grandfather could come and fetch him. He lives with his grandfather together with his sister and a couple of his other cousins. He admits that his grandfather has a difficult enough time without him adding to his load, but adds that he really does not know why he did it and that he did not really have a good reason for stealing. On questions of what he wants to do after the programme he replies: *“Ek wietie, ek wil net uit die moeilikheid uit bly daai’s al en skool klaar maak.”*

#### **4.15.2 Participant 2**

Participant 2 is a sixteen year old coloured boy who was arrested for assault. He stabbed one of his friends with a bottle-neck. In conversation with him he explains that this was not his first offence, *“ is nie die eerste keer wat ek nou hier kom want al die ander kere het ek survive.”* He dropped out of school whilst in Grade eight and does not plan on going back. He also admits to using drugs and seems to be very streetwise. He explains that he wants to become a car-dealer but doesn’t really mind as long as he can earn money he’d be fine.

#### **4.15.3 Participant 3**

Participant 3 is a sixteen year old black boy who was arrested for housebreaking. He, together with two of his friends, had robbed a phone-shop and caused damage of up to R10 000. He still denies that they did the damage, and only admits to taking the money. He also explains that this is not his first offence. *“I steal money so that I can have all the cool things I want. I even stole from my mother.”* His brother is in jail and he explains that he is not scared of going to jail because sometimes it safer in jail than outside. When asked if he intends to stop stealing he does not even have to think, he answers straight away that he will never stop and adds that there is more money in stealing and drugs than there is in working anyways.

#### **4.15.4 Participant 4**

Participant 4 is a sixteen year old white girl who was arrested for shoplifting. She still attends school and explains that she is definitely planning on studying further. On questioned of why she stole a shirt she explains like many others that she does not really know why herself. *“But I guess it’s because I knew that I could get away with it. Because I got away with it once before. I went into the shop went to the fitting*



*rooms and put on the new shirt and walked out. But this time they stopped me. It was really stupid of me.”* She later explains that spending an evening in the police cells was enough to make her realise her mistake.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter some conclusions and recommendations about the implementation of the YES-programme will be presented. It is important to add that the aim of this study was not to measure the effectiveness of the YES-programme. Therefore it should be noted that comments on the outcomes of the programme are not based on objective measures. Rather the shortcomings identified are entirely based on my own observations, as well as my perceptions and the perceptions of youth and parents involved in the programme.

### 5.1 Sentiments regarding the impact of NICRO programmes

My first impression of this programme was that the participants were not learning much from these sessions. Each week they came to a two-hour session, sat around, joked with each other and played games. In fact when probing the participants on what they had learned or gained from the programme quite a few only remarked on the different games that were played and the new friendships that were discovered. Yet at the final session during an evaluation of the programme there were some of the participants, especially those who throughout had been rather quiet and only spoke when questions were directed at them, who learnt valuable lesson about themselves and the situation that they had created for themselves. Therefore I do think that the programme is of use and successful, because it does reach some participants even if not all. In the interview with the social worker she had discussed her views on the programme and identified that the programme, in her opinion, would be more successful if it was used as a preventative measure instead of a curative measure. I would agree with her statement because the programme depends entirely on the participants doing their part, by taking responsibility for their actions thereby working toward a change in behaviour. Yet most of the youth currently involved in the programme do not share this sentiment and therefore gain little from the programme.

It is notable that throughout the sessions both parents and children never named offences committed by the adolescent, as shoplifting, robbery or, assault; instead words like "*the thing that happened*" or "*wat ek gedoen het*" was used when referring to the offence. This could also still be a way of denying responsibility for what happened or not wanting to take full responsibility for what happened. And I

noted that in later sessions where I asked participants to share their stories with the group it opened the way for discussions on what they had done wrong and how they could have acted differently. Yet even in these discussions participants shifted the blame to their choice in friends, or in some instances lawyers and court proceedings for their behaviour. Participant should somehow be made aware that they are responsible for their own actions and should therefore be motivated to change.

### **5.2 Miscommunication among officials**

Another point of concern is the miscommunication between the magistrates' office and NICRO. There are sessions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and each session targets a different age group. The thirteen to fourteen year old youth meet on Mondays, Tuesdays are for the fifteen to sixteen year old youth and Wednesdays are for youth between the ages of seventeen and eighteen years. It is hoped that if the youth are in groups of their peers that they would be able to feel less anxious and participate adequately. There are also dates set-up at the beginning of the year for all the programmes which will run for the remainder of the year, which gets faxed to the magistrates' office in advance. Yet there are still parents turning up with their children on the wrong day or in the middle of a programme. These youth are then turned away and have to wait until the next programme starts sometimes two months down the line. Parents get despondent because of money spent on getting to the meeting place as well as having to take days off from work, and the youth who in some cases already do not feel up to the challenge of the programme might even decide not to return to the programme, when they are expected to wait that long for the next one to start.

### **5.3 Attendance**

In addition to the participants who get turned away there are also those participants who only start attending from the second or third session. These participants had also received the wrong dates from the courts and would be required to complete those sessions that they missed when the next programme begins. However these participants were allowed to join the programme into the second or third session as it is believed that the group is not close-knit yet, thus introducing someone new at that stage would not affect the other participants. Apart from these participants there are also participants who do not attend all the sessions.

Most of the groups start with between ten and sixteen participants, by the last session there are only between six and ten participants. The Monday group, for example, started with six participants by the final session there were only three participants. In the other groups as well participants turn up for every other session or some attend the first two sessions only to be seen again at the last two sessions. As I understand the process the adolescents are obligated to complete the full programme in order for their case to be withdrawn. However, this does not seem to be the case here. At the last session participants are warned of the implications of absenteeism and are therefore required to attend the session(s) that they have missed out on as soon as the next programme starts. This is also part of the recommendations included in the social worker's report to the court. Yet in the time that I had been facilitating sessions, apart from those recorded I had continued to facilitate sessions, I am only aware of one participant who attended a later programme for the session that he had missed. As mentioned in the interview with the social worker, she had attributed this to a "loophole in this system", seeing that she does recommend that the youth who do not complete the full eight weeks either complete those sessions that they have missed, repeat the whole eight sessions or complete some other form of community service.

It would appear that some of the participants get away with this absenteeism because of the court arrangement. At some of the courts youths are referred to the programme and do not get another date to report back to the courts and it seems that it is assumed that youths will take part in the programme and therefore the case is withdrawn. Others have to report back to the courts and this makes it more difficult for them to get away with absenteeism. Unfortunately this does detract from the programme's effectiveness.

#### **5.4 Assignments**

At the first meeting parents are made aware of the fact that the adolescents would be required to finish assignments at home, and parents are encouraged to get involved by assisting their children with these assignments. The first assignment, as mentioned earlier, is the letter of apology. Participants did not take the assignments very seriously, and most of the letters only came in near to the end of the programme.

However, the letters were never sent, but most importantly, the letters were not dealt with any further. In my opinion it would have been more advantageous if the letters

were sent. Most of the participants never asked about the letters again, especially because they had not really put any effort into writing the letters and some participants handed in letters consisting of only two lines omitting their names. Yet there were participants who went to great pains to write letters and therefore asked about it, in one of the groups there were a couple of participants who had committed acts against each other (assaulted their friend) and therefore wondered what happened to those letters.

I think the idea of having participants writing a letter is a good one, especially because most of the participants start out in the group not knowing how to express their thoughts and feelings in an appropriate manner. But I'm also of the opinion that the writing of the letter could have been used in a more constructive way, so that the participants could have a sure sense of having repented of their wrongdoing and being able to go on with their lives without the offence hanging over their heads forever. This way the letter might have made participants come to a real sense of what they had done, whether it was shoplifting or assault, who it affected in the short- and long-term and why it was wrong.

Apart from the letters participants are also given other assignments that not everyone does. Unfortunately there is no real way of forcing participants to do homework, especially because the programme is voluntary and the responsibility should therefore be with the participant. It does, however, make sessions more difficult when only a few of the participants have done homework and can therefore participate in the discussion. Yet it should be kept in mind that assignments, especially those that requires participants to use their writing and reading skills, could be difficult for those who are not interested in putting in some effort.

On the other hand, in later groups that I facilitated, I let the participants decide on appropriate "punishment" for not completing assignments. One group decided on doing twenty push-ups. Surprisingly, there were still at least two or three participants each week that did not complete assignment and therefore had to do the push-ups. I think that this mostly has to do with the fact that participants do not take the whole process seriously. In some instances participants do not want to be part of the programme, and still others agreed to being part of the programme because it seemed like the easiest way of getting out of trouble.

### 5.5 Real and imagined differences among participants

The programme is set up in such a way that it does not cater for all the participants. Some of these participants were adolescents who were excelling in school and sport (one participant was in her final year of school while another had received South African colours for high-jump). So facilitators should move away from the idea that every adolescent who will be a part of the programme is a school-dropout, or drug-addict, or in some or other way a “trouble-child”. This is exactly what participants referred to when they were discussing the programme not being challenging enough and being simple or meant for adolescents with a lower IQ.

Yet there are those who write their name with great difficulty, and those who struggle to grasp and perform basic instructions, not to mention those Xhosa- and Afrikaans-speaking adolescents who struggle with English. Maybe groups should therefore be formed on this basis (level of schooling, maturity, mother-tongue) instead of age.

There is a remarkable difference between the adolescents who are in school and those who have dropped out of school. Those who are still in school seem to be more mature, they understand instructions better, they understand that there is a time and place for everything and therefore even though they also joke and clown in the group they know when to be serious and when to be joking. Those who have not completed school or are in a lower standard because of only recently returning to school are more difficult to handle, they cannot debate with the others during small-group discussions, everything seems to be amusing to them. These are, mostly, the adolescents who are constantly in trouble and whose parents are just desperate for some ‘miracle cure’ to save them. It seems like the programme does not have any effect on them. At the final session when evaluation of the programme was taking place, each person was asked what they had learned and was going to put into practice in their lives. One of these ‘difficult’ participants replied: “*Ek het baie papiere gekry en ek moet hulle altyd hou*”. He was referring to hand-outs received during sessions. When probed about what he should do with these “*papiere*” he just thought that perhaps one day when he has nothing to do he would read them.

As noted earlier the different groups are composed in terms of the different age-groups. This was done in an attempt to curb differences amongst the adolescents from disrupting the group sessions. However, in my opinion group dynamics would be

better catered for if groups were composed in terms of the youths intellectual/school leaving abilities as well as their language usage and fluency. Because these are the issues that make it difficult for participants to not only understand and tolerate each other, but also makes it difficult for the facilitator to get the message across. This is however a daunting, if not impossible, task mainly due to the fact that the social worker meets participants for the first time at the first session.

### **5.6 Time constraints**

Quite often sessions are bluntly cut short because of time limits. Each session has activities and discussion with instructions on how much time should ideally be spent on each activity/discussion. Unfortunately because of the language barrier, the differing intellectual levels and participants not coming prepared with the assignments these time limits are not always realistic. In some session it often happens that there are other pressing concerns that the participants would rather be discussing and this also takes up valuable time, yet these issues are of importance to the participants and should therefore be discussed. Thus facilitators should be aware of what the main aim of a session is and try to get this across instead of trying to squeeze in all the activities into one session.

### **5.7 Lack of continuing support**

Another concern for me is the way in which the programme ends. Participants start an eight-week programme and get to know new friends and a facilitator who lends support. This support network however, ends after the eight weeks. The facilitator thanks the adolescents for their participation and everyone goes their own way. There should be some type of follow-up. This way the success rate of the programme can be determined but, more importantly the adolescents would have that support network to help them to apply the skills which they have gained within the programme. After the eighth session the youth are “free” to go as it were. No follow-up is arranged or anything. It is just assumed that the youth have learnt their lesson and will now apply these newly learnt skills into their lives.

This is also a concern for both parents and youth who are unsure of what the next step is. Most of these parents did not get any further instructions from the courts and were hoping for some guidance at the last session. However, here the only added information they gain is that a report will be sent to the court. Parents are also

informed that if they received a court date that they should then attend court on that date and that everything will then be handled. Parents without a court date are to understand that the matter is now settled and assured that the court would receive a report on the adolescents' participation in the programme.

As mentioned in a previous chapter Higgins and Butler (1982) discusses the difficulty that adolescents experience in adjusting to conventional society and inevitably social support is needed, after the criminal act has occurred. Therefore, in my opinion, it cannot be expected of these adolescents to return to conventional society without a support system that falls into place after the programmes are completed. We should bear in mind that these adolescents are returning to peers and pressures within the communities, which are still the same. Thus it is understandably difficult for youth who complete the programme with aspirations of improving themselves by putting into practice skills learnt throughout the programme.

### **5.8 Youth and parents' expectation**

Parents were committed to their children and the process of change offered by the programme. This could be witnessed by their attendance of the programme. Parents were required to attend the first and last sessions. There were parents who could not get time off from work, but still made the effort to come for the first couple of minutes to register the adolescents and then left the adolescent there with a grandparent, aunt, uncle or older sister, it seemed that everyone in the family was concerned about them. Parents are not obliged to attend all the sessions, and the facilitators' manual suggests that having the parents present might inhibit the participants. One of the participants' parents had decided that they wanted to attend with him, at the second session his mother came with him. Having his mother there did make him noticeably uncomfortable especially because his mother participated in the group as well, but it didn't seem to have any effect on the other participants. From the third session onward his father came along and sat in the background with his newspaper, this seemed to help him be a part of the group and did not at all discourage him or any of the other participants from having their say within the group. This parent shared at the final session that attending with his son was a good experience for both him and his son, it put them in a situation where they could have time alone with each other to get to know each other better.



Earlier on I mentioned parents expecting a “miracle cure” for their disobedient children. Parents want mighty change for the better to take place in their children’s lives and are noticeably disappointed when such changes did not occur.

### **5.9 Content of the sessions**

Youth and parents are promised assignments that are rarely given and even then most participants do not make an effort to complete the assignments. The manual suggests a journal that could have been a useful tool, especially if the facilitator were to somehow incorporate it into each session. Some of these adolescents have trouble in articulating what they think and feel and keeping a journal throughout the process could have helped them to make sense, for themselves, of their thoughts and emotions.

The first and the last sessions seem to be the most emotional. The first session is emotional because parents are still angry and feel disappointed. Parents are anxious to see if the programme could be the turning point in their child’s behaviour. For some of the adolescents ‘performing’ in the programme might be the only chance they have to prove to their parents that they have learnt from their mistakes. Therefore the final session is as emotional. Many parents come to this session only to find that their son or daughter had not attended all the sessions, some have attended as little as two of the sessions. These parents are angry and desperate and fear that nothing will be able to help their child. Other parents come to the final session anxious to meet a child who has changed their actions for the better. Adolescents are equally anxious; they attend the first session not knowing what will happen and some expect the programme to be some form of harsh treatment meted out in the fashion of army movies. Some of these adolescents attend the final session wanting to prove to their parents that they have learnt some important lessons and should be trusted again. Others come knowing that they haven’t attended all the sessions and are not sure about what will happen to them next.

Especially because most of the participants react to conflict or disagreement by using their fists, the session regarding conflict and communication should have been used more productively. To help the participants understand that they can be assertive and make demands without resorting to violence, and don’t have to be passive about everything either.

Also the sessions on socialisation as well as rights and responsibilities were based on concepts not understood by the participants and in which they were not interested in. Thus those sessions turned out to be lectures that was not what the programme is about as these sessions calls for participation which the adolescents were unwilling to give.

The participants should be more informed about the procedures. They are unsure about what happens after the eighth session and at the final session none of these concerns are adequately dealt with. What happens to the court case? Will there still be some kind of record of their involvement in the programme? Will there be follow-up sessions? These are the concerns of the participants.

### **5.10 The fear of being labelled**

One of the aims of the YES-programme, and diversion in general, is to sanction youth in such a way that it does not label or stigmatise the youth (Sloth-Nielsen 2000: 418). Yet the fear of being labelled is still very real for these youths and their parents. Both parents and youths go to great lengths to hide their involvement in the programme from people outside of their immediate family and in some cases siblings are not even informed. As noted earlier parents are especially anxious about how much information to share with the schools. They fear that this information could later lead to their child being the first accused when things go wrong. Similarly the youth do not share their involvement in the programme with those outside of family ties. They fear being “flavour of the month” and in those instances where adolescents’ criminal behaviour and involvement in the programme are known by members of the community it seems that they are labelled to some extent.

The stereotype of what a criminal or offender should look like is an issue that should be addressed. Parents in the final session also touched on this. They were surprised when they came to the first meeting to find parents and children just like themselves, trying to make sense out of a bad situation. They were expecting a room filled with unsavoury characters with lists of offences. The adolescents had the same ideas, even though some of them knew what the programme was about because they had friends who had attended the programme before. One participant (who was also the only white boy in his specific group) admitted to feeling worried about fitting into the group, he too had a predetermined idea of what the participants would be like.

For the adolescents and their parents to have these fears are normal, especially because they didn't know what to expect. But these are issues that the facilitator should be aware of, and after meeting the participants the sessions should be structured in such a way that all the participants can benefit from it.

### **5.11 Application of theories**

In concluding this part of the study I find it evident that both the control and neutralization theories, discussed in chapter two, are applicable to these participants. Control theory focuses on the control that both parents and the school have over youth, which influence their decisions about delinquency. The parents of these participants have little control, this is made clear in the way the children interact and react towards their parents. Most of these adolescents are on the streets late at night and decide for themselves about curfews, and from discussions with some of these adolescents it also became clear that not only are they out late at night but they also attend places that they should not even be getting entrance to because of their age (such as clubs and pubs). Further Sutherland and Hirschi (in Warr 1993: 248) state that parents who spend time with the children are able to reduce criminal behaviour. However, the parents of these participants are also unable to spend a considerable amount of time with their children as they have to work in order to provide for their physical needs.

Sykes and Matza's (1957: 102) techniques of neutralization are also evident in these youths explanation of the delinquent acts and why they had been involved in them. Many of the participants do not take responsibility for their delinquent behaviour and blame lawyers for accusing them, and friends for persuading them to commit a crime. The neutralization theory focuses on exactly that, discussing methods used by youth to distance themselves from their criminal behaviour. Also participants who were caught shoplifting felt that no one was injured as they believe that the owners wouldn't miss a couple of products. Participants who were arrested for possession of drugs felt that their was no victim as they used the drugs on themselves. Thus denying injury as well as the existence of a victim. Participants in the sessions also focussed more on the actions of the police, lawyers and parents to avoid focussing on their actions and thus making their actions seem as the lesser issue and the negativity or inconsiderate behaviour of others as pivotal.

## 5.12 Conclusion

What exactly is it that both NICRO and magistrates want out of the programme: Weeks into the programme an eighteen year old young man and his mother comes to join the programme. The dates that they had were wrong so if he was going to complete the programme then he had to wait for the beginning of the next one. I explained to her that there are only two sessions left in this programme so it was really impossible for him to join this specific group. Apart from this he is already eighteen so strictly speaking he should not even be consider for this type of programme anymore. The mother who is noticeably upset replies: *“Hy het so mooi reggekome toe moet dit nou gebeur. Die magistraat het gesê ek moet hom hiernatoe bring sodat hy kan leer van wat reg en verkeerd is.”*

This young man had been caught stealing at the place where he had part-time employment. He left school in standard eight (grade 10), and has since then been at a technical school studying carpentry. Does he still need to be taught the difference between right and wrong?

In the closing part of this discourse it should be stated that NICRO has both positive and negative aspects. The youth who participate in the NICRO programmes in my opinion will only get out of it that which they put in. Thus I think more should be done, by both parents and facilitators, to motivate and encourage the youth to participate and acquire skills that would enable them to attain a better life.

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