

THE EXPERIENCES OF STREET CHILDREN AT COMMUNITY- BASED HOME SCHOOLS

by

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The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered behind the text. It features a shield with a red and white checkered pattern, a blue top section, and a red banner at the bottom with the Latin motto "Festera roburant cultus recti". Above the shield is a figure holding a staff and a red flag.

SUPERVISOR: PROF AG SMIT

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment 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

There are an estimated 10 000 children in and around the streets of South Africa, with the speculation that this could be higher, given the difficulties surrounding the counting of the street children.

Not all street children live on the streets permanently: many spend their days there mainly for economic reasons earning an income, then spend their nights at their homes or those of friends and relatives. Others go to the street as an alternative to going to school or, in an effort to avoid parents or caregivers who show little interest in their lives, or who force them onto the street to earn money.

It is particularly children that have not become permanent residents of the street and that are part of community-based home schools, that are the focus of this study. A qualitative approach is used to establish the experiences of these children in a residential area in the northern suburbs of Cape Town.

The study revealed the following:

- Community-based home schools provide children with basic needs like food, clothing and importantly, a trusting relationship with an adult.
- Children's lives are restored in a non-threatening environment, assisting them to regain their dignity, establish healthier self-concepts as well as higher self-esteem.

- Once these basic needs are fulfilled, it became evident that children are able to return to the experience of mainstream school and in so doing face the world with renewed fervour.

OPSOMMING

Na beraming is daar omtrent 10 000 straatkinders in Suid Afrika. Daar word gespekuleer dat die getal hoër kan wees as gevolg van die probleme met die tel van straatkinders.

Nie alle straatkinders leef permanent op die strate nie. Baie spandeer hul dae op straat slegs vir ekonomiese gewin waar hulle 'n inkomste verdien, en slaap snags by hul huise óf by vriende óf familie. Ander leef op die straat as 'n alternatief om skool toe te gaan. Hulle doen dit ook om hul ouers of voogde te vermy wat min aandag aan hulle skenk of wie die kinders forseer om geld op die straat te verdien.

Dit is veral kinders wat nie permanent op die straat lewe nie, en deel is van huisskole, wat die fokus is van hierdie studie. 'n Kwalitatiewe benadering is gebruik om die ervarings van hierdie kinders in 'n gemeenskap in die noordelike voorstede te bewerkstellig.

Die studie het die volgende getoon:

- Gemeenskapsgebaseerde huisskole voorsien kinders met die basiese benodighede soos kos, klere en baie belangrik, die vertrouwe van 'n verhouding met 'n volwassene.

- Die kinders se lewens word herstel in 'n omgewing wat nie bedreigend is nie en wat hulle help om hul waardigheid te herwin en om 'n gesonde selfkonsep en hoër selfbeeld te vestig.
- Wanneer hierdie basiese benodighede vervul is, het dit duidelik geword dat hierdie kinders kon terugkeer na die hoofstroom-skool ervaring en op hierdie manier kon hulle die wêreld met hernuwe ywer aanpak.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The increase in the incidence of street children and their increasing appearance throughout the country is a cause for concern. Smit & Liebenberg (1998:335) suggest that stakeholders need to assess current service provision and focus on effective alternatives. Loffell (1997:8) states that the public as well as the government sector, is more mindful of this group of children and their needs and acknowledges that efforts to deal effectively with them is in progress.

The *Proposed Integrated Provincial Policy Framework for Services to Street Children in the Western Cape – PPPF* (my abbreviation) (1997:7), acknowledges the role that research should play in the monitoring and evaluation of service provision. Presently, shifts are occurring in service provision to accommodate for the complexity of the situation with the approach being holistic and multi-pronged rather than a single service approach, so that families in their communities can be addressed more effectively.

Children are subjected to ill treatment often because parents themselves have become marginalised in society. Indications by Whiteford *et al.* in the *White Paper*

for Social Welfare (1997:9) is that about one third all South African households are living in poverty. Most of these are African households, in the rural areas, headed by women. As a result of this, over half of all South Africa's children live in poverty. Unemployment in South Africa is estimated to be between 25% (South African Institute for Race Relations 1998:50) and 34% (Stats in Brief 1996). This scenario has facilitated the ever-increasing marginalisation of families with the resulting ill treatment of children.

Several studies elaborate on the connection between discriminatory policy and the conditions that prevail in society as regards street children. Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994:110) state that within the South African context, "poverty is structurally related to, and has been exacerbated by, the policy of apartheid. Socially constructed and maintained in this way, poverty can be seen as a central factor in the creation of the street child problem in this society". Richter (1994:28) believes that the challenge currently facing South African society is to confront the vast material poverty that has been exacerbated by the deliberate political policy of apartheid.

The *White Paper for Social Welfare* (1997:9) reiterates this idea by stating that, "structural poverty emanates from the economic, political and social organisation of society". This indicates the enormous impact that the ideology of the state has on the conditions of a society and how it can, by the same token, through its state organs, facilitate the change in values, ideas, knowledge and subsequent

approaches to dealing with and eradicating poverty from society as well as other social ills.

This socio-economic deprivation has had a rippling effect on the fabric of our society that needs to be addressed with urgency. Devastating manifestations of this deprivation can be observed in the disintegration of family life in particularly the sub-economic strata of our society. Skweyiya (2000:11) remarks with cynicism that, "the disintegration of the social fabric, of family and community life is a reality that has not been acknowledged at a fundamental level". This indicates that firm steps need to be facilitated to ensure the eradication of the problem and its psychosocial effects.

Silva (1996:279) states that psychosocial trauma is devastating to children and becomes noticeable in, *inter alia*, low self-esteem, an altered self-concept and loss of respect in elders and other authorities. This has consequences for the way in which families relate to each other. The children who find themselves in such situations often come from poorer disintegrated families.

This disintegration leaves children vulnerable. They experience difficulties even more intensely than adults do because they are in the process of development where they need support from nurturing adults at home, school and society at large. Teachers, parents or caregivers and others in society who interact with

children need to understand the importance of their psychological development (The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk - IMC 1996).

However, it is particularly at home and at school where they are exposed to abuse and neglect. Consequently, their rights to dignity are violated and they are defenceless in the face of this adversity. An accumulation of these factors often drives children to alternative means of subsisting, such as life on the street. They find a 'home' on the street. In the quest for the support and understanding that children so desperately need, they latch onto anyone, in this case other street children, who can provide them with the empathy and comfort that they seek. Silva (1996:281) states that as these children, "seek their own level they find an anchor usually among their peers, who understand their situation".

A report by the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* – RDP (1995:9) states that the government that came into power in 1994 has pledged the willingness to commit to children. In the ANC manifesto (1999:13) one of the key points indicated for improving the lives of children is the fact that street children will be given special attention. One of the priority target groups quoted in the *National Youth Policy* (1997:34) are the young women and men who live and work on the street – the implication being that the children born of them will also be targeted. This indicates that at macro level, the government expresses a willingness to address that which is ailing the youth and children of our country.

1.1.1 Traditional approaches

Traditional approaches to dealing with street children often centre around facilities like shelters and drop-in centres. Research done by Silva (1996:281) and Dallape (1996:288), has shown that street children are often averse to authoritarian, structured, institutionalised lifestyles such as those found in most shelters and schools. These systems, more often than not, perpetuate and reflect the domination, powerlessness and lack of care and nurturance that they experienced while in their parental homes.

Service provision, claims Dallape (1996:288), has often been of a curative rather than a developmental and preventative nature, where agencies that were involved fell outside of the community from which the children came. Welfare agencies are often trapped between the alleviation of immediate suffering and advocating for the rights of the child (and the poor).

1.1.2 Community as context for intervention

Until now, programmes have all too often been based on supposed needs of the street children. These have also largely focused on the child who is on the streets and who now needs to be 'cured'. Veeran (1996:254) cautions against reinventing the wheel or, "superimposing first-world solutions to third-world conditions". It is important to meet needs evidenced by the children and to relate their experience to develop effective service provision.

Little attention is focused on earlier intervention strategies within the community where the child is essentially still living at home, but 'working' on the street by day begging, to make money for the family, finding himself in a vulnerable and threatened state that could lead to the child leaving home. Furthermore, the child who is not yet living on the street permanently, but who is at risk by nature of the often dysfunctional and impoverished family within which he finds himself, goes largely unnurtured until he moves out of the community and reaches the streets where he then gets noticed and 'treated'. Dallape (1996:290) considers the development of the child within the community from which he comes to be crucial to the effectiveness of street children programmes. Roleplayers need to play an active role at various levels to ensure that the incidence of street children is lessened rather than increased (Smit & Liebenberg 2000:9). In order then to provide solutions based on the third-world conditions, from which children come, it is essential to give relevant training and orientation to various stakeholders.

A community-based informal setting offers an alternative that occurs within the community, involving caring people from stable homes who provide certain services from that particular community. Here the basic needs that go unmet in the parental homes, like proper childcare, trusting relationships, protection and schooling, are fostered in a way that tries to address the successful development of children. The idea of the communities themselves taking charge of the children with the support from government is well documented by the IMC (1996).

Community members, in particular, enter such programmes with varied amounts of training – often with very little formal training but lots of life experience. To empower a community to care for its children, it is important to provide them with extra skills, over and above what they already have. This also presents an opportunity for upskilling and employing members of the community by empowering them to deal effectively and in tandem with other service providers for the needs of their children. Training should further be customised so that it adequately addresses the target groups - in this case the children at risk of becoming or who are street children (Smit 1999:4).

A 24-hour community-based model of which home schools formed a part, has been introduced to involve communities in services to children in a synchronised, preventative and rehabilitative-educational manner (Smit & van Schalkwyk 1998:335). Schooling needs as well as other psychosocial needs are also met here.

1.1.3 Future prospects

The *White Paper on Social Welfare* (1997:19) states that there needs to be a national and collective responsibility which incorporates the formal welfare sector, religious organisations, NGO's, the business sector, informal social support systems, community networks, corporate social investment programmes, occupational social services and private social service practitioners. Ross (1991:72) expresses similar sentiments advocating for a communal approach.

In the statutory document which contains the *Minimum Standards - South African Child & Youth Care System* compiled by the IMC (1998), a proposal is made that role-players need to be active at four levels for child and youth care provision,

Level 1: Prevention

Level 2: Early intervention

Level 3: Statutory process

Level 4: Continuum of care

The PPPF (1997) have drawn on the IMC (1996) interim policy to formulate their policy around street children. In the IMC (1996:17) document, it is stated that there needs to be a move away from the “medical model” where the emphasis is on

“weaknesses, categorising, labelling, helping and curing towards a developmental and ecological perspective which focuses on reframing problems as strengths on competence building, and residential environments which empower children, families and communities”.

This would imply a shift towards focusing on levels one and two rather than three and four where the children are labelled and need curing because they have fallen in trouble. Levels one and two are of a developmental nature that should be able to impact positively on children and their families.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND AIM OF THE STUDY

Little attention has been paid to alternative models that can adequately capture the street child who is experiencing problems at home and at school. Such a model is the 24-hour model that included community-based home schools (Smit 1998:340). One factor of overall success of such a model may be how children experience provided services.

As such, the primary aim of this study is to capture the experiences of children involved in community-based home schools for street children.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Research design

A qualitative and non-experimental approach will be chosen for this study. It is particularly suited to this type of study as it lends itself to rich descriptions and a chance for elaboration of experience. Two particular strengths of qualitative studies highlighted by Orford (1992:127), are that firstly, they focus on the views of the persons being researched and secondly, this method aims to capture the diversity of social phenomena as well as the theories such phenomena generate. Working with communities makes this kind of approach preferable because one captures their knowledge, attitudes and experiences succinctly.

1.3.2 Literature study

A literature study is done that focuses on:

- Street children as a vulnerable group
- Informal settings as opposed to institutions as settings
- The environment of the child
- Re-positioning of service provision
- Community-based home schools for street children

Such a review would consider important areas of the street children problem. The literature review includes past research on service provision and recommendations made, the needs of children and a view of a model that could provide for street children within the framework of current thinking.

1.3.3 Data collection methods

Data will be collected from children involved in a programme that strives to engage them within the new paradigm envisaged for supporting children and youth. This data collection will take place during two sessions per group. The researcher will be the collector of the information. Use will be made of drawings as a projective technique, individual interviews, focus group interviews as well as observations of the children at their home schools.

1.3.4 Data analysis

During data analysis information is sorted, collated, categorised and systematised within the context of the study so that it addresses the research question at hand.

The researcher as well as two independent researchers analyse the data independently for themes.

4. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF TERMS

1.4.1 Home schools

A community-based home care service that has been set up in the homes of caring adults in the community from which the street children originate, to support them emotionally, socially and educationally. It is not the same as home education as laid down by the South African Schools Act (1996:30), which states that a parent should apply for home education and that the person should be registered by the Head of Department.

1.4.2 Children on the street

Children who are mostly not attending school and who spend time on the street during the day, often to obtain money, but who return to their own homes or those of friends or relatives at night.

1.4.3 Children of the street

These are children who are on the street all of the time. They sleep, eat and make a living from the street and have largely abandoned their homes and severed ties with family or/and community.

1.4.4 Home school teacher

A caring and willing adult from a community who has offered her services to helping the children. In a traditional sense, they are formally untrained teachers but they have received formal training in working with children 'on' and 'of' the street within the project.

1.4.5 Streetworker

Someone who works with children who are found on the street. They meet the children at a specific place on the street close to where the children normally meet each other and engage in activities with them. In the process, they also facilitate the provision of health needs such as food and clothing. This is possible because they serve as a link between the child on the street and the other workers and agencies that assist street children in the area. They also keep track of the children's movements especially the new faces on the street and this information is relayed to the larger team for the appropriate assessment and intervention.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

This study is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1

This chapter covers the background to the study, the problem statement and aim, the research methodology and the conceptual terms used.

Chapter 2

This chapter incorporates a literature review that describes the issues surrounding street children, with particular reference to alternative ways of addressing their situation.

Chapter 3

A description of the research methodology used for the research is expanded on.

Chapter 4

Research findings and discussion are presented.

Chapter 5

The present study, conclusions, limitations and recommendations are summarised.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY

The literature study focuses on the following areas:

- Street children as a vulnerable group
- Informal settings as opposed to institutions as settings
- The environment of the child
- Re-positioning of service provision
- Community-based home schools for street children

2.1 STREET CHILDREN AS A VULNERABLE GROUP

2.1.1 Incidence of street children

Barrette (1995:1) makes a very disturbing observation when she states that, “ even in Africa, [which is] renowned for the warmth and strength of its families” the growing trend of street children is occurring. Historically, urbanisation, industrialisation, family breakdown, housing shortages and the increase in societal unrest have often been cited as phenomena conducive to this problem (Swart 1990:57-58). In South Africa, this phenomenon was particularly destructive as a

result of apartheid policies such as migrant labour, influx control and the Group Areas Act, which forcibly split families, breaking up the family ethos with devastating repercussions for children (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 1997:155). Dowd (1998:17) stated reasons for an increase in street children as being the “declining socio-economic situation in the central business district, growing unemployment and the juvenile justice system.” Boikanyo and Donnell (1997:7) attributed the increasing numbers of children that move on and off the streets to the relatively new phenomenon of AIDS orphans, lingering high unemployment, as well as crime levels.

Literature indicates that no single factor can be attributed to the street children situation. However, a combination of social and personal factors lies at its root (Swart 1990:57). Moorehead (1989:7) notes that in the latter part of the 1980s, the position of children was not good. She claims that apart from the poverty to which children were exposed and which underlies so many of their other problems, children had to work, were undereducated, bullied, malnourished, abused and without homes in every country of the world. This does reflect very poorly on our civilisation and our attitudes towards children.

In South Africa, reports of street children can be traced back to the turn of the century. It is only since the 1980s that the public has been conscientised regarding their situation. It is also since then that help has come in informal ways (Schurink in Barrette 1995:2). This awareness has facilitated the desire to improve services.

It has been the trend recently to distinguish between children 'on' and 'of' the streets. This distinction becomes significant because it enables stakeholders to address more effectively the needs of the two groups. Morch (in Swart-Kruger and Donald 1994:108) describes children 'on' the street as those who have not severed family ties, but who go to the streets by day and return home at night. School attendance for this group might be irregular. Richter (in Swart-Kruger and Donald 1994:108) describe children 'of' the street as those who have severed ties with family, community and school by choice or through being pushed out, and thus live on the street.

Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994:109) as well as Veeran (1996:45) expand on the difficulties in establishing the number of street children in South Africa. The highly fluid nature of their street lives make estimations difficult. However, research compiled by Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994:109) estimate that there are fewer children who live on the street permanently (children 'of the street), than those who go onto the streets by day largely for socio-economic reasons (children 'on' the street). The amounts cited by them are that there are an estimated 10 000 children 'of the street and 1 000 000 'on' the street. According to Smit and van Schalkwyk (1998:1), three out of four street children move onto the street by day largely for economic reasons (such as to supplement the family income), and then return home at night. This echoes the idea that most street children do not live on the streets permanently.

Given this scenario, the children at risk of becoming children 'of' the street (permanent street children) comprises a very large group and presents a particular challenge for implementing interventions that would prevent and keep them from the streets.

Wertheim (1996:13) observes that programmes and facilities in many cases cater more for those children who are 'of' the street, making the task of accommodating for the at-risk group of children who are 'on' the street a challenge.

2.1.2 How do children become street children?

Many factors can stunt healthy development in children, and contribute to a child eventually becoming a child of the street (Kuse 1997:22). Factors range from within the child, such as low resilience and poor, sensitive temperament, through to family circumstances, like the quality of the relationship between parents or caregivers and how these interface with the children or other people who live in the house. Poor parental inner controls like volatile temperaments, their own substance abuse which can result in various kinds of abuse towards children, each other and themselves, unemployment and poverty are breeding grounds for tensions between parents and children. Dawes and Donald (1994:23) state that, "children's life circumstances can restrict the optimal development of their adaptive powers and hence their ability to engage actively in the world". However, the extent and quality of the supports in place for the vulnerable family by other family

members or public agencies and the community becomes increasingly important in difficult conditions.

Although the level of schooling amongst street children is low or non-existent, schools as we know them traditionally offer little assistance to such children, other than where the school is aware of the difficult circumstances of the child and offer support. In these cases, children can then get varying amounts of support, but mostly while at school. When not at school, this help is often not possible. Consequently, a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to support the children in the variety of contexts within which they exist.

At the 1990 Cotonou seminar, Barrette (1995:32) cited reasons for the street children problem in South Africa as being:

- The lack of a father figure through divorce and single parenthood and the resulting lack of positive male role models in the home;
- Step-parents arguing about biological versus step-parenting responsibilities;
- Children are often abandoned, especially when born out of wedlock. This often happens when they become a problem for the mother because of skipping school, mixing with bad friends, glue sniffing, sleeping out, to mention a few reasons. The street then becomes an ideal refuge because other street children welcome those who are as desperate for survival as they are. Talented children also go there, because they experience this lack of nurturance at home

and then go out to seek means to survive - to get on with their lives, no matter the risk it poses them;

- Also mentioned are urbanisation, because of the desperate attempt to escape poverty in the rural and previously called homeland areas;
- The transitional nature of African society (traditional versus the First world scenario);
- The school crises of the 70's and 80's that often saw children leave school and join the street.

Schurink (1993:266) notes push and pull factors that manifest on micro, meso and macro levels. Push factors (factors that drive children to the street) include poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, child abuse, family disintegration, alcohol abuse by parents, school breakdown, the collapse of alternative care facilities and family violence. Alcohol abuse can be broadened to drug abuse, where children are often pushed onto the streets to get money that would feed the habits of their caregivers. Veeran (1999:228) cites similar reasons for children leaving homes including, schools, violence, attraction to city life as well as peer pressure.

Pull factors (factors that attract and draw children to the street), include the desire to earn money, to supplement family income and to roam the streets. The sense of belonging and relatedness that the street offers children who feel unwanted can also be a pull factor because the children understand each other, and provide support and protection to the group in their quest for this unfulfilled need. Silva

(1996:281) reiterates the fact that the children “find an anchor” amidst the other street children.

Children in such a vulnerable position, according to a study conducted by Smit (1998:39) often manifest in their behaviour traces of being, “anxious, [a] poor self-image and exhibits fear for all figures of authority”. Findings also indicate that children have poor health and are involved in anti-social activities like sexual abuse, violence, exploitation and drug abuse (of which glue sniffing is common). This study further noted that children’s emotional needs must be met in order for effective communication and the feelings of trust to take root.

Hansen (1996:256) elaborates on three stages in the process of becoming a street child, i.e. “preliminary stage”, which entails unconscious and conscious processes based on experiences to which the child is exposed, in which the child is often a victim of circumstances. The second stage is the “acting out stage”, where the child manifests disturbed behavioural patterns such as truancy, stealing and substance abuse. The third stage is the “consolidating stage”, when the child is on the street and actively engaging in activities there.

It is not easy to pinpoint any one factor as being a key player in this process. One needs to rather look at the interplay between a whole range of circumstances in order to see how children develop into street children. It is a process and therefore the focus should be on intervention within the process rather than curative

approaches, which take place *post facto*. It is also only by knowing where to look for causes that one can begin to unravel the process and know where to focus preventative work.

2.2 INFORMAL SETTINGS AS OPPOSED TO INSTITUTIONS AS SETTINGS

2.2.1 Service delivery at present: topical debates

Currently, service provision is presented mainly in the form of shelters (Veeran 1999:224). These shelters have received their fair share of criticism because they primarily represent yet another institution to which children must submit, often situated away from their communities and which offer services aimed largely at providing daily material needs. Thomas (1994:214) and Veeran (1999:224) in the debate around the institutionalisation of children, emphasise that NGO's in line with international perspectives agree that authoritarian, uniform-wearing, rule-oriented approaches do not work productively towards solving the problem of street children because the underlying attitudes of the adults are still authoritarian. It is often the breakdown of relationships with authoritarian adults that cause children to leave home in the first place. When the trust of children is broken down to the extent that they become suspicious of help from adults, then we must seriously question our methods of working with such children (Bar-On 1997:65).

In an extreme portrayal of the bad relationship that can exist between children and adults in South America, a *Unisa Centre for Latin American Studies* (UCLA) report (1994) claims that adults in South America, have gone as far as murdering children

to deal with the estimated 8 to 30 million street children in Brazil prior to 1980. The reality is that adults contribute to the difficulties that children experience and then try to solve the problem by destroying them.

Mathye (1994:7) and Mwaniki (in Barrette 1995:83) believe that childcare facilities, as they occur at present, often stand to discourage children from being a part of the facility. Mathye (1994:7) has also found that the children receive services in exchange for both specific behaviours and the provision of information to service providers on demand. This again makes the children feel that adults do not really care for them but are only interested in using them for their own personal gain. Given the exposure that children have had to the streets and the sense of freedom that they experience, this form of authority from adults is often seen as yet another way in which adults act in their own interests without viewing the real needs of the child as paramount.

Mwaniki (in Barrette 1995:83) states that children find it very difficult to identify with formal institutions that provide for them. The relationship between the child and the housemother or housefather is an assumed one that does not serve to adequately compensate for the bonds of a mother or father within the real home situation.

The deep need that children have for a sense of belonging, has usually been severed as a result of poor home environments and this needs to be dealt with extremely carefully. Houseparents can seldom provide that sense of community

effectively, given all the children that they cater for. Children in this position are thus vulnerable and empower themselves through controlling their lives on the streets. How they subsequently live is a creation that they convince themselves is good for them under the circumstances providing a false sense of freedom. Swart (1990:97) comments on this paradoxical situation by stating that the children, “appear to be free and yet in need”.

Mathye (1994:7) also speaks of the independence that children have developed in order to cope with the hardship of the street. They experience as she says, an “advanced sense of independence”. This makes them resistant to authoritarian and formal structures, which is also a reason why some find it difficult to cope at the formal schools.

This means that children need to be offered assistance that builds on the strengths that they have developed for themselves. The children must feel that they are being assisted in individualised ways because they are unique individuals with special needs. So an environment that is more varied in approach as far as expected behaviours, programmes and interventions are concerned, will be of more benefit to the children. Children can then be more actively involved in programmes, which have a strong child-centred approach (Van Beers 1996:199).

2.3 THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CHILD

2.3.1 The needs of children

The *Child Care Amendment Act* (Act 96 of 1996:1), defines the basic needs of a child as, “physical, psychological, emotional and social requirements fundamental to the well-being of a child”. These needs form the foundation for the child. Children at-risk exhibit these needs in addition to others. Of particular importance to them is the need for love, physical care, security, new experiences at home and school and a need for recognition and appreciation (Smit 1993:129).

2.3.2 Adequate environments

The concept ‘environment’ adopts various meanings within the literature. According to St. Clair (1986:69), conditions within the environment shape the child, be this environment favourable or unfavourable. The implication is that the needs of the child will be met or not met to the extent that the environment of the child is adequate or not. Bowlby (1988:11) states the importance of a ‘secure base’, because if this is intact, the child can venture out, become differentiated effectively with good ego development in place and will not easily become attached to those who practice maladaptive behaviours. These needs are the same for all children and they need to be understood when working systemically with children.

As indicated by Lewis and Lewis (1989:121), systems theory views living organisms as being in inter-relationships with each other, in this way affecting each other’s functioning. Within this framework, sub-systems exist in society that need

to be examined because of the manner in which these affect functioning of one another. Such sub-systems could be the school, peer group and families. So, the connections between the systems of individual human living are an important consideration in the approach to children at-risk. As Compton and Ashwin (1992:212) so aptly say, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Bronfenbrenner's theory of the ecology of human development (in Orford 1992:27) develops the idea of systems further by referring to four levels in which human development takes place: micro, exo, meso and macro levels. He viewed systems functioning within systems as "nested structures". Dyadic relationships within and between subsystems affect the system in dynamic ways. It is necessary to understand this concept, in order to understand the functioning of the individual better. These levels impact on each other in a cyclical manner: where they interface, interactions occur, and what is projected during these interactions is based on what has been experienced on another level. The impact that these levels have on a child is critical to development. However, resilience should never be underestimated.

There also exists the need, in practice, to approach developmental work within the societal environment that we are located within a specific period in time. This "current context" is always also made up of a "historical context" all of which takes place within a continuum of events. To apply generic principles as a guide in our work with all children is to deny the nuances as well as the individual and group

idiosyncrasies, which occur within various groups within our society, particularly South African society. The needs of a group differ according to time and space and cannot be assumed. Again, we need to understand groups as outlined in Donald *et al.* (1997:36) by viewing them within “the social context as ‘systems’ where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between all parts”. Consequently, the preferred approach to working with children is holistic, working within the larger environment or context of their development.

2.3.3 The macro, meso, & micro levels of society

2.3.3.1 Macro level

From this level, government and global policies impact on the meso and micro levels within a given society. Government legislation drives the processes that serve to enable (or disable) service provision.

In South Africa the provision of services for the Child and Youth Care System, according to the IMC (1996:18), should on a macro level, straddle the welfare, justice, education, labour and health sectors.

Socio-economic factors like retrenchments and reductions in welfare benefits also contribute to the breakdown of societal norms at this level (Swarts 1997:98). This has a rippling effect on already marginalised people, engulfing them further into the cycle of violence, stress and hopelessness.

2.3.3.2 Meso level

At this level, the involvement and impact of other significant social groups such as the community, the church and the school can be significant as a support for children at-risk. In a UNICEF report (1997:27) the role of individuals other than the primary caregiver is reiterated because "when children are not able to live in secure family environments, the role played by other nurturing individuals should be recognised and supported". The implication here could be extended family members or the community.

The *National Youth Policy* (1997:56) encourages the promotion of projects that are community-based by using the youth in those communities to focus on health, support and counselling initiatives that would develop the community at large.

Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994:110) state that the problem of street children is reduced significantly when community awareness and solidarity is established. Ennew (in Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994:110) claim that by the mid 1980s in Cuba, street children had disappeared. According to the Inter-NGO report (in Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994:110), Nicaragua experienced a reduction from 70 000 to 25 000 between 1979 and 1980, because of this increased awareness and support.

By involving the community, the development of the community also occurs. Caregivers could receive training, and by means of sponsorships and financial support from welfare agencies, are provided a payment for their vital services. It is

a step towards eradicating the poverty, which engulfs communities and which affects vulnerable children. In so doing, people also own the problem and become more empowered to deal with it themselves. In the UNICEF report (1997:21) it is stressed that, "the untapped skills, ideas and knowledge of community members must be identified and utilised". It also states that communities need help in drawing up "situational analyses" and that the community needs to make "greater use of universities and research centres" to assist them in serving communities more effectively. Institutions of higher learning then become one of the systems at this level that need to work with other community-based systems on development. This kind of collaboration serves the need of training and job-creation in exchange for supporting children from the community who are vulnerable.

A community-based approach to working with marginalised youth, at this stage of development in South Africa, is preferable because of the potentially empowering nature of developmental programmes. Job creation and the prevention of children becoming street children are but some of the positive spin-offs that can happen with involvement at this level.

Another important structure is the school. The school plays a significant role in the lives of children at this level. Our traditional schooling system has often found the effective support and management of vulnerable children to be of a particular challenge where the staff often are unfamiliar with the children's difficulties (Smit & Liebenberg 2000:28). Often, where the home does not provide for adequate

provision of needs and support and where poor communication exists between home and school, the school could be the child's last hope (Smit & Liebenberg 2000:28).

2.3.3.3 Micro level

The implications of poverty are particularly evident on this level, where it manifests in, *interalia*, the inability of the family unit to provide for the basic needs of their developing children: the provision of food, a safe home, clothing and love. Richter (1994:43) states that the pressures experienced by parents are often projected onto their children in the home.

The UNICEF report (1997:5) has identified a few necessary conditions for the achievement of children's rights. Amongst others, they speak of the nurturing family as being the "primary institution and the best environment for protecting and promoting the well-being of children".

Winnicott, an English paediatrician whose theories particularly, "stress the delicate balance between the environment and the evolving self" in the context of object relations theories, espoused much on the initial and subsequent stages of development (St Clair 1986:68). Winnicott stated that, "[a] good-enough environment can be said to be that which facilitates the various individual inherited tendencies so that development takes place according to these inherited tendencies". He goes on to say that this environment, at the beginning of a child's life, can best be catered for by the mother because of the special state she is in (St

Clair 1986:69). This state is called “primal maternal preoccupation” referring to a mother who is positively receptive to the needs of the child, creating an environment that is conducive to healthy growth. At the beginning of life, the child is totally dependent on a primary caregiver – usually the mother. The identity of the child is subjective. It sees itself in relation to an object. This makes the initial experiences that it has vital because successful resolution of the needs of the infant at this stage will determine the extent to which it will be able to gain a true sense of self. As such, it is the interactional process between child and mother that is crucial to its development.

Apart from structural and societal factors that contribute to children’s vulnerability, Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994:113) also cite several individual factors: authoritarian parents and schools, abuse by parents, being forced by parents onto the streets and generally unsupportive parents.

Le Roux and Smith (1998:907) make the point that, “rehabilitation and resocialization should take place at the macro level (government policy), meso level (community), and micro level (the children themselves)”. Families would also be involved in this process. Change needs to take place within systems to facilitate changes in the interactions.

2.3.3.4 The eco-systemic perspective

To realise the above, an integration of perspectives is important. Donald *et al.* (1997:40) states that an eco-systemic epistemology places children within a context that enables one to look critically at the various areas in which they function. In this way we can relate to children within a constructivist paradigm, which implies that change needs to take place *via* their involvement so that they become active agents in their development.

The eco-systemic or “ecological-systemic approach” is further explored by Smit (1990:365), with the focus being on the dynamics between the child, family, broader context (like the school and community) and ultimately the national and global economy of the child. All these factors impact in a significant way on the manner in which crises are dealt with and the extent to which they can be solved.

An important group within eco-systems remains the family. Within the family structure, members exist in a way that affects others through a myriad of interactions. The sub-systems in a family are interactional systems like parental interaction, sibling interaction, coalitions or scapegoating, grandparents and other extended members of the family within the household. An eco-systemic framework adds richness and dynamism to the interactional patterns that exist within and outside of the life of a child. It is therefore important to focus on the various sub-systems in the lives of children to understand them better and to make the relevant intervention.

There is a need to examine society on many levels and to view factors that sustain problems from an eco-systemic framework. In so doing, targeting structures and processes that are triggering problems becomes easier and change is thus facilitated. This will guide the preventative work in the continuum of service provision.

2.4 RE-POSITIONING OF SERVICE PROVISION

To place current directions of service provision against a background of research, it is worth stating selected and pertinent recommendations for successful programmes from Schurink *et al.* (1993:273);

- scientific needs analyses of children in a collaborated effort by support agencies;
- non-institutionalised settings and services offered near or in areas where children are;
- an emphasis on children who are still in the process of becoming street children and whose ties to family and community have already weakened;
- the active engagement of families in working toward solving their problems so that children will be at less risk of turning to the streets;
- basic services and support programs should be provided to the child preferably within the community of origin.

Currently, changes in service provision are starting to incorporate these factors, especially with the focus being on non-institutional, community-based alternatives that target children at-risk, but that have not yet made the street their home (Smit in Le May 2000:20).

Furthermore, a UNICEF report (1997:6) stated that, "vulnerable children without family or home should be provided with care in a family-like setting which offers protection and security and is conducive to their full development". Again there is an emphasis on creating environments like home as opposed to an institution.

In South Africa the need to look at alternative strategies to support children, emerged at the IMC conference (1996) where there was a strong focus on street children, and a well-represented task drafted a policy around afore-mentioned strategies. This policy was informed by current organisations and commissions involved in advocacy and providing services to street children, national legislation like the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)* and the *White Paper on Social Welfare (1997)* as well as international policies regarding children, like the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)* which was ratified by South Africa in June 1995. These efforts culminated in the PPPF (1997).

The PPPF currently sets the scene for service provision in the Western Cape. This policy has provided an important thrust for the shift in focus in service provision for

street children. Presently, the services available are those that cater mainly to the children already living on the street. The desired situation according to the PPPF (1997:12) is that children should receive support in a more preventative and developmental manner.

The four levels of care that exist on the Continuum of Care model developed by the IMC and contained in the PPPF (1997:13-14) are:

LEVEL 1: PREVENTION

This level includes prevention services and programmes that empower and provide skills to families, communities, children, youth, women and older persons. These should provide access to services for vulnerable and at-risk groups so that they are able to withstand and manage environmental influences that impact negatively on them. On a macro level, poverty eradication should also be a priority.

Examples of such services would be: Early Childhood Development (ECD), after school centres, parenting skills, youth and community development programmes, lifeskills and leadership training, education and training and economic empowerment.

LEVEL 2: EARLY INTERVENTION

Services at this level should be proactive and should be informed by practices that indicate risk. Developmental risk assessment will determine where strength-based developmental and therapeutic programmes should be focused. Children would hereby be diverted from entering the justice system and rather remain within the family system.

*Examples of such services would be drop-in centres, streetwork, **community-based home schools**, diversion programmes, family-support/reconstruction services, school-based services, ECD and after school care.*

LEVEL 3: STATUTORY

At this level, individuals have become involved in some way with the legal system. When children are in conflict with the law or are in need of care and protection in terms of the *Child Care Act 74 of 1983*, the *Probation services Act 116 of 1997*, the *Correctional Services Act 8 of 1959* and the *Criminal Procedures Act 51 of 1977*, certain measures must be ensured. The placement of the child at this level needs to be appropriate and serve the best interests of the child and family.

Examples of such services are assessment, referral, trial and sentencing, diversion programmes and places of safety.

LEVEL 4: POST STATUTORY/ALTERNATIVES

At this stage, all the services required to integrate children who have been through level three and who need to be re-established with their family and communities or placed into alternative care, are active.

Examples of such services are residential care/alternative care, quality services through a range of programmes, such as parent skills training and after school care.

Levels one and two incorporate the new focus in service provision where emphasis is placed on preventative strategies while levels three and four focus on curative approaches which is largely the way provisioning currently happens. These later stages are considered, at governmental level, to be those best avoided through the implementation of earlier preventative strategies as outlined above (IMC 1996).

2.5 COMMUNITY-BASED HOME SCHOOLS FOR STREET CHILDREN

Community-based approaches are preventative in nature and fall on level two in the Continuum of Care model, which forms the thrust of current movements in the social and welfare system in South Africa.

Limited information exists regarding home schools as a community-based approach and as an alternative to institution-based options in South Africa.

Outlined in this section is the development of community-based home schools that strives to take services to where the children are located.

Community-based home schools evolved in an attempt to address research findings that institution-based care for street children, despite having its role to play in providing needs for street children, has not adequately addressed this problem (Mwaniki in Barrette 1995:83). Alternatives closer to the communities from which the children come have proven to be successful (Levenstein 1996:45).

This programme (Smit 1996) was implemented in an attempt to cater holistically for children's scholastic, emotional and social needs. The need to encounter street children where they gather and partake in activities, which is primarily on the street, was thus investigated and a programme was developed. Initial attempts to do this amongst groups of Stellenbosch street children, where programmes were conducted with them during the day, produced findings that evolved into more comprehensive service provision in the form of the current 24-hour model.

This model entailed working within a community and using established service providers that would cater to the needs of the children. Street children are not a homogenous group, and thus their diverse needs call for broader participation from the community and other role-players (Smit & van Schalkwyk 1998:335).

According to Smit and van Schalkwyk (1998:339) the model consists of the following components:

1. *Street outreach programs in the city*

This involves collaboration between social workers, street workers, the police service, hospitals and local magistrate courts on a 24-hour basis. The key partner is the street worker who builds up a trusting relationship with children on the street through street schooling, which includes life skills, games and story telling. Through this, the children are made aware of the services that are available to them. Contact is also made with their parents to assess problem areas and possible re-integration into the family.

2. *Day-care centres*

This facility provides the children with food and clothing. The provision of these needs help to restore dignity to the children, which is part of the trust-building process.

3. *Street outreach programs in the communities from which the children came*

A streetworker is actively involved in the children's community of origin, continuously monitoring their movements as well as the services available to them. The streetworker plays a critical role in keeping the children in the communities in which they have become re-established, thus preventing the trek to the city centres.

4. *Community-based home schools in the communities from which the children come*

These are homes volunteered by people in the communities to accommodate children during the day, where they partake of informal learning activities. They also form a link between the child and parents/caregivers, as well as mainstream schools. Streetworkers who find children on the streets in the community have the option to introduce them to these homes.

5. *Community-based assessment and service delivery facility*

This facility serves as an auxiliary service to the home school. These assess the needs of the children and then provide the intervention that proves necessary at the time.

6. *Monitoring*

Daily monitoring of the needs of the children is critical to this model. Members of the team communicate on a regular basis so as to provide effective provision of services within the context of the child.

This model thus utilises resources that exist in the community to provide a 24-hour service in an eco-systemic framework. The various role-players that impact on the life of the child are co-opted and utilised where possible, so that the child still feels

a part of his community. This makes the integration back into the community, if not the family, easier.

The home school caters specifically for the child who is still within the community, or 'on' the street, who has established a relationship of trust with the streetworkers and indicated a readiness to move back into the community. The home school then informally embarks on a range of activities. These activities include the provision of basic needs like food, clothing and a safe place to stay for part of the day. Other needs like acceptance and someone to speak to about those things that concern them are met. Outdoor activities like gardening and field trips are done. They receive medical care and most important of all, love in a stable, trusting relationship. Home schools have thus evolved from the desire to address the needs of children closer to their places of origin, to helping them to become integrated rather than isolated from their communities and schools.

Practical outcomes by home school teachers and parents of street children attending home schools in the Uitsig area included (Smit 1999:12):

1. There was more community support for the home schools;
2. It gave many children a second chance for schooling opportunity;
3. Many street children left the streets and attended the home schools;
4. The home schools served as support system for the parents;
5. It provided a health care service which would otherwise not be possible;
6. It served as support system for mainstream schools in the area;

7. Crime and drug use decreased.

This study aims to investigate the experiences of those children who attend such home schools. These are discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to set out the research methodology applied to capture the experiences of street children in community-based home schools. It does this by providing information on the research design, the target group, data collection methods, data analysis and by looking at the role of the researcher in the research.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The methods employed occur within a qualitative research framework, utilising drawings as a projective technique, individual interviews and focus group interviews. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998:175),

“qualitative methods are best suited to developing insights and understandings that apply to a particular group of people at a particular point in time, and are not well suited to reaching generalisations about a broader population”.

Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994:18) state that, “qualitative methods have the advantage of focusing in on real-life problems, of reflecting the world as it actually is, and are more likely to come up with unexpected results”. This type of research is thus considered to be best suited to meet the needs of this specific area of study as it allows the researcher to make close contact with the children which facilitates probing responses made by them. Furthermore, as little is

known about children's experiences of community-based home schools, this method can facilitate rich descriptions of their experiences.

The research design has been developed from an informal unpublished research project (Smit 1998) that investigated the thinking skills of street children. Based on the results from this research, the following problems emerged concerning research design:

1. Minimal verbal responses were made by the children thus the need to engage them in a less verbal technique such as drawings was identified;
2. The preference for some children to be less verbal in their responses, was not accommodated for in the method of data collection;
3. The children showed poor word finding when having to express their ideas;

3.3 THE STUDY

3.3.1 Methodological decisions made for this study

1. As the children did not elaborate much on stimuli presented in the past study, it was decided to incorporate activities that the children enjoy doing, starting with an ice-breaker which enables them to become comfortable with the researcher;
2. To allow the less verbal children the opportunity to express themselves, drawings as a data collection technique would be used to facilitate the expression of their ideas;

3. Due to poor word finding, the children would be placed in a focus group situation where interaction within the peer group tends to promote spontaneity, which helps with the expression of ideas.

3.3.2 Target group

The groups come from three home schools located in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. The children are all Afrikaans-speaking. Their ages range from 11 to 16. All the children present during the visits to the home schools form part of the study, which totals 10 children, two of which are girls. The researcher does the activities with the children in a room at their respective home schools.

3.3.3 Data collection methods

Peräkylä (1997:201) states that the enhancing of objectivity is a very concrete activity. Accuracy and inclusiveness of recordings and efforts to test the truthfulness and claims are vital. For this study, a variety of methods are employed to allow for the verification of ideas expressed *via* triangulation. Triangulation as explained by Banister *et al.* (1994:145) explores a cluster of methods and uses other investigators and perspectives to facilitate “richer and potentially more valid interpretations”, so that the material that is gathered becomes more than the product of a method. In this study, data will be collected through the use of drawings as a projective technique. Individual and focus group interviews will then be conducted regarding drawings. All discussions will be recorded on audiotape which will be later transcribed. Brief supplemental notes will be made additionally at times, as “the use of the tape recorder does not eliminate the need for taking

notes" (Patton 1990:348). He goes on to state that doing this can assist with the formulation of new questions while in the process of interviewing as well as facilitate later analysis. Observation as research method will also be used throughout.

3.3.3.1 Drawings as a projective technique

The experience of less verbal children in the informal research project (Smit 1998) has led to the technique of engaging the children in projective techniques. The experience encountered by Lewis (1998:86) with such a group of children is that interviewing is a challenge because of, "poor linguistic skills and [an] inability to identify their own feelings". Children thus have preferences when having to express themselves. According to Singer (1981:327), "the research application of the projective techniques has been an exciting and fruitful development in psychology". This technique has meaningfully added to the repertoire of data collection methods in the field of social research, especially with regard to children.

Bell (1948:5) believes that with projective techniques, an individual structures "events in terms of his own motivations, perceptions, attitudes, ideas, emotions, and all other aspects of his personality". Hammer (1986:240) encourages this idea by stating that, "children and adolescents relate more to, put more of themselves into, graphic than verbal projective techniques. Words are more distant abstractions than are pictures. The child tends naturally to order his experiences visually". By using drawings, the children are better able to express their experience of the home school.

The view of Banister *et al.* (1994:87) particularly supports the multi-pronged approach used in this study, when he claims that,

“participants sometimes prefer to use drawings to explore their construing. This initial freeing from language can give rise to more spontaneous expression and illuminate, perhaps more readily, the personal quality of the experience that language often fails to convey. Drawings are most often used in conjunction with other methods.”

This view particularly supports the multi-pronged approach used in this study.

3.3.3.2 Individual interviews

The type of interview conducted with the children is semi-structured, using an interview guide approach. According to Huysamen (1994:45) and Patton (1990:288), this approach, with its structure, allows for versatility in that the interviewer can probe responses made by the interviewee and adapt formulation and terminology to suit the style of participants as the interview progresses. At the same time, it ensures, by way of the interview guide, that the interviewer covers the area being studied. In this study, the guided approach essentially consists of the three questions posed to participants as they draw. These are:

1. This is what I think about the home school
2. This is how I feel about the home school
3. This is what I do at the home school

The interviewer will ensure that these three aspects are covered as the children respond.

3.3.3.3 Focus group

A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic (Patton 1990:335). According to Schutt (1996:329), “focus group methods thus share with other field research techniques an emphasis on discovering unanticipated findings and exploring hidden meanings”. Talking to the children in a group facilitates a broader range of responses. In so doing, it sets off ideas, which other children might not have thought relevant or known how to express. Waterton and Wynne (1999:129) make the point that if justice is to be done with focus groups, this will be conducive to challenging “epistemological assumptions about the subject matter”.

3.3.3.4 Observation

Observation is vital to any research process, providing an informal means of assessing responses made by children during focus groups discussions as well as the projective techniques. Banister *et al.* (1994:32) highlights the pitfalls of observation, but goes on to say that, “observation will produce rich and exciting results, which may well help to challenge existing assumptions about social life, experience and rules, and to point the way to new developments”. Observation will take place throughout the period that the researcher works with the children.

3.4 PROCEDURES

3.4.1 Introduction

- The researcher introduces herself after which the purpose and the procedures of the study to be undertaken with the children are explained.
- The children then introduce each other by stating the name of a child in their group as well as an outstanding characteristic of that child. This enables the researcher to gain a little understanding of the children by using them as agents to introduce each other.
- The following ice-breaker is then done to foster an atmosphere of introspection.

ICE-BREAKER

Each child has to imagine him- or herself as a passenger on an aeroplane that is on its way somewhere. *En route*, the aeroplane experiences problems and is forced to do an emergency landing at a deserted place where the passengers have to disembark for an unspecified period for the sake of safety. Each passenger can take only two items along with him. Each child has to imagine which two items he would take along and has to explain why.

After the initial introductions, the projective technique is done, followed by brief individual interviews and then the focus group interview.

3.4.2 The projective technique

Once the children are comfortable, drawings begin in the following manner:

- Each child receives two big sheets of newsprint paper, crayons and khokis
- They divide themselves into pairs
- Each child takes a turn having the outline of his body drawn by his partner while lying on his back with arms and legs outstretched
- Once the children have the outline of their bodies drawn, they take their drawings, draw clothes on them, then proceed in the following manner:

The children are asked to 'fill' the following in on their drawings:

- (a) at the head area, draw: This is what I think about the home school

Dit is wat ek van die huisskool dink

- (b) at the heart area, draw: This is how I feel about the home school

Dit is hoe ek oor die huisskool voel

- (c) at the feet area, draw: This is what I do at the home school

Dit is wat ek by die huisskool doen

3.4.3 Individual interviews

Once the children complete their drawings, each child spends approximately 15 minutes with the researcher, individually talking through what they have drawn. The freedom to express their ideas without any fears is stressed. They are also told that their responses will be audiotaped. The drawings facilitate discussion around various aspects of their home school in an informal and enjoyable manner. Speaking to them in this manner is less intrusive, as their drawings become the focal point. The researcher notes aspects of importance and similarity (with other children's comments) for later verification in the focus group discussion.

3.4.4 Focus group interviews

Once all the children have had an individual interview with the interviewer about their respective drawings, the group then has a chance to express any other ideas that might not have been expressed previously, which they feel could be relevant to the drawings. The researcher also takes some of the more common responses made by the children and restates these as a way of checking that her perception of what the children said in the individual interviews, are as they had meant it to be. The children are again informed that their responses are to be audiotaped.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Patton (1990:347) makes the point that, “data interpretation and analysis involve making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said”. As such, the analysis of the data will take place in the following manner:

1. After each session, the data from the audiotapes will be transcribed;
2. Recurring patterns are then highlighted and coded by the researcher as well as two independent researchers;
3. Recurring patterns and codes are then unitised by the three researchers;
4. Units are placed into categories created from the data obtained;
5. When all the information is collated and consensus is reached by the three researchers, the findings are written up;

6. In the interpretation and discussion, use will be made of the original dialogue text to substantiate the findings.

Categorising and making connections between data in this instance is embedded in the “grounded theory” approach of Strauss (in Dey 1993:103) which aims to create theory from the data gathered. No preconceived categories exist in this approach. In this way a theoretical analysis relevant to data gathered is created simultaneously through the process of developing conceptual categories from the information gathered from the participants as it relates to the area being studied.

The categories serve as indicators of the experiences of the children. Representative descriptions of these experiences are embedded in the text during the interpretation and discussion (see chapter four).

3.6 TESTING VALIDITY OF FINDINGS

Given the potential for subjectivity in qualitative research, caution will be exercised to ensure the validity of the findings. To increase the validity of the responses made by the children, the researcher will be the only one who works with the children. In this way the children receive the same instructions when having to do tasks.

During the interviews with the children, the researcher focuses and reflects only on the drawings as a source of information. Preconceived ideas will thus be cast aside when working with the children.

The same approach will be used with the focus group interviews, where the researcher avoids assuming that she knows what the children want to say, but will rather probe for further information. Previous statements made by children will be restated as a means of scrutinising the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation.

Throughout the activities done with the children, use will be made of reflective questioning and reframing statements made by the children as a way of verifying what they are saying.

Finally, two independent researchers will read the transcripts and code the information separately.

3.7 ROLE OF RESEARCHER

During 1997, the researcher spent approximately three months doing volunteer work with street children in an area in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. After that, a period of approximately eight months was spent assisting with the home schools for street children and interacting with other role-players involved, offering the researcher the opportunity to gain insight into street children. It also allowed for interaction with the other role-players involved with them, which helped to understand the children better.

Involvement on this level is important because the researcher needs to understand the idiosyncrasies of the group that is worked with. Schutt (1996:330) makes the point that when one enters the field with participants, it is important to be aware of, "one's personal stance toward the people and problems likely to be encountered". He states further that one should know how participants dress and be aware of their everyday activities so that as researcher, one is prepared for what will be encountered. During this study, direct contact with the children took place over two sessions: session one approximately three hours per group and session two approximately one hour per group.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the experiences of children at community-based home schools in a sub-economic, urbanised community in the northern suburbs of Cape Town in South Africa. The categories that emanated from data obtained in the study are outlined and interpreted within the context of the set-out aims.

The study consisted of 10 children whose responses were solely in Afrikaans. The researcher made use of these responses, which are translated into English in this text. The voices of the children are paramount to this study, therefore *verbatim* extracts are taken from the interviews conducted. Their attitude toward the activities was positive throughout the study.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.2.1 Introduction

Five categories emerged from the data analysis, on which consensus has been reached between the researcher and the two independent researchers.

- Children's emotional experience of the home schools
- The activities children engage in while attending the home schools

- Physiological needs that are met at the home schools, specific to the children
- The experience of acceptance and empathy by an adult
- The experience of physical security and safety

4.2.2 Children's emotional experience of the home schools

An overwhelmingly positive response dominated children's emotional experience of the home school:

We feel happy
Ons voel gelukkig

It's nice at the home school
Is lekker by die home school

Yes. We are happy here
Ja. Ons is gelukkig hierso

One statement in particular, stands out:

I feel glad to be here
Yes. It keeps the children out of the street
Ek voel bly om hier te wees
Ja. Dit hou die kinders uit die straat uit

As these respondents attend home school regularly, it would appear that they enjoy it. The literature identifies a "link between a positive school climate and academic achievement [where] school climate is also recognised as an essential component of positive youth development and the prevention of negative behaviour" (Van der Merwe 1996:304). The difficulties that they experience at the mainstream school often makes them disillusioned enough to leave school and

spend their time on the streets. The fact that the children express happiness is a manifestation of the positive climate at their home school.

4.2.3 The activities children engage in while attending the home schools

Children were actively engaged in varied activities at the different home schools, with some home schools sharing activities and others doing activities which are unique to their specific home school. The children like the variety of activities as well as the varied manner in which they learn. Being engaged in play is a favourite activity as well. Children expanded much on the games that they play:

I play snakes and ladders, draughts
Ek speel slangetjiebord, draughtbord

We sometimes go on outings at the park and sometimes we play here
in the yard
*Ons gaan somtyds uitstappies hier by die parkie en ons speel party=
keer hier binne in die yard in*

Researcher : Do you play other games too?
Child : Yes, cricket, soccer, tennis, dominoes
Researcher : *Speel julle ander games ook?*
Child : *Ja, krieket, sokker, tennis, dominoes*

The conveniences and comforts taken for granted by many growing children, like television and access to music, are relished by the children attending the home school:

Child : And we watch TV and listen to tapes
Researcher : You listen to tapes, what do you listen to?
Child : Music
Researcher : Which music do you like?
Child : Any music
Child : *En ons kyk TV en ons luister tape*
Researcher : *Julle luister tapes, na wat luister julle?*
Child : *Musiek*

Researcher : *Van watter musiek hou jy?*
Child : *Enige musiek*

Activities that develop skills and facilitate learning also occur:

Researcher : *What do you learn?*
Child : *Sums*
Researcher : *Wat leer julle?*
Child : *Somme*

This child has learned how to make candles and explains the procedure involved:

You take the acid and then you mix it with the wax and then throw it into the pot and then you put it on a stove so that it melts
Jy vat die suur en dan meng jy dit met die was en dan gooi jy dit in die pot en dan sit jy dit op die stove sodat dit smelt

One child had this to say:

We go to the library, then they fetch us with the taxi then we go to the library and then we read at the library and we learn here
Ons gaan library toe, dan kom haal hulle vir ons hier met die taxi dan gaan ons library toe en dan lees ons daar by die library en ons leer hierso

The types of education are varied:

We keep ourselves busy... We learn things like we read books. So far, since I have been here, we have made candles and we are now busy making a garden
Ons hou baie vir ons besig... Ons leer goed soos ons lees boeke. So ver soos ek nou hier gekom het, het ons al kerse gemaak en ons is nou besig om tuin te maak

And I drew that we write here at the home school. We draw and we play here at the home school
En ek het geteken dat ons skryf hier by die home school. Ons teken en ons speel hier by die home school

Religious needs are also met. A child recounted the centrality of prayers in a school day:

Yes, and before we eat we pray and when we go home in the

afternoon we pray and when we come again we pray again
and when we are there we write and so on...
*Ja, en voor ons eet bid ons en as ons in die middags huistoe
gaan bid ons ook en as ons weer kom dan bid ons weer en as
ons daar is dan skryf ons en so aan...*

Literature indicates that explorative learning is a strong motivator for people (Adams 1996:312). These children clearly were motivated by the nature of the activities in which they partook.

4.2.4 Physiological needs that are met at home schools, specific to the children

Lewis (1998:14) states that street children usually come from communities that are underdeveloped and stressed, and that the families in such areas often experience, *inter alia*, high rates of unemployment and a shortage of food. Given such circumstances, it is not surprising that the daily goal for people is survival, and that a basic need like food would present people in these communities with a daily challenge. This need appeared, from the data, to be essential to the children's experience of the home school, and enjoyment and talking about food featured prominently:

We eat here at the home school
Ons eet hier by die home school

In the mornings you eat porridge and in the afternoons you eat
your food
In die oggende eet jy pap en in die middags eet jy jou kos

I eat porridge in the morning, in the afternoons I get my food,
and then we sit a little and then M buys us sweets...
*Ek eet in die oggende pap, in die middags kry ek my kos, en
dan sit ons so 'n bietjie en dan koop M vir ons lekkers...*

Commenting on the happy people on her drawing one child explained:

Because they get their porridge and their food and everything
that they want they get
*Want hulle kry hulle pap en hulle kos en hulle alles wat hulle
wil hê kry hulle*

This child provides a detailed account of the nice food that she eats. Deep gratitude is evident when she explains that they are not fussy eaters, but that they are grateful for what they get:

Yes. We eat soya mince and porridge and canned fish and
what is that stuff... mielies and meat and bread and coffee.
We do not say 'no' we want of that and that like the other
children who were here did

*Ja. Ons eet soya mince en pap en blikkie vis en wat is daai
goed... mielies en vleis en brood en koffie. Ons sê nie nee
ons wil van daai hê en van daai hê nie soos die ander kinders
wat daar gewees het*

In Smit and Liebenberg (2000:25) street children are described as usually being "dirty and smelly". Interestingly, the data revealed a strong need for personal hygiene:

We talk about the things and about going to the library then
we go to the library and our roll-on [i.e.deodorant] and stuff...
*Ons praat oor die goed en oor library toe gaan dan gaan ons
library toe en ons roll-on en goed...*

The account of a child commenting on toothbrushes was taken from observation notes after activities were done with the children during the first visit:

After the first session at one of the home schools, the researcher observed the children peering into her car while she was speaking to the home school teacher. One boy informed the researcher that three toothbrushes were lying in her car, all different colours, and remarked

that it would be beneficial to have a toothbrush so that he could brush his teeth!

4.2.5 The experience of acceptance and empathy by an adult

These children, who have already been cheated of a conventional childhood, are too often only focused on negatively. This negative perception of street children is noted in Swart (1990:46) when she states that members of the community tend to view this group of children, "either as waifs in need of care and guidance, or as pests defiling the environment. In both instances people feel free to abuse them". In the process, their individuality, sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem are eroded.

Conversations with the children and their home school teachers revealed how children glowed when they were acknowledged and praised for positive qualities, instead of focusing on the negative:

- Researcher : Is there anything that you would like to say about the picture that you have drawn?
Child : About the face that is beautiful
Researcher : But you do draw beautifully
Child : M also says I draw beautifully
Researcher : Did you also draw so beautifully when you were at school? [the mainstream school]
Child : Yes
Researcher : Is that so, and did the teacher also tell you that you draw beautifully?
Child : Yes, my teacher says I must go to what-d'you-call-it... um... what is it again... this where the other people draw on the walls?
Researcher : Oh! those types of drawings like graffiti?
Child : Yes

Researcher : Is daar enigiets wat jy wil sê omtrent hierdie prentjie wat jy geteken het?

Child : Oor die gesig wat mooi is
Researcher : Maar jy teken baie mooi nê
Child : M sê ook ek teken mooi
Researcher : Het jy in die skool ook so mooi geteken?
 [die hoofstroom skool]
Child : Ja
Researcher : Is dit, en het die juffrou ook vir jou gesê jy
 teken mooi?
Child : Ja, my juffrou sê ek moet dingis toe gaan...
 um...wat is die nou weer... die wat die ander
 mense op die mure teken?
Researcher : O! daardie tipe tekeninge soos graffiti?
Child : Ja

In the following extract, the researcher felt that the child needed to be heard and understood by an empathetic listener. He evidently experienced difficulties at the mainstream school, which made further schooling difficult:

Researcher : Why are you not at school this year?
Child : I was at school until March then I left school
Researcher : Why then? Was it not nice at school?
Child : It was nice at school
Researcher : And then?
Child : I ran away every day
Researcher : Alone?
Child : With a friend
Researcher : Where is he now?
Child : He still goes to school
Researcher : But you then left it? How is that so?
Child : I don't know. The work is difficult at school.
 Accounting and we got Xhosa
Researcher : Was it difficult for you? Did the teachers not
 help you?
Child : They rather go home

Researcher : Hoekom is jy hierdie jaar nie op skool nie?
Child : Ek was op skool tot Maart toe los ek maar
 die skool
Researcher : Hoekom dan so? Was dit nie lekker by die skool nie?
Child : Dit was lekker by die skool
Researcher : En toe?
Child : Ek het weggehardloop elke dag
Researcher : Alleen?

Child : *Met `n vriend*
Researcher : *Waar is hy nou?*
Child : *Hy gaan nog skool*
Researcher : *Maar jy het dit toe maar gelos? Hoe is dit so?*
Child : *Ek weet nie. Die werk is swaar by die skool.*
Rekeningkunde en ons het mos Xhosa gekry.
Researcher : *Was dit vir jou moeilik? Het die onderwysers nie*
vir jou gehelp nie?
Child : *Hulle gaan liever huistoe*

During a visit by the researcher to one of the home schools, a child spontaneously shared the fact that he doesn't want to go to school because he struggles with reading, indicating a sense of acceptance and freedom to share difficulties with the adults present. Swart (in PPPF 1997:8) echoes the fact that street children seek out people who understand them and situations that will assist them in regaining their self-worth.

4.2.6 The experience of physical security and safety

Children have an intrinsic need to feel safe in their environments (Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994:117). Comments were expressed by a group of boys about their experiences with another boy attending their home school, who is older than they are and who intimidates them:

Child : *I now want to say what Apie does*
Researcher : *Who is Apie?*
Child : *A..., he is rude here at the home school, he*
hits us and swears in front of M. Then we
always walk out and sit outside
Researcher : *So is it not nice when he is here?*
Child : *It's not nice when he is here because he is*
rude
Researcher : *Now how often does he come here then,*
this A...?

- Child : He comes with us just when he wants to, if he does not want to, then he does not want to then he also does not come
- Researcher : So it is not nice when he is here?
- Child : It's not nice when he is here, when we are here, it is nice
- Researcher : Just you three?
- Child : Yes
- Researcher : So you do not fight with each other?
- Child : We do not fight with each other
- Researcher : So you get along well?
- Child : We are very good friends
- Child : Ek wil nou sê wat apie doen*
- Researcher : Wie is apie?*
- Child : A..., hy is onbeskof hier by die home school, hy slat ons en vloek voor M. Dan loop ons altyd uit dan sit ons buite*
- Researcher : So is dit nie lekker as hy hier is nie?*
- Child : Issie lekker as hy hier issie want hy is onbeskof*
- Researcher : Nou hoe gereeld kom hy dan, die A...?*
- Child : Hy kom saam met ons net as hy wil, as hy nie wil nie dan wil hy nie dan kom hy ook nie*
- Researcher : So dit is nie lekker as hy hier is nie?*
- Child : Issie lekker as hy hier is, as ons hier is, is dit lekker*
- Researcher : Net julle drie?*
- Child : Ja*
- Researcher : So julle baklei nie met mekaar nie?*
- Child : Ons baklei nie met mekaar hier nie*
- Researcher : So julle kom goed oor die weg?*
- Child : Ons is baie goeie maats*

In order to feel safe and secure, the children have a strong desire to protect those in their clique. Apart from protection, support and companionship, Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994:116) make the point that the peer group often provide important functions like imparting information about safety as well as economic activities. The

following was expressed by the same group of boys who experienced being threatened and unhappy about one of the older boys in their group:

- Researcher : Now if something happens between you three – say someone does something wrong to you, what do you do then?
- Child : Then we do X, we will make X
- Researcher : What is X?
- Child : Say now they hit him, then we help him
- Researcher : Oh! so you defend each other?
- Child : Yes, we do not split on each other
-
- Researcher : Nou as iets so gebeur tussen julle drie – sê nou iemand doen iets verkeerd aan julle, wat doen julle dan?*
- Child : Dan doen ons X, ons gaan X maak*
- Researcher : Wat is X?*
- Child : Sê nou hulle slat vir hom dan gaan help ons hom*
- Researcher : O, so julle defend mekaar?*
- Child : Ja, ons staan nie mekaar af nie*

A further factor that cemented their need for feeling safe and secure was embedded in their perception and experience of the home school concept. The children showed much insight into an important aim of the home school:

It keeps us off the streets
If there are more home schools there will be more children
off the streets
It keeps the children out of the street

*Dit hou vir ons van die strate af.
As daar meer home schools is sal daar meer kinders van die
straat af wees
Dit hou die kinders uit die straat uit*

4.3 SYNTHESIS

Research results show that the children in this study related concretely to their experiences during the interviews. To express what they think of their home schools, how it feels to be there and what they do there emerged spontaneously through their interpretation of their drawings. Lewis (1998:87) in her work with street children also expresses this idea when she states that, "drawing comes naturally to children and is a far less threatening way to communicate". They speak from a lived experience base.

Street children clearly develop a lowered sense of self-esteem and poor self-concepts through negative experiences, which are the culmination of the life events to which they are exposed. They need love and care (Kenward 1987:135) and environmental contexts such as their families, communities and their schools play a vital role in their development and thus are important stakeholders in their development (Smit & Liebenberg 2000:31). The findings of this study illustrated those manifested contexts to which the children have previously been exposed and their subsequent maladjusted development.

What has emerged through this research of home school experiences, is that a context that allows children to be **children**, instead of parental children, where the experience of parent-type responsibilities robs them of their childhood, is an important place to start addressing positive and appropriate development. The children need a stabilising environment that can support them in their endeavours

to attain healthy physical, socio-emotional, spiritual and cognitive development within a 'home-like' context. Relationships of trust are established here, which is a crucial building block for healthy development.

Their experiences, as related in this research, indicate how such development is being made, thereby allowing the children to absorb and regain dignity, self-esteem and improved self-concepts.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Overall, the children responded fervently. However, there were times when responses to certain questions were not detailed enough. This prompted the researcher to engage in follow-up interviews with the children to gain more insight into their experiences. This was also an opportunity to verify some of the statements made by them during the first session and to address those which were not thoroughly dealt with during the subsequent interviews.

4.5 FOLLOW-UP SESSION

4.5.1 Target group

Two groups were used, consisting of the children available on the days of the visit. The first group consisted of six children, two of whom were present on the previous visit. The second group, visited on the following day, consisted of three children, two of whom were present during the previous visit. Altogether, four children who

were involved in the initial interviews were also involved in the follow-up sessions. These sessions took place at two of the three home schools previously visited.

4.5.2 Method

The follow-up session was held with the children two months later. Open-ended interviewing took place where three questions were posed as a guide. The questions were:

1. What is a home school?
Wat is 'n huisskool?
2. What is the difference between the home school and a normal school?
Wat is die verskil tussen die huisskool en 'n gewone skool?
3. Must there be more or fewer home schools?
Moet daar meer of minder huisskole wees?

As the children's previous answers were not always elaborated on sufficiently, it was hoped that by introducing further questioning, such areas would be elucidated.

4.5.3 Procedures

4.5.3.1 Introductions

After the researcher introduced herself and pinned her name on her shirt, the children were asked to do the same. The children were informed that they would be spending an hour together, talking about various aspects of the home schools. They were told that this would take the form of three questions that would be put to

them and which would be recorded. The recording equipment was shown to them as well as instructions on how to use it. They were informed that the first question would be done with them individually whereas the second and third questions would be done with them as a group. The researcher attempted to introduce an atmosphere of play into particularly the first question, enabling them to relax.

4.5.3.2 Ice-breaker

A warm-up activity was done where the children were asked to close their eyes and to relax. They were then asked to think of any good thing that happened to them in the past and how that made them feel. After about five minutes, they were asked to open their eyes and then relate their experience. Once the children completed their responses, they were asked to sit back and relax again, thinking of anything unpleasant that happened to them in the past. After five minutes, the children responded as before.

4.5.3.3 The interviews

Once the introductory activities were completed, the children were taken to a room individually, where the first question was asked and responses were recorded. They were told not to share the question (question one) that was asked by the researcher, with their friends as their friends might copy them, which would not be fair to them and which would spoil our activities. When all the responses were complete, the researcher continued to work with the children on questions two and

three, periodically using their understanding of a home school during the focus group activity.

4.6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

After the data was collated and categorised in the same manner as in the first session, only one new category emerged. When analysed, this category captured the natural progression for many children who have been in the home school environment over a period of time and who now have an underlying desire to return to mainstream schools. This category will be dealt with first in the following section, after which, additional extracts of data which emerged and which fitted into existing categories, will be highlighted.

4.6.1 The need to be in mainstream schools (new category)

Children that have been exposed to a nurturing context such as the home school appear to develop a measure of willpower and confidence to move into the school environment again. This is an indication of positive development that has taken place within the child at the child's pace.

One child, although stating that she likes the home school, had this comment about the mainstream school:

Child : It makes me feel nice and that – and then sometimes and then I miss the school again and that and then I check first must I then I say to M, M I am rather again going to stay at the home school – then I don't feel like going to school again

- Researcher : Okay, now what do you miss about the school if you miss the school so much – what is it about the school that you miss – the big school?
- Child : Then I miss my friends – and then we sit and when we get into the class and then we make jokes of the – with the sir...
- Child : *Dit laat my lekker voel en daai – en dan party= keer en dan mis ek weer die skool en daai en dan check ek eerste moet ek dan sê ek vir M, M ek gaan ieder weer by die home school bly – dan lus ek weer nie vir skool gaan nie*
- Researcher : Okay, nou wat mis jy van die skool, as jy so die skool mis – wat is dit wat jy van die skool mis – die groot skool?
- Child : *Dan mis ek my chommies – en dan sit ons en as ons in die klas is dan maak ons jokes van die – saam met die meneer...*

Less jovial perceptions emerged from this child who also expressed a need to be in the mainstream school. This child faced barriers to attending school currently. It is barriers such as these, that schools have little empathy for, and that together with other difficulties that might be experienced, often culminates in them leaving school again.

- Researcher : Do you want to go to a real school?
- Child : Yes
- Researcher : Why do you then not go to a real school?
- Child : Because I do not have clothes and shoes and pencils and files
- Researcher : So you do not have all the stuff that is necessary for school?
- Child : If the school asks us then we do not have
- Researcher : And then? What does the school do if you do not have all the things?
- Child : Then we get sent to the office, then we must stand in a line then we get beaten
- Researcher : *Wil jy na `n regte skool toe gaan?*
- Child : *Ja*
- Researcher : *Hoekom gaan jy dan nie na `n regte skool toe nie?*

- Child* : *Want ek het nie klere nie en nie skoene
nie en nie potlode nie ook nie lêers nie*
- Researcher* : *So jy het nie al daai goed wat jy nodig het
vir die skool nie?*
- Child* : *As die skool ons vra dan het ons nie*
- Researcher* : *En dan? Wat maak die skool as julle nie
die goed het nie?*
- Child* : *Dan word ons kantoor toe gestuur, dan
moet ons in `n lyn staan dan kry ons pak*

4.6.2 Children's emotional experience of the home schools

The positive emotional space that the home school provides in these children's lives is evident when they enthuse about the value it can have for other children who are not attending the mainstream school:

There must be lots of home schools for the children that do not want to go to school anymore, that walk on the streets and that want to become 'skollies'/hooligans, that want to shoot guns, that want to carry knives – that they can come in the home schools – that they do not become gangsters and that they must be sweet children and that they must be obedient and we like that

Daar moet baie home schools wees vir die kinders wat nie meer wil skool gaan nie, wat so op die strate loop en wat skollies wil raak, wat gun wil skiet, wat messe wil dra – wat hulle in die home schools kan kom – dat hulle nie gangsters moet raak nie en dat hulle soet kindertjies moet raak en dat hulle gehoorsaam moet wees en ons hou daarvan

4.6.3 The activities children engage in while attending the home schools and physiological needs that are met at the home schools, specific to the children

(These two categories have been combined here because of the manner in which the children expressed these experiences)

The activities participated in, as well as the satisfaction of physiological needs were expressed by two children as follows:

We eat, we write, we draw and we play – we play that lotto and tv we watch in the mornings and in the afternoon when we go home then we eat food and before we go home then we get an orange

Ons eet, ons skryf, ons teken en ons speel - ons speel daai lotto en tv kyk ons in die oggende en in die middag as ons huistoe gaan dan eet ons kos en voordat ons huistoe gaan dan kry ons `n lemoen

That we watch tv, then we get our porridge in the mornings early then we wash and then we brush our teeth

Wat ons tv kyk, dan kry ons ons pap in die oggende vroeg dan was ons ons en dan borsel ons ons tande

4.6.4 Their experience of acceptance and empathy by an adult

The children needed to feel acceptance and empathy, rather than ridicule, given that they have already been disappointed by the adults close to them. Smit (1998:39) believes that, “the street child in general has a poor self-image, is anxious, mistrusts others, and exhibits fear for all figures of authority”. The following indicates this child’s feeling of anger and hurt towards an authority figure and also illustrates a sense of helplessness that he experienced during this

encounter. On being asked what it feels like when the teacher is rude to him, one child responds:

You do not feel nice – you feel heartsore – its like you
want to swear at the teacher when the teacher says
something ugly to you
*Jy voel nie lekker nie – jy voel hartseer – dit lyk
amper jy wil die juffrou uitvloek as die juffrou jou iets lelik sê*

What this child does is leave the class in an attempt to deal with his feelings of rejection, anger and the lack of empathy shown by the teacher. Exposure to such situations over protracted periods of time is what children often describe as reasons for leaving mainstream school.

4.6.5 Their experience of the need for physical security and safety

The punitive nature of the school environment appears to be the deciding factor in children leaving mainstream school. Their scholastic careers, which are evidently experienced as difficult, and which appears to be the one institution that presents them with the final humiliation, is contrasted with the safety experienced at the home school:

Here a person does not get beaten – it's just nice here –
you eat, you write, you can play around, you can walk,
and they are not rude, its wonderful here and it is so
nice when you come here every morning. The
teacher is also not rude – everyone is just nice – I
feel so happy

*Hier word `n mens nie geslaan nie – is net lekker hierso –
jy eet, jy skrywe, jy kan rond speel, jy kan loop, en hulle
is nie onbeskof nie, dus wonderlik hierso en dit is so
lekker as `n mens hiernatoe kom elke oggend. Die*

*juffrou is ook nie onbeskof nie – almal is net lekker – ek
voel so bly*

4.7 FINAL FINDINGS

This chapter made provision for the research findings by highlighting the experiences of children who attend home schools. The findings come from two sessions spent with the children. The second session largely encapsulated what was expressed in the first. However, two elements that did emerge with vehemence were:

- Situations at the mainstream schools, which pushed children out of that system, featured prominently. Here inadequate school uniforms and stationery, the non-payment or incomplete payment of school fees, the poor response from their parents or guardians to these difficulties, corporal punishment, teacher attitudes manifested in a lack of empathy, and struggling to master schoolwork were clear difficulties for the children. It created anger towards their educators resulting in powerlessness in the children, expressed in them staying away from school and turning to the streets to regain that sense of power over their conditions.
- Certain children were being developed to a point where they were starting to feel the strength that would enable them to confront the challenges of mainstream school once more.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Little is known about the experiences of children in community-based home schools. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of street children engaged in such a model of service provision. As such, a comprehensive literature study focusing on current service provision, recommendations of past research around effective provision of services as well as examining the new directions espoused by governmental departments engaged in the care of children was conducted. In so doing, the study was placed within the context of the current paradigm shifts in service provision at the macro level of South African society. This was followed by a study, which looked at the experiences that children have in community-based home schools, which have been established in certain areas of Cape Town. Community-based home schools aim to reach street children, particularly those who have not made the street their permanent home, but who are at risk by nature of their circumstances.

5.2 RESEARCH SUMMARY

Chapter 1 encapsulates the broad concept of the entire study by providing insight into the content of the various chapters. It starts by focusing on the factors that have culminated in the marginalisation of sectors of our society, with particular reference to the vulnerable state of families and children in South Africa. The sub-group street children becomes the focus area and specifically the group of children who are out of school and not 'full-time' street children are concentrated on. An alternative to traditional approaches is expanded on against the background of current shifts taking place at governmental level.

It is against this background that the aim and research question of this study was formulated: To capture the experiences of children involved in community-based home schools for street children.

A brief overview of the research methodology is then given. Finally, a conceptual analysis of terms used in the study is provided.

Chapter 2 involves the various theoretical perspectives around street children as a group in our society. Attention is given to the African context, where despite the communal functioning of the vast majority of societies within Africa, the breakdown of the family structure with its resultant effects on the children is highlighted.

The current scenario regarding the incidence of street children is discussed. This is developed by looking at how children become street children, making extensive use of past research. Good enough environments that can lead to the healthy development of children are examined. The focus then moves to current provisioning, largely in the form of shelters and drop-in centres.

The chapter closes with a strong focus on shifts at provincial level in service provisioning as well as a description of the community-based approach which provide for the children in the context of their experiences, strongly reflecting shifts at the macro level of South African society at present.

Chapter 3 elucidates the theoretical basis for the research methodology. It explores the qualitative framework of the study where a projective technique, individual and focus group interviews, are used. Suitability of these methods for this context is described. The procedures involved in the gaining of data as well as the manner in which the data has been reduced into thematic units and then categorised is described. Validity testing is also highlighted.

Chapter 4 provides the research findings and discussion, which consists of narrative text interspersed with analysis made by the researcher. Further indications of the verification of the data occur towards the end of the chapter in order to optimise the credibility and accuracy of the research findings.

Chapter 5 ends the study by drawing conclusions from the findings. This chapter also highlights limitations found while engaged with the study as well as recommendations for further research.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Children's experiences at community-based home schools are multi-faceted. They do show insight into their experiences and have the capacity to express these with the aid of various techniques.

The experiences of the children bring forth clear perceptions. They experience the home school as a safety net. This is characterised by feelings of acceptance, emotional support and the understanding of their needs by the adults entrusted with them. The children evidently feel safe and respected in this environment. They feel that they can express their needs and be treated with the necessary attention and respect, instead of being ridiculed. Children need a containing environment in order to grow effectively. This forms part of the first level of service provision as envisaged by the social welfare sector in the IMC recommendations (1996).

Children, from the infant stage, are playful. Play helps them to develop social competence in later life (Greene 1997:131). What is characteristic of this group of children is that early exposure and responsibilities normally expected of an adult have created conditions where play and fantasy, as a necessary developmental phase, has not been adequately resolved. Once at the home schools where they

feel stripped of the adult responsibilities, they find much pleasure in play. Data obtained from the children where play in various forms was highlighted confirms this need to re-establish the child within who is shed of adult responsibilities.

The mistrust that children have built up since their initial abandonment often as infants by their caregivers, leaves a scar that takes a long to heal. Within a warm, caring and accepting environment, they can heal, particularly if they have not become permanent residents of the street yet. What is evident with the children in the home schools is that they regain enough confidence and dignity to eventually have the capacity to leave the safety net of the home schools. The developmental life skills which they have acquired, covertly and overtly, have managed to infuse them with the strength to engage with mainstream living, which includes the school, their social lives as well as their family lives. This strength consists of higher self-esteem, a better self-concept thus a better sense of who they are and what their worth is. This self-confidence is vital for coping in the world, and particularly with the demands of school, the family and the peer group.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Home schools for street children is a new concept in South Africa. This has resulted in there being no literature on this particular area. Little could be drawn on from established home schools for this study.

Because of the concept being a new one and thus not widespread in its application, the investigation took place with a small group of children.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused only on those children who were engaged in the home school. A follow-up study that would lend more impetus to community-based home schools would be one that could concentrate on the experiences of children who have been exposed to the home schools and who have developed to a stage where they could move on. These would be children who might have returned to mainstream schools or who might be functioning more effectively in other spheres of society.

Children who have returned to the mainstream school after having been to a home school might undergo a period of adjustment as well as require special support. Their teachers might also experience the need for support when dealing with special educational needs that might arise with such children. Future research could focus on effective support for teachers and children in such circumstances.

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APPENDIX

LEGISLATION AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS REFERRED TO IN THIS STUDY

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Ratified in South Africa in 1995

NATIONAL

Child Care Act 74 of 1983

Probation Services Act 116 of 1997

Correctional Services Act 8 of 1959

Criminal Procedures Act 51 of 1977

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)