

STREET CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE CYCLE OF RECIDIVISM

by

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DECLARATION:

I declare that “ street children’s perceptions and experiences of the cycle of recidivism” is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All the sources I have used or quoted are acknowledged by complete references.

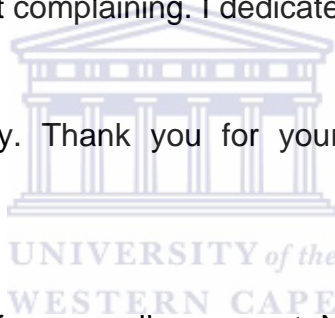
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ABSTRACT

Street children are a common sight in South Africa and a topical issue. Due to their harsh living conditions, they are prone to fall into the habit of criminal activities, for survival. Various aspects and factors seem to influence delinquency. Social, psychological and historical factors have been considered and studied to explain and assist in the decreasing and handling of youth misbehavior.

The goal of this research was to explore and describe the experiences and perceptions of the street children about the cyclical pattern of recidivism. To gain in-depth information regarding this issue, a qualitative research approach was followed. Data were collected by means of story-telling, guided by two foundational question themes. Firstly, experiences of family life and schooling and secondly, experiences of survival on the street and repeated criminal involvement. Data were analyzed according to the guideline discussed in Creswell (1998). Data were verified by means of measures suggested by Creswell (1998). Findings indicated that participants in this study suffered severe emotional and physical and material deprivation in their family contexts before moving to the street. Survival on the street depended on befriending other street children; begging on the street; abusing substances and getting involved in crime.

Motivational factors for repeatedly being involved in crime were peer pressure, substance abuse, no fear of prosecution and opportunity/mischief.

It was clear that participants were caught up in a “sub-culture” of life on the street.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

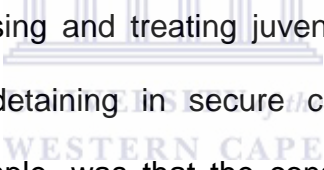
1.1 Contextual information and motivation for research

According to the Department of Labour (2002) street children comprise of two groups, namely children of the street and children on the street. Children of the street are those children that live on the street and who have no functional family support. Children on the street 'work' there and return home at night.

What the two groups seem to have in common, according to Baker (1999) is that they perceived the street to be financially more lucrative than the home or a shelter. Andersson & Stavrou (2001:70) note that "many of the street children and youth in Dar es Salaam choose to live on the street, justifying their course of action as being the only alternative to the realities of extreme poverty, disintegrating families and high levels of abuse." A study by Davies (2008) on street children in the northwest of Kenya alerts to the fact that in absence of the support of family, street children formed stable relationships of peer support on the street through a self-defined structure in involving close personal and economic relationships. These structures also facilitate criminal involvement.

Bezuidenhout & Joubert (2003:61) states that in South Africa, street children specialize in crime such as pick pocketing, prostitution and

other gang related activities. More recent literature from the South African context indicates that “the development of juvenile misbehavior cannot be viewed as a sudden occurrence, but as an awareness of adolescent behavior that was previously ignored or address on an informal basis (Bezuidenhout & Joubert 2003:13). This means that various aspects and factors contribute to youth becoming involved in misbehavior and programs to prevent and treat misbehavior by the relevant role players involved with youth must consider all these aspects. Social, psychological and historical factors have been considered and studied to explain and assist in the decreasing and handling of youth misbehavior.



In the past, addressing and treating juvenile misbehaviour seems to have focused on detaining in secure care. The view of Milham (1978:142) for example, was that the consequences of isolation, the social and educational benefits of securing and what happens after release were some of the more important issues in securing youthful juveniles.

Rossouw (1999) is concerned that youth offenders are “processed through juvenile courts only to re-offend”. The repetitive committing of crime is defined as recidivism (Bezuidenhout & Joubert 2003: 205). A study by Tshiwula (1991) indicates that the young person’s contact with family whilst in prison is important to avoid recidivism. She argues that in order to prevent recidivism, the youth in conflict with the law should

not be released into exactly the same circumstances that lead to them to commit the crime in the first place. Rossouw (1999) advocates for de-institutionalization and diversion programs as interventions for children who have committed crimes.

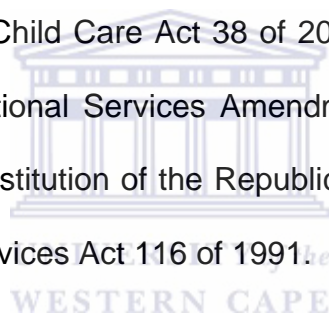
There is a serious concern that youth offences can lead to adult criminal behavior. Cupido (2004) analyzed a program for youth offenders offered by the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) in South Africa and found that although this program was aimed at first time offenders, the participants in the programme were in fact involved in previous crimes at some level. A study by Maye (2000) on the rehabilitation of maximum-security offenders found that a large percentage of the offenders were incarcerated for the first time during their teenage years (i.e. 12-18years).

Bigelow(2000:1) that most children with an early onset of drug abuse and arrest history and coupled with risks such as peer victimization and family problems such as alcohol and physical abuse and poverty, do progress to an adult criminal debut. The need for continuous research and appropriate interventions to address the issues of children living on the street and recidivism is thus undisputable.

Street children in the Western Cape form part of an increasing number of youth that are repeatedly conflict with the law. This is evident from

the demand for more space for youth to be detained, especially males between the ages 14-18 years, as reported by various Places of Safety. Bonnytoun, Wynberg, increased their totals from 160 to 190 in 2005 (Institute Administration System, March, 2005). Bosasa Place of Safety, Clanwilliam, opened in 2005, with a capacity of 35 (Probation Officer's Forum Minutes, 2005) and cannot cope with the demand for admissions.

A variety of South African legislations are in place to ensure that youth are protected and that the best interest of the child is to be served. Examples are The Child Care Act 38 of 2005, Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977, Correctional Services Amendment Act 14 of 1996, Child Justice Bill and Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, Probation Services Act 116 of 1991.

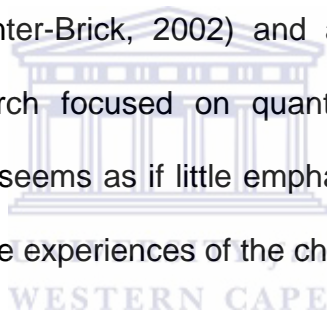


The Department of Social Development and various non-government organizations support preventative and diversion programs to divert youth from criminal activities and being transferred to detention facilities. Many of the street children are also involved in these programmes. In spite of preventative measures, these children still return to the streets, get involve criminal activities and are referred to Places of Safety via the judicial system.

During my two years of working with street children, I observed many of these children's progression and pattern of moving through the

judicial system. They were involved in various diversion programs and after their release from the facility, service delivery continues through shelters; out-reach programs and various other services available to street children. Even with the services available to the street children before and after incarceration, a cycling pattern evolves where the street child returns to street and falls prey to recidivism. Hence, my interest was to explore the views of the street children in conflict with the law about living on the street and the cycle of recidivism.

Recent research on street children seems to focus on the lifestyle of street children (Panter-Brick, 2002) and according to Baker (1999) most of the research focused on quantitative surveys to explore prevalence rates. It seems as if little emphasis is placed on qualitative studies to explore the experiences of the children themselves.



1.2 Research problem statement and significance of the study

Street children's survival on the street and repeated involvement in crime is a topical issue. The need arise to explore from the children's perspectives their survival on the street and the cycling pattern of recidivism. In doing so, the researcher wants\led to "give voice" to the youth; learn how they construct their realities and acknowledge that their perspectives cannot be overlooked in program planning.

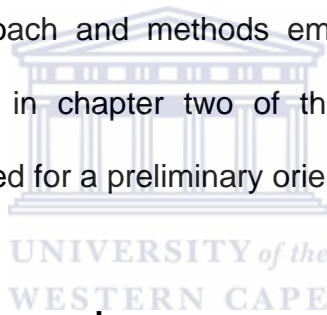
1.3 Goal of the research and the research question

The goal of the research was to qualitatively explore the perceptions and experiences of street children about street life and the cycle of re-offending (recidivism).

The question to be answered by this research was: “How do participants in this research construct their experiences of getting to the streets, staying on the street and getting involved in repeated crimes?”

1.4 Research methodology

The research approach and methods employed for his research is discussed in detail in chapter two of this research. The following summary is presented for a preliminary orientation.

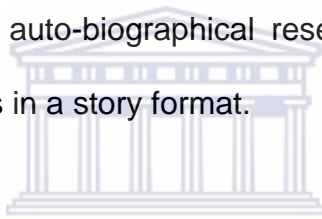


1.4.1 Research approach

Creswell (1998:15) defines qualitative research as, “an inquiry process that explore a social or human problem...the researcher build complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” This approach thus seems to fit the goal of this research as previously stated. The exploratory and descriptive nature of qualitative research realized in this contextual study.

1.4.2 Research strategy for data-collection, data analysis and data-verification.

Life-stories (within context of auto-biographical research), and more specific narratives as stories, was selected as strategy of inquiry in order to get a free flow of information about getting to the street, surviving on the street and recidivism. According to Roberts (2002: 116-117) narratives as stories refers to a narrative inquiry that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions, as told by participants into thematically unified, goal-directed processes. Due to problems experienced as mentioned in Chapter 2.4.6 this research did not realize as pure auto-biographical research. I did however try to organize the findings in a story format.



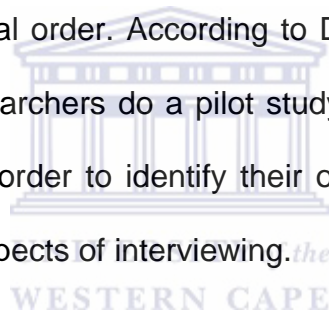
I purposefully selected a sample of ten participants from the population of street children with records of repeat offending at selected institutions in the northern suburbs. Two broad question themes guided the story telling namely, participants experiences of going to the street, surviving on the street and their experience of recidivism. Semi-structured interviewing facilitated the story-telling and I had to do a lot of probing in order to get some coherency in the story.

A content, thematic analysis of data was done based on guidelines of Creswell (1998). Data was verified according the suggestions of Creswell (1998) and it includes peer reviewing, member/participant

checks, clarifying researcher bias and using rich thick descriptions of the setting and the process followed.

1.4.3 Piloting of interview

The researcher elected a street child who was detained at Bonnytoun, place of safety to conduct the pilot interview. The reason for conducting the pilot interview was to assure that the researcher would get the relevant information needed and if changes need to be made to the questioning. During the pilot interview the researcher gathered that more probing needed to be done as the participant could not give a life story in chronological order. According to De Vos et al. (1998:32) it is suggested that researchers do a pilot study in which they try out their interview design in order to identify their own ability to come to grips with the practical aspects of interviewing.



1.5 Ethical considerations

- Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape.
- The Department of Social Development of the Western Cape gave consent or access to participants that were detained in Places of Safety.
- The goal and potential risks of involvement in the study were explained to potential participants.
- Volunteers were briefed about the ethical guidelines that I would adhere to. These included:

- anonymity in reporting of the findings;
- the use of the findings for research purposes only and no information would be used against them;
- voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so and;
- access to debriefing if they felt the need for it.

1.6 Use of literature in the study

Cresswell (1994:179) and Creswell (1998:88) indicate that the use of theories and literature to guide qualitative studies can be placed on continuum of before/after data collection, depending on the goal and strategy of inquiry. In this study, the researcher aimed for a truly inductive form of inquiry and reasoning and did not want to be influenced by the existing literature on the topic of domestic violence for collecting data. For this reason, theories and literature were consulted for a basic theoretical orientation in the beginning of the study and were researched in depth after the data collection.

Literature findings pertaining to the themes that emerged from my own study are therefore presented in Chapter 3 as comparison of the findings of my study.

1.7 Definition of concepts

The following definitions as stated in the glossary of Bezuidenhout et al. (2003:205-210) were adopted for the purpose of this research

Crime: “Conduct that is prohibited by law and is punishable by the state”

Street children: “Children with disrupted or no family ties who are forced to survive in urban areas on the streets.” According to the Department of Labour (2002) street children comprise of two groups: children of the street (i.e. living on the street) and children on the street (i.e. working there but not living there.)

Detention: “The lawful limitation of a person’s freedom of movement in recognized institution”

Diversion: “The channeling of children away from the formal court system into reintegrative programmes. It is a way of getting children to take responsibility for what they have done without taking them through courts and prisons. If a child acknowledges responsibility for the wrongdoing, he or she can be set specific tasks, or required to attend a programme or in some way be made to put right what he or she has done wrong.”

Youth misbehavior: “Also referred to as juvenile delinquency: children involved in unlawful conduct”

Recidivism: “The repetitive committing of crime”. Bezuidenhout (2003:56) states that recidivism can be explained as the repetitive committing of crime.

1.8 Layout of the report

The report is structured into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction of the study. This section contextualized the research problem and introduces the reader to the research process

Chapter 2: Research methodology. The chapter reflects on the selected research methodology

Chapter 3: Data analysis and discussion. In chapter 3 the findings of the data analysis is presented and relevant literature is compared to the findings.

Chapter 4: Summary of findings and recommendations.



CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The goal of the study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of street children on recidivism.

The foundational question to be answered by this research was: “How do participants in this research construct the experiences of getting to the streets, staying on the street and getting involved in repeated crimes?”

I hoped that the findings would contribute to a better understanding of the issue and inform interventions to help these children. This chapter motivates and explains the methodology followed to execute the research.



2.2 Research methodology

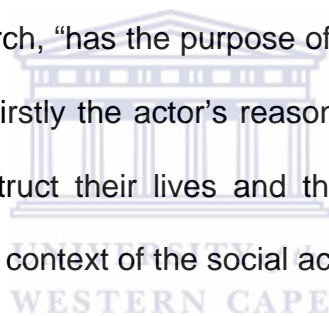
2.2.1 Research approach and research design.

Creswell (1998:14) states that, qualitative research is “where the researcher is an instrument of data collection and gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on meanings of participants and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language”. This approach to the research was chosen to gain an in-depth perspective of recidivism amongst street children. By using qualitative research methods the participants had the opportunity to say in their own words what their perceptions were regarding the cycle of recidivism. Taylor and Bogdan (1984:125) state that, “qualitative research provides a thick description of social life and are directed towards understanding and explaining features of social life beyond the particular people and setting studied”. Qualitative research was the best approach for

this research because the characteristics of this kind of research according to Mason (2002:3) fit what I believed was essential for the exploration that I wanted to do. These characteristics include:

- It is based on methods of data generation, which are flexible and sensitive to the social context
- The methods of analysis and knowledge building involve understanding of complexity, detail and context
- It aims to produce rich, contextual and detailed data.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:8) support the view of Sarantakos (1993:42) who state that qualitative research, “has the purpose of helping the investigators to interpret and understand, firstly the actor’s reason for social action, secondly the way participants construct their lives and the meanings they attach to them, and thirdly the social context of the social action”



In view of the abovementioned discussion I conclude that qualitative research is by its nature guided by an exploratory descriptive and contextual design. Burns and Grove (1999:339) confirm this as they indicate that qualitative research is meant to *explore and describe the depth, richness and complexity* of an issue or phenomenon. Holloway and Wheeler (1996:95) further explain that experiences of participants in qualitative research have a specific significant *context* that the researcher needs to take into consideration in the interpretation of the data.

These characteristics fit my research and are also evident in the following discussion of the strategy of inquiry used in this research.

2.3 Strategy of inquiry

I would like to categorize the research strategy used in this research as a form of biographical inquiry, and more specifically, autobiographical life stories, in the form of narratives. Roberts (2002: 116-117) acknowledges that the term “narrative” has been used in various ways in qualitative research. He explains further, that within the context of biographical research, it refers to a narrative inquiry that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions, as told by participants into thematically unified, goal-directed processes. He concludes that narrative, therefore, has been applied to both stories and methods of inquiry.

Although I had to do a lot of probing to help the participants to tell their stories in a logical and coherent way, their narratives could be “chronicled in terms of a series of events, happenings influences and decisions” (Coffey& Atkinson 1996:68).

I also want to confirm the view of Roberts (2002:119-120) when he states that it is , through narrative, that we come into contact with our participants as people engaged in the process of interpreting themselves. I then “decoded, recognized, and re-contextualized” the narratives as presented in the interest of reaching a new interpretation of the raw data of experience presented to me.

2. 4 Data collection

Creswell (1998:109) illustrates the circle of activities in data collection. These activities includes, locating the site/individual, gaining access and making

rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues and storing data (Creswell, 1998). In the following section I explain the data collection based on selected aspects of Creswell's circle of data collection activities.

2.4.1 Locating the site/individual

Creswell (1998) indicates that individuals should be located who have experienced similar actions or processes. So I located street children who were part of a program for street children offered by a non-government organization and who have been involved in crime repeatedly.

2.4.2 Gaining access and establishing rapport

Creswell (1998) states that it is important to gain permission from the participants and those parties legally responsible for the participants or the researcher. After locating the potential participants for the study I submitted a copy of the research proposal and letter to the Social Development Department to gain access to participants detained at two Places of Safety. (Appendix 1) Another letter and copy of the research proposal was sent to a non-governmental organization to get permission to conduct the study with participants enrolled in their No Limits Program for Street Children. (See appendix 2) Two letters of approval were forwarded to the researcher after approximate one or two months after this submission. (See appendix 3) The approval meant that the researcher had access to the facilities and uses their venue to conduct the study.

Ethical clearance for conducting the research was also granted by the Senate Ethics Committee of University of the Western Cape. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and invited to participate in the study. They were told that their identities will be withheld in the report and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. Volunteers had to sign a consent form see appendix (4) to confirm their voluntary participations.

2.4.3 Purposeful sampling strategy

According to Creswell (1998:118), “purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in qualitative study”. Sarantakos (1993:164) states that purposive sampling is a technique where researchers, “choose subjects who, in their opinion, are relevant to the project”.

I purposefully selected male and female street children who fit the goal of the study and who were willing to participate. The researcher selected ten participants but only seven eventually participated.

2.4.4 Interviews for collecting data

The technique of data collection used in this study was semi-structured interviews aimed to facilitate story-telling by the participants Miller and Brewer (2003:167) state that a semi-structured format of interviewing allows the participant to develop their answers in their own terms and at their own length and depth. Two question themes guided the story telling:

- Experiences of family life and school experiences
- Experiences of life on the street and repeated criminal involvement

I started with the first question theme and thereafter explored their life on the street and involvement in crime. As researcher I had to employ the skill of probing significantly in order to facilitate the telling of the story in a coherent way. Interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews were scheduled for one hour per interview, but the interviews were terminated when the information became when the participants started repeating themselves. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:271)

2.4.5 Interview setting

The researcher chose the research setting that was known to the participants, so that they could be comfortable during the interview. If the participant was still on the street and not in detention, the researcher chose the setting of No limits Program for Street children. This organization has community centers where they present their programs for the street children on a daily basis. These centers have consultation rooms and the researcher chose to conduct the interviews in these rooms.

The fact that the participants were living on the street and had to come to the centre for the interviews did however impacted the research process. When the participants selected were under the influence of substances, the interviews had to be postponed until later in the day or the following day.

If the participants were in detention, the researcher had to make appointments that suit the setting/detention centers.

2.4.6 Field issues

The following field issues influenced the progress of the data-collection:

- The time waiting for the approval of access postponed starting date for data collection/ commencing with interviews.
- Some venues used for the interviews were not suitable due to high outside noise levels.
- There were instances where the street children have moved to other areas or were under the influence of substances (glue/thinners) or could not be traced. Hence the researcher had to wait for notification from the staff at No Limits to indicate when the children were available
- Participants would lower their voices which affected the quality of the recording. The researcher also observed that the participants would look at the recorder and lose track of their story line. Hence the researcher had to focus on bring the participants back to specific story lines.

2.5 Storing data

I used selected guidelines for data storage as listed by Creswell (1998:134). I tried to transcribe the recorded interviews as soon as possible after the interviews. The names of the participants were masked to protect their anonymity. I filed all the original, hand written and typed transcripts by using numbers in stead of names. I stored and labeled the original audio tapes used for recording interviews by numbers.

2.6 Data analysis

The audiotape recordings were transcribed and a thematic analysis was done.

The following guidelines as recorded in Creswell (1998:140-142) were followed for the analyzing of the data:

- I began by reading through all transcripts, in order to get a sense of the whole. I then jotted down first impressions/ideas/concepts in the margin of the text. In this process, I also considered my field notes and observations.
- Thereafter I got back to the transcripts and organize the data by means of coding and sorting the images into themes and sub-themes of a chronicle. To understand the participant's construction of reality, the analysis moved beyond content analysis, (**what** was said) to also note the structure and format of the "story" (**how** it was said). The way in which the experiences and perceptions were conveyed; their interpretations and reflections of the sequence of events and the expressions used to portrait the "story", helped to get insight into participants' views. (Coffey & Atkinson 1996:83).
- Central generic themes (storylines) that emerged were identified and reported.

2.7 Data verification

Creswell (1998:2001-2003) lists several data verification methods suggests that at least two of these methods should be used in a study.

I engaged in the following procedures for data verification:

- *Rich, thick description-*, describing the setting and participants. Patton (2002:98) alludes to the fact that phenomena can only be understood within the context in which they are studied, findings cannot be generalized from one context to another and the data represent simply represent another construction to be taken into account in the move toward planning. However presenting thick descriptions will help the reader to make decisions regarding transferability
 - *Member checks* were done by reflecting and checking with participants at intervals and at the end of the interview my understanding of their perceptions and stories.
 - *Peer reviewing and debriefing* provided an external check of the research process.

An independent coder and the supervisor did spot checks on transcriptions and moderation of the data-analysis process and reach consensus with the researcher on interpretation of the data.
- *Clarifying research bias* I have been working with street children for the past 5 years. Therefore I had knowledge of street children's modus operandi and the type of crimes they commit. I had to consciously step out of the role of social worker and took on the role as researcher and not reflect on prior knowledge of negative experiences that could bias my data-collection and data-analysis. Consultations sessions with my supervisor,

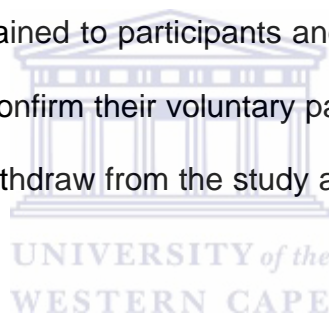
debriefing and personal reflections helped me to clarify my biases based on my work with these children.

2.8 Ethical issues

Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Senate Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape.

The ethical considerations for conducting research listed by Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:102) were strictly adhered to:

Privacy or voluntary participation: As indicated in 2.4.2 in this chapter, the goal of the study was explained to participants and voluntary participants had to sign a consent form to confirm their voluntary participation. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so.



Anonymity: I ensured participants that their names will not be used in reporting the study. Interviews were numbered and no names were used.

Confidentiality: The participants were assured that the information used would not be used for any other purpose than for the study. The participants who were still trail-awaiting were informed that the information given in the study would not be divulged to the criminal court. Measures for data-storing, as described 2.5 of this report, were strictly applied.

2.9 Summary of chapter

This chapter dealt with the methodology that was put to use in this study. An elaborate discussion on the reflection of the qualitative approach used for this study was explained. It covered the qualitative approach, data collection the process and methods and data verification.

In chapter three I will analyze and discuss the data that was gathered.



CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The goal of the study was to explore the street children's perceptions of living on the street and recidivism. The participants were asked to tell the story of moving to the streets, living on the streets and getting involved in repeated criminal activities. In order to answer the overall research question, the participants were asked to structure their stories according to the following two themes:

- Experiences of family life and school experiences;
- Experiences of life on the street and repeated criminal involvement.



During the interviewing process, I assessed that the participants found it difficult to tell their life stories in a coherent way. Hence, I had to ask probing questions and guided them in order to get some logical sequence in the unfolding of events as required in story telling. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed. The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and transcribed using the exact pronunciation of the participants to capture their dialect. I therefore did not try to edit the Afrikaans.

In this chapter I discuss the findings of the analysis of data collected in relation to the questions asked.

3.2 Profile of participants

Although ten participants initially volunteered to take part in the research only seven eventually participated. The biographical details of the respondents are listed in the table:

Table A: Demographic profile of participants

Sex	Race	Current Age	Age first on street	Language	Alternative care/ Detention centres	Types of offences	No of offences
Male	African	16	10	Xhosa	Bonnytown, Lindelani, Bosasa, Homestead	Theft	4+
Male	Coloured	16	8	Afrikaans	Bonnytown x2, Lindelani, Pollsmoor, Children's home	House breaking	5+
Male	Coloured	15	13	Afrikaans	Bonnytown, Pollsmoor, Bosasa, Rosendal House, Boys town x2	House breaking, theft, possession of drugs, theft out of motor vehicle	5+
Male	Coloured	17	5	Afrikaans	Bonnytown, Pollsmoor	Possession of drugs, theft	3+
Male	Coloured	15	11	Afrikaans	Lindelani	Theft, housebreaking	4+
Male	Coloured	15	13	Afrikaans	Bonnytown, Bosasa	Theft, theft out of motor vehicle	5+
Female	Coloured	17	15	Afrikaans	Vredelust house x2, Pollsmoor, Ons plek	House breaking and robbery	5+

The participants were street children, from Brackenfell, Parow, Goodwood and Cape Town, who are living on the streets without functional family support. There were six males and one female and six Coloured and Afrikaans speaking and one Black and Xhosa speaking. All participants are

previous criminal offences, has been detained at places of safety or correctional facility and has formed part of the No Limits Program for street children.

3. Discussion of findings

The findings are discussed based on the themes indicated in the tables that follow.

The following table reflects the findings in relations to the first question theme.

Table B: Participants experiences of family life and schooling

<p>Theme one:</p> <p>3.1.1 Social and emotional deprivation in family life before leaving home</p> <p>Sub-themes: 3.1.1.1 Family violence</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.1.1.2 Substance abuse</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.1.1.3 Poverty & housing problem</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.1.1.4 Instable family life</p> <p>3.1.2 Theme two : Limited family contact after leaving home</p> <p>3.1.3 Theme three : Lack of schooling</p>

3.3.1 Social and emotional deprivation in family life before leaving home

According to Krieger (2001) deprivation can be conceptualized and measured, at both the individual and area level, in relation to: material deprivation, referring to 'dietary, clothing, housing, home facilities, environment, location and work (paid and unpaid), and social deprivation, referring to rights in relation to 'employment, family activities, integration into the community, formal participation in social institutions, recreation and education'.

However, people and especially children, can also be regarded as being emotionally deprived if they are deprived of adequate and appropriate interpersonal and/or environmental experiences in their early developmental years. (Dorland's Medical Dictionary 2007).

Participants reported several issues that can be categorized as interpersonal and social experiences contributing to social and emotional deprivation and which eventually contributed to leaving home for the streets. Narratives indicated that they were exposed to family violence, substance abuse and poverty within the family. They also referred to feelings of abandonment and limited contact with their family as well as the inability of their parents to control their movements. The family setting also contributed to problems in schooling. Also significant was the fact that they told their experiences in a factual, non-emotional way as if they have been desensitised by these events over a period of time.

3.3.1.1 Family violence

Participants reflected on incidences of family violence. The incidences included inter-parental conflict and physical abuse at the hand of the parent resulting in them leaving home and went to live on the streets.

When asked about the reasons for moving to the streets one participant responded as follows:

- *Deur my stiefpa... Hy wou my verkrag het – toe hardloop ek weg daarvandaan af. Toe besluit ek sommer nou vanaf op die straat wees”*

(It was because of my stepfather...he tried to rape me. So I ran away.

And then I decided to live on the street)

Most significant also was the report of abusive relationships between the respondents and their fathers and also an expression of longing for a father as indicated in the following quote:

- *Ek het eerste in die Wallacedene gebly, juffrou. Toe't ek 'n pa gehad, juffrou. Toe't my pa en my ma gebaklei en toe was ek agt jaar oud gewees, juffrou. Toe't my pa my geslaan en ek het weggehardloop?. (I first lived in Wallacedene, miss. Then I had a father. Then my father and mother fought and I was eight years old, miss. Then my father hit me)*

Another participant reflected on repeated violence and the mother's hesitance to take action against the violent father:

- *Want, my ma is bang om 'n saak te gaan maak teen hom(pa). (Because my mother was afraid to lay a charge against him (father))*

The above-mentioned responses summarize the nature of family relationships as depicted by the children, before they left home.

Regulus (1995:1046) states that the consequence of this negative father and child relationship is that families contribute to youth at risk for gang involvement. The author further elaborates and indicated that weak family attachments and inappropriate role modeling deprive youths of affective ties, identity anchoring, adult status recognition and social sensitivity.

Grych, Wachsmuth and Klockow (2002) studied the effects of inter-parental violence and children's representations of family violence. This study suggests that hostile aggressive family interactions may effect children's socio-emotional development. According to Grych et al. (2002) witnessing aggression in the family affects children's developing beliefs about close relationships and may be a process by which these experiences give rise to later problems in social and emotional functioning. Some of the participants not only witnessed the aggression between parents and parents on siblings but fell victim to the aggression.

Johnson (1998:136) states that, "family factors are some of the strongest influences in a person's life". According to Johnson (1998) the client responds to these influences by either rejecting or conforming to the family lifestyles. Hasen (1991:12) states that, "physical, sexual and psychological abuses within the domestic sphere are major factors contributing to children's decision to begin strolling, especially on a full time basis." Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) studied the developmental implications of the street child in South Africa. According to the latter authors, the lack/loss of emotional security, trust and identification were the most significant risk factors that street children were exposed to.

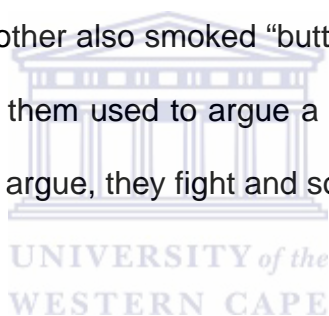
3.3.1.2 Substance abuse of parents

Hayes, Smart, Toumbourou and Sanson (2004:3) state that "parental substance abuse is a significant contextual predictor of the onset of adolescent use/abuse."

Participants reflected on the substance abuse by their parents when speaking about their experiences of life at home. (Later on in the discussion it became clear that they were all involved in substance abuse).

The following example illustrates:

- *My pa het buttons gerook, maar hy't dit gelos. Hy't 'n soort siek...ek dink dis TB. TB wat hy het. En my ma het ook buttons gerook, maar sy het dit gelos. Sy drink nou net bier. Hulle twee het ook baie gestry (silence) As my ma miskien dronk is of so, dan stry hulle, baklei hulle en so aan in die huis(My father smoked "buttons" , but he stopped. He's ill, I think its TB. He's got TB. And my mother also smoked "buttons", but stopped. She only drinks beer. The two of them used to argue a lot (silence) if my mother is maybe drunk, then they argue, they fight and so on, in the house)*



The following participant reflects on how his father used him to beg for his drug money on the street:

- *Ek het op die straat gekom omdat my pa my gebruik het, om geld te skarrel by die mense. Dis hoe ek op die straat gekom beland het (speak very soft – I had to ask to speak up). As ek elke middag uit die skool uitgekom het, dan gebruik hy my om drugs geld te vra by die mense. Dis hoekom ek op die straat is. (I came to the street because my father used me to beg for money. This is how I landed on the street. When I came from school in the afternoon, then he would use me to beg for drug money, from the people)*

The street children's responses indicated that they were exposed to drugs at a young age by their parents. They witnessed their parents abusing drugs and were also used by the parent to obtain money for drugs.

The effect of parental substance abuse on the physical and emotional well-being of children has been frequently reported in the literature. Findings by Walsh, Macmillan and Jamieson (2003) indicates that the rate of physical and sexual abuse was significantly higher amongst those who reported parental substance abuse. Although no mentioning was made about sexual abuse in my study, there is clear evidence of abuse and/or maltreatment by parents.

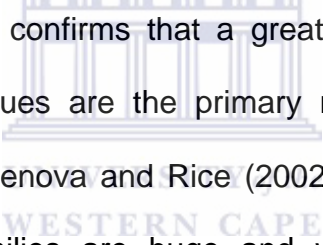
3.3.1.3 Poverty and housing problems

Padayachee (2002:4) cited in Bezuidenhout(2003) states that, "home factors such as family structure and family background, limited provision in basic needs of the children, abandonment and negligence, various forms of abuse, no supervision, low socio-economic status and overcrowding affects youth in South Africa." The participants reflected on their poor economic family status and felt the need to provide or contribute to the house hold in order to uplift their circumstances. One participant said that their whole family lives on the street.

The following narratives and quotes summarize some of the examples of severe material deprivation as well as poor parental models amidst these struggles for existence.

- *Ons almal, ons slaap almal buite. Is net my klein ander broertjie wat ini ander plek bly – kinders wat nie praat nie – so iets. My pa, smokkel nou, My eie, regte pa werk by Tira winkel en dan my suster se pa en my ander klein broertjie se pa – hy smokkel (We all, all of us (family)sleep outside. It is just my little brother that lived elsewhere- where children don't speak- something like that. My own, real father works at Tira shop and my sister's father and my younger brother's father, he's smuggling)*
- *ek maak altyd 'n plan dat daar iets is in die huis om te eet (I always make a plan so that there can be something to eat at home)*
- *Ek verkoop dit, juf (gesteelde goed). Koop vir my klere. Koop kos in die huis in.(I sell it, miss {stolen goods}. Buy clothing for myself. Buy food for the house.)*
- *Ek het eerste...ek het in mense se tuine gaan werk en ek het vir mense geld gaan vra, gevra vir werk. Ek het gekry....af en toe het ek los joppies gekry. Dan koop ek kos van die geld wat ek kry. By die wit mense vra ek kos en dan neem ek dit huis toe. Dan sorg ek dat daar altyd iets is as daar niks is om te eet nie. Soos many times' Saterdag en Sondag dan is daar niks kos by die huis nie. Dan sorg ek....al is dit my laaste sent ook, ek sal dit uit my sak uit haal en gaan kos koop vir my familie by die huis, Ek vat dit so....hier waar ek op straat bly ekke eet. Ek eet elke dag. Ek weet nie of my familie elke dag by die huis eet nie, want baie keer dan kry ek 'n gevoel, daars niks kos by die huis nie. Dan het ek klomp geld op my dan gaan ek dan koop ek kos. En dan gaan ek huis toe en gee my ma R50 of 'n R100. Dan sê ek my ma sy moet gaan kos koop vir die huis as daar niks is nie. (I used to work in people's gardens and asked them for*

money and work. I got money from doing casual jobs. Then I would buy food from the pay I received. I asked for food from White people then take it home. This is how I ensure that there is something to eat at home. There are many times, on Saturdays or Sundays that there is no food at home. Then I ensure, even if it is my last cent, I take it to buy food for the household. I just think of how I am fed while I'm on the street, every day I have something to eat.. I do not know if my family at home has something to eat. Sometimes I get a feeling that there is no food at home. If I have much money I buy food. Then I go home and give my mother a R50 or R100 and tell her to buy food if there is none.)



A study by Laylor (1999) confirms that a great number of street children indicated that financial issues are the primary reasons for coming to the streets. According to De Genova and Rice (2002:439) the consequences of economic distress on families are huge and wide ranging. Participants' responses indicated that their basic needs were not met by the parents. This seemed to be a strong motivator for the participants' to move to the street and try to make a living on the streets. According to Maphatane (1994) street children operate mainly in one area and give a percentage of their earnings to their families.

The contribution of family issues for living on the street is also reflected in the following narratives/quotes that indicated family instability and which are closely related to the kind of parental care they experienced in poverty conditions.

3.3.1.4 Instable living environment

The responses that follow reflected on the participants' movements within families, children's homes and moving out of their homes, and which contributed to social and emotional deprivation:

- *Wat ek 3 jaar oud was, het die social worker my weggestuur, voogouers toe in die 'Lavis in. Ek het daar gebly vir 'n lang tyd. Sê 13jaar (a pause) ek het skoolgegaan in die 'Lavis in, by Bellvue primary. Agterna dan ek gat ek...dan trek ons. Toe gaan bly ons in die Ruyterwacht in. 'Gat ek daar skool gegaan in die Elsie, by Valhalla Primary. Het net std.5 klaargedoen en toe los ek die skool. Daarvandaan gaan ek weer huis toe, na my eie mense toe (ha-an/no). Daarvandaan toe stuur hulle my weg. Huis Rosendal toe. Gat bly ek daar. Toe moet ek daar gat bly by huis Rosendal. Ek het net 'n jaar daar gebly toe stuur hulle my Boys Town toe. Daarvandaan van Boys Town as, het ek weggehardloop huis toe, na my eie ma...na my eie mense toe. (When I was three years old, the social worker placed me in the care of foster parents, who lived in Bishop Lavis. I lived there for a long time. I think, 13 years (pause). I attended school in Bishop Lavis, Bellvue Primary school. Thereafter, I went...then we moved. Then we went to live in Ruyterwacht. I went to school in Elsie River, at Valhalla Primary. Until I completed standard 5, then I left school. From there, I went to Rosendal House. I went to live there. Then I had to stay at Rosendal House. I was there for a year, when they sent me to Boys Town. From Boys town, I ran away home, to my own mother...to my own people.)*
- *Toe, toe't ons huis afgebrand. Kan ek ook nie by die ander mense bly nie. Toe't ek, toe't ek maar gecheck, nee, ek sal nie worry nie. Ek weet hoe's*

dit op die straat lewe. (Then, our house burned down. I could not go to live with other people. Then I thought “no”, I won’t worry. I know the street life)

Due to the unstable home circumstances the respondents had to adapt to continuous changes within their family environment. These circumstances motivated them to follow peers in an effort to seek a “better life” on the street.

Dusek (1987:143) states that, “for the adolescent, the difficulties of frequent movement include the problems of making new friends, the inability to establish meaningful long-term friendships, adjustments to new schools and the like”.



3.3.2 Theme two: Limited family contact whilst on the street

Johnson (1998: 198) mentions that, “ the family is usually intergenerational, exists over an extended period of time, and has very strong bonds owing to the amount of time members have spent together and the strength of the influence a family has on its members.”

It was clear from participants’ stories that, not only did they not have strong bonds during the time they lived at home, but they also had limited contact with family members after they had left home. The participants stated that they go home from time to time but the time spent at home is minimal. This means that the children control the amount of time they spend with their family.

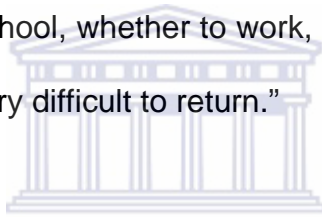
- *En toe het ek, het ek daar gebly vir 3 jaar was ek op die straat gewees. Daarna, toe't ek weer huis toe gegaan. En dit het nog nie so goed gegaan by die huis nie. Toe't ek weer straat toe gegaan. Vir 4 maande weer op die straat gebly* (I lived there for three years on the street. Thereafter I went back home. And it did not go so well at home. Then I moved back to the street. For four months I then stayed on the street.)
- *My ma kom haal my mos, dan gaan ek huis toe. dan bly ek 'n bietjie by die huis en dan gaan ek weer Bellville toe.* (My mother comes to fetch me, then I go home. Then I stay st home for a while, then I go back to Bellville)
- *Ek het net huis toe gegaan en toe kom ek weer terug. Dan bly ek so vir 'n paar maande weg en dan is ek net weer weg.* (I went home so I came back again. Then I stay for a couple of months then I leave again)
- *elke Desember dan gaan ek huis toe dan kom ek weer terug na die straat toe.* (Every December I go home and then I go back to the street)

The lack of parental guidance and care were not the sole reasons for the participants to leave the home, but it points to emotional and social deprivation influences that contributed to the problem. Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) states that there is evidence that children who seem to have severed all bonds with vital family members because of long absences, abuse or rejection, may still retain emotional home ties that they seek to re-establish temporarily or permanently. This was also evident in the participants' stories as the quotes indicate.

3.3.3 Lack of schooling

According to a study by Matthews, Griggs and Caine (1999) a high proportion of South African adolescents, particularly in the Black and Coloured population, are being exposed to the adverse consequences of not completing their schooling. These consequences are poor mental health, reduced probability of employment and inadequate income. For society this results in higher crime rates.

All children between the ages of 7 to 15 years are compelled to attend school, according to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. In a discussion document of the Department of Labour (2002:39) it is stated that: "once a child has dropped out of school, whether to work, pregnancy, imprisonment or other reasons, it is often very difficult to return."



The participants in this study noted that they left school at an early age and were roaming around in their communities:

- *Ons het saam skool geloop..nie saam skool gelopie. Ons het...hy't na my toe gekom altyd. Dan het ons library toe gegaan en so-aan. Toe van die library af gaan hy Shoprite toe. Toe gaan steel hy 'n kan jam can, mos. Toe begin ek glue te trek, mos en daarvandaan af toe kom ek straat toe en so-aan en toe vang ek strond aan. (We went to school together...didn't go to school. We did...he always came to me. Then we'd go to the library and so forth. Then from the library, we'd go to Shoprite. Then he went to go steel a can of jam. Then I started sniffing glue and from there I moved to the street and so forth and so I started doing wrong)*

- *Omdat ek nie wil skool geloop het nie (silence.)* (Because I did not want to attend school)
- *Toe skors hulle my van daai skool af. Toe gat ek Bellvue toe. Daar het ek die ruite weer uitgegooi, baklei met die kinders en alles. Daar het hulle my ook weggejaagt en toe gaan ek na 'n ander skool toe. Maar daai's in Caledon.* (Then they expelled me from the school. So I went to Bellvue. There I threw out the windows and fought with children. They chased me away from there and then I went to a different school, But that is Caledon)

It was clear from participants' stories that, even before they left their homes and especially also since they have been on the streets, they did not want to be in school and also caused disruption if they did attend school. The reality is that leaving school for the streets left them deprived of potential educational and social support within school context and exposed them to more deprivation.

Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck and Nessim (1993) report that the frequent family relocation was associated with an increased risk of children failing a grade in school and behavioral problems. The reported instability of family and social environment thus further contributed to the participants

Several studies (Steinberg 1992; Farrow, Deishner, Brown, Kulig and Kipke 1992 and Baker 1999) indicates the role of emotional and social deprivation in

the lives of street children due to the lack of secure family life and the support of other role models like teachers.

Baker (1999) reports on a study on street children in Durban and indicated that family problems, poverty, peer pressure and school problems were by far the most important reasons for leaving home for the streets.

3.4 Experiences of life on the street and repeated criminal involvement

The next discussion themes dealt with life on the street and repeated criminal involvement. Table C structures the themes and sub-themes of findings that emerged.

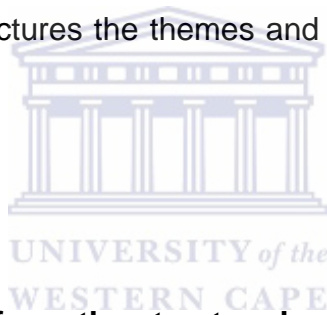


Table C Experiences of life on the street and criminal involvement

Theme 3.4.1 Influence of peers whilst on the street
Theme 3.4.2 Survival on the street
Theme 3.4.3 Criminal activities
Sub-themes: 3.4.3.1 Experiences of offences and recidivism
3.4.3.2 Reasons for repeated offences
3.4.3.3 Detention experiences
3.4.3.4 Interventions by service providers

3. 4.1 Influence of peers whilst on the street

Tshiwula (1998:62) explains that when peer pressure is applied it is difficult for adolescents to try and modify antisocial behavior once they have started to engage in it. According to Tshiwula (1998:63) “peers can also be responsible for introducing their friends to gangs, which may subsequently lead to delinquency. “ Participants’ stories reflected how they joined friends who were involved with drugs and criminal activities.

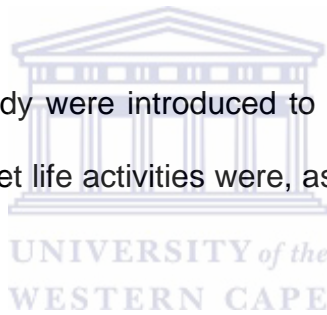
The following narrative highlights the typical cycle of going to the street with peers, surviving with peers and staying with peers:

- *Ek was daar, ek was.. hoe oud was ek gewees? Dit dink ek was elf, twaalf jaar oud gewees. Toe kom ek daar in ons straat, toe bly ons daar. En toe sien ek, hey, my tjommies, hulle almal, hulle gaan so Parow toe, steel doen dinge, rook dagga. Toe check ek maar net, hy, dis lekker, sien nou miss, doen dit lekker, juffrou. Toe check ek kan vir hulle join Toe join ek hulle op die ou end toe wat hulle nie daar is nie, Toe’t ek geslaap in die Parow, toe’t ek ook nou mense beginne ken in die Parow. Geslaap daar, gesteel, in gebreek saam met mense, tot nou toe. Gesteel en ingebreek, grootgeraak. (I was there, I was, how old was I? I think I was eleven, twelve years old. Then I came to the street, and then we lived there. Then I saw, hey, my friends are all going to Parow to steel and smoke drugs. Then I thought that I can join them, so I did. Then they were not there. Thereafter I slept in Parow. I got to know people in Parow. I slept there, stole, house breaking with people, until now. I stole and broke into houses and I grew older)*

Dusek (1987:210) suggests that, during the earlier years of adolescence, there is an increase in conformity to peer group norms and standards and Smith (1996) highlights the importance of the support of a peer group to street children.

The study of Baker (1999) on street children in Durban also highlighted the role of friends in going to the street and staying on the street. However he noted that the stories of some of the children indicated a ‘torn affinity between the family home and friends on the street’, but when they were asked to choose, they would rather stay with friends.

The participants in this study were introduced to the street and street life by their peers. Part of the street life activities were, as mentioned above, abusing drugs and criminal deeds.



3.4.2 Survival on the street

A study of Brown (1993) indicates that street children, despite the harsh life style, appeared to develop a repertoire of coping strategies that successfully meet the demands of street life. Participants’ stories indicated that survival on the street are closely linked to the theme of joining peers and gangs for stealing and living together. The following quotes also illustrate their efforts of getting food by doing minor jobs and begging:

- *Ek het 'n ander bratjie gehet. Hy't elke dag geld gehet. Ek't hom gevra, waar kry hy die geld. Dan sê hy my hy skarrel. Dan vra ek hom waar en*

hoe skarrel hy. Dan ê hy my hy “park” karre in Tyger valley in. Dan vra ek hom nou hoe...nou hoe lyk dit in Tyger valley. Dan sê hy my daar’s jolle (dance clubs), daar’s parking areas. Daar wat hulle karre park. Park hulle en dan vra ek hoeveel betaal hulle. Dan sê hy 5 rande, 10 rande. Dan vra ek hom, kan ek saam met hom gaan. Dan sê hy Vrydagaande en Saterdagagaande. En so het ek saam met hom gegaan. So het dit gekom dat ek in die Tygervally beginte bly het sommer. (I had another friend. He had money every day. I asked him where he got the money. Then he told me that he begs for money. Then I asked him where he goes to beg for money. Then he told me that he parks cars at Tyger valley. Then I asked how Tyger valley looks. He told me there are night clubs. There are parking areas. The nightclub goers’ park there and he charged them. Then I asked how much they pay. Then he said R5 and R10. Then I asked him if I can join him. Then he said I could, but on Friday and Saturday evenings. And so I went with him. This is how I came to Tyger valley then I stayed there.)

- *ek het vir mense geld gaan vra. (I asked people for money)*
- *gaan skarrel op die robots, daar by Sanlam se robots, dan kry hy mos kos. (Go beg at traffic lights, at Sanlam’s traffic lights, then he gets food)*

Other “work” also included selling of goods (aluminium, supplies, equipment, etc). The goods would be mostly those that were robbed or stolen and sold to anyone who was willing to pay or a designated buyer.

A study by Foutie (2004) reflects that street children's survival was made possible through begging, scavenging and doing odd jobs like parking cars.

According to the discussion document on child labour of the Department of Labour (2002) there were a number of children who spent 12 hours begging for money in public or for food. It was further mentioned that this activity reduces the child's self-worth.

Bynum and Thompson (1996:156) theorize that "delinquent boys" become frustrated with their inability to gain status through conventional means. Then they become a delinquent sub-culture and are viewed by the society as nonconforming delinquents.



3.4.3 Criminal activities

The participants have all been involved in criminal activities. During the discussions of their criminal activities, they reported on experiences of offences, first crimes and repeat offences. There were motivational factors, which they mentioned during their disclosure of their criminal activities and they talked about detention experiences and intervention by service providers.

3.4.3.1 Experiences of first offences and repeat offences (recidivism)

Carcach and Leverett (1999) define the term recidivism as the subsequent offending by a person who has been convicted of a prior offence. The participants in my research were asked to give their story on how they got involved in criminal activities. The stories of their first offence were told with excitement, some had to think back, some were told with some pride, and

jokingly. The respondents could not tell their stories in a chronological order, thus I had to probe and asked them of their different cases, starting with their first case.

- *dit was op 'n Donderdagaand. Ons het op 'n plek se dak gesit. Toe't een beginne praat van die plek inbreek. Maar ek het hom gesê as ek nou vir hom na 'n plek toe neem waar 'n camera en alarm is dan gaan ek teen die karre skop. Maar, het wil vir Diskom inbreek, maar daar's ook cameras en alarms. Maar hy en daai ander klein, klein laaitie het gegaan. Hulle't gaan inbreek, maar hulle was op die dakke gewees. Toe's hulle vir Shoe Fashion ingebreek en maar hulle niks gevattie want die alarm het afgegaan. En die next dag, dan loop ons deur die Stasieweg in, maar dan is hulle voorbarig om te kyk ons die gat te kyk in die dak in, om vir my te wys hoe lyk die gat. Toe't die mense uitgevinne dat hulle die plek ingebreek het. Ek het saamgehardloop en toe vat hulle vir my ook. (It was on a Thursday. We sat on the roof of the place. One began to talk about breaking into the place. But I told him if I would take him to a place where there are cameras alarms that I would not do it. But we broke into Discom and there were also cameras and alarms. But he and the other small boy went in. They broke in, but they were on the roof. They broke into Shoe Fashion but they didn't steal anything because the alarm went off. The next day we walked in Station road. The two boys went to look at the hole in the roof. Then the people found out that they broke into their place. I ran with the two boys and was arrested as well)*

- *'It was eerste, um, dieftsal gewees, aluminium ek en Bradley ons het daar geslaap by Eskom, ek en Bradley en Aggies. Toe't ons daar gelê, toe sien ons die plaat is los, toe rook ons die plaat los, en toe sien ons daar's nog plate, maar dit was nie los gewies nie. Toe trek ons dit af van die deur af en toe breek ons dit op en so-aan en toe gaan slaap ons agter die bank. Toe kry ons daar ook aluminium, toe breek ons daar ook af, die next dag toe survive ons. Toe's daar nog twee plate daar by Eskom en toe haal ons daai ook af die next dag. Toe die aand toe gaan haal ons weer aluminium by die bank, toe slap ons weer by die bank. Die aand toe vang die security vir ons daar by daai kar plek, vang hy vir ons daar. Hy werk mos daar, daai security, toe vang hy ons toe hou hy vir ons daar. Toe't ekke weggekome, toe's Bradley alleen daarso, en toe, ons het mos 'n groot waentjie vol carboard gehad daar. toe kom ons, toe kom ek die oggend, toe staan ek op, ek het daar agter die blomme gelê, daar om die draai. Toe kom ek terug, toe sien ek daar lê die trollie nog. Toe tel ek dit op, toe kom die mense en toe vang hulle my. Toe neem hulle my daar na die bank toe in daai toilet daarso, toe's Bradley klaar daar. Toe word Bradley geslat sommer en daarna toe bel hulle die polisie. (This was my first theft, aluminium. My friends and I slept outside Escom. While we were lying we saw that a slate was loose on the building. Then we saw more slates, but it was not loose. Then we took it off the door and we broke it into pieces than we went back to sleep behind the bank. Then there were two more slates at Escom, and then we went to fetch that the following day. We went to fetch the aluminium at the back and slept there. That evening*

the security caught us there. He worked there and he caught us. I got away, but my friend was left alone. We had a trolley full of card board. I went to sleep the morning, then I woke up, I slept behind the flowers around the corner. When I came back I saw the trolley was still there. So, I picked it up then people came and caught me. Then they took me to the bank to the toilet, and then my friend was also there. Then they hit my friend and thereafter they phoned the police.)

The participants could recall their first offences clearly but the offences thereafter were not so clearly described and explained. The respondents indicated that the initial offence was with friends or peers but most street children tend to move away from their peers and do criminal activities alone.

- *ek breek daar by die wit gebiede in. By die karre in. Dan verkoop ek die front-loader cd's, Alleen. (I do housebreakings in white areas. I break into cars. Then I sell the front loaders and compact discs, only)*

They described their experiences of their criminal career or cycle of recidivism as follows:

- *My tweede saak...(thinking)dit was net karre inbreek, karre inbreek. Al my sake was karre inbreek, net van daai. Net van daai een saak, verder net karre inbreek. Ons steel die cd-players, in die karre en speakers en die amps, en nog goeters kry 'n mens, klomp goeters nog kry 'n mens in 'n kar...guns en sulke goeters. Dan verkoop ons die goed . Dis my vyfde saak. (My second case... (Thinking) it was just theft out of motor*

vehicles, theft out of motor vehicles. All my cases was theft out of motor vehicles, only that. Just that one case, thereafter, I just got involved in theft out of motor vehicles cases. We stole cd-players out of cars and speakers and amps and other things. You get guns and other things in the cars. Then we sell the things. This is my 5th case)

- *Toe gaan hulle met my polisie toe. Ek dink, ek het weer Lindelani toe gekom. Toe vat hulle my polisiestatie toe. En my derde saak. watter saak was daai? Ek en die Delano en ja...daai ander laaitie. Hy watter saak was daai(thinking). Ek dink dit was vir 'n huisbraak saak, ja, 'n huisbraak saak. Toe kom ek mos van Bonnytoun. Toe bly ek daar vir agt maande. Het ek die 6de Mei gaan ek uit. Dat ek en Delano nou die goete weer aangevang het. (Then they went with me to the police cells. I think I went to Lindelani again. They took me to the police station. And my 3rd case, what was that? Delano and I, yes, and that other boy. He, what case was that? (thinking) I think it was a house breaking case, yes. A house breaking case. We came from Bonnytoun. I stayed there for eight months. Then I went out on 6 May. That Delano and I did the same things again.)*

These narratives clearly reflect the matter –of-fact way in which the involvement in repeated crime was reported. Laylor (1999) states that street children are often involved in delinquent behaviour. This author states that younger boys mainly practice petty theft such as stealing food from shops/markets, and older boys may become involved in more confrontational

crimes such as pick-pocketing and robberies. He further states that these activities, inevitably, bring the street children in contact with the police (Laylor, 1999:765). Block (1991:28) notes that, "although a first offence may mark the beginning of a criminal career, once a career has begun; it may or may not continue. Participants in this study all continued with criminal activities.

3.4.3.2 Reasons for repeated offences

Participants indicated that repeated involvement in crime whilst on the street peer pressure, substance abuse, mischief, and no fear of prosecution; there was opportunity or mischief and the lack of income/money. The following are responses of participants highlighting their reasons for offending:

a) Peer pressure

A common response when the participants was asked about their first criminal activity was, that a friend was an accomplice. In the following responses the influence of friends and significant others, that were involved in the cases/ or criminal, are evident.

- *... daar was mos 'n ander laaitjie, Velapie, mos, hy't mos karre ingebreek.en toe't hy ons saam met hom karre ingebreek. (...There was a boy. He broke into cars. And then he broke in care with us)*
- *het my vriende my geleer van glue trek, buttons rook, sulke dinge en kar inbreek en HB en so. (my friends showed me how to sniff glue, smoke buttons and stuff like that as well as breaking into cars and houses)*

- *Ek en my tjommie was saam. Ons het 'n huis ingebreek en toe van dietoe't sy die tv en videos goed uitgehaal en toe kom die boere (Saps).(My friends and I were together. We broke into a house, and then she took out the television and other stuff. Then the police caught us)*
- *Ek het diefstal sake gehet ek en my niggie was in 'n saak. Diefstal saak. Ons het gysers gesteel. Ons het aluminium gesteel. (I was involved with my cousin in theft cases. We stole geysers. We stole aluminum)*
- *Is maar die vriende wat ek gehad it. Ek wil nie geluister het nie, wat my mense my sê nie.Altyd gedink ek het 'n regte plan – en so aan. Toe verlei hulle my om te steel – my gewys hoe om te steel. (It is the friends that I had. I didn't want to listen to what people say. I always thought that I had a right plan. Then my friends influenced me to steal, they showed me how to steal)*

These responses indicate that peer influence plays a major role in the respondents' criminal behaviour.

b) Substance abuse

Participants also said that their reason for being involved in repeat offending is due to substance abuse. Through doing criminal activities, they are catering for their drug habit. Thsiwula (1998:68) stated that due to fear and pain, one seeks a defense mechanism to escape the realities of being irresponsible and in this case the defense mechanism might be the use of alcohol and drugs.

- *Is die glue en die buttons en tik wat in my is wat ek nie weet hoe om uit my te kry nie. Dis daai van altyd , nie geld is nie, my tjommies sien en rook. Dan kry ek die lekker feeling. Naai, ek kan maar nou 'n skyf trek en 'n head slat. Nou, daai maak my nog net so deurmekaar. Gaan breek ek net in vir nog tik-geld, vir glue-gels, so... (It is the glue and the buttons and the tik that is in me, and I do not know how to get it out. It's when I don't have money, I see my friends smoke. Then I get a yearning. I then decide to smoke with them. Now, that confused me. Then I break in at another home for money for drugs)*

According to Farrow, Deishner, Brown, Kulig and Kipke (1992:720) alcohol and other drug abuse also appears to be pervasive problem among homeless youth. Although these agents may play a functional survival role by deadening emotional pain and helping youths cope with uncertainty and instability in their lives.”

c) No fear of prosecution – experience of offences

Another explanation for repeat offending was that detention or the consequences of their criminal actions were not perceived as severe. Hence they did not fear the consequences as prescribed by the criminal justice system.

- *Ek het gedink, ek worry nie, dit was nog nie sò hard in die selle nie, sien. Want ek gedink ek gaan maar net elke keer weer selletjies toe. Toe gaan breek ek maar net weer in en het so aangegaan. En het weer gemang*

(was in arrested and in cells)en gesien ek tol die saak aanmekaar, aanmekaar (doesn't get sentenced-released)So het ek aangegaan. Dan het in ingebreek (I thought, I wouldn't worry, it wasn't so hard in the cells. Because I thought I was going back to the cells again. Then I went to break into a house. And I was detained again. So it continued)

d) Opportunity/Mischief

The following participants noted that they did not plan to do the criminal deeds. He just decided to do the criminal activity when the opportunity arises, without pre-planning.

- *Maar my gedagte was nie om karre in te breek nie. Maar ek het net na 'n kar geloop. Straight na 'n kar toe gegaan. Ek het die ruit uitgeknap, deur oopgemaak. Ek het die skroefdrywer uitgehaal, die tape uitgehaal en die kar uitgeskud. Die phone en sulke goeters en verder het ek weer die kar toegemaak en net gestap. En ek gat verkoop dit. (But I did not think of breaking into cars. I just walked up to the car. Straight to the car. I hit out the window, opened the door. I took a screw drywer, a tape and searched the car. The phone and other goods I took and then I closed the car and walked on. I sold the goods)*
- *Dit was bietjie lekker juf. (smiling) Dit was lekker gewees. Hoekom Saterdag en Vrydae aande dan staan ons by Setrum hotel. Dan rob hulle die mense se geld, selfone, kettings alles daai. (It was fun, miss. It was fun. On Fridays and Saturdays we would stand at the Centre Hotel. Then we would rob the people of their money, cell phones, chains, and things like that)*

e) Money/income

Another reason given for repeat offending is due to lack of income for basic needs. Participants also indicated that they compared themselves to peers who did manage to get some money from home and decided to make a plan to match what they had. The following responses suggested that participants also compared their own circumstances to that of peers. The study of Foster and Louw-Potgieter (1991:246) refers to this as relative deprivation:

- *Ek het nie geld gehad nie. Maar dit het net op my gedagte gekom om die kar te breek. (I didn't have money. But, it came to my mind to break into the car)*
- *As ek by die huis ook is en dan.. dan twee rand en drie rand, daai gaan mos nie laat dinges nie. Nou kom my ander tjommies van hulle huise af. Nou hulle miskien twintig en dertig rand. Nou ek kan mos nie vir hulle elke dag vra nie. (If I am at home, then I would have two or three rand, that won't be sufficient. Now, my friends come from their homes and they would have maybe twenty or thirty rand. Now, I can't ask them for money every day)*

Street children live in extreme poverty which forces them to become at least partially self-supporting (Laylor, 1999:760). It seems as if they believe that life on the street is more secure in terms of providing for basic needs than the parental home.

3.4.3.3 Detention experiences

According to Goffman (1961) long residential stays in restricted environments has detrimental effects on residents. The respondents in this study were all exposed to restricted environments after one or more of their arrests. The researcher inquired about their experiences whilst in institutionalised care.

None of the participants have been given a prison sentence. During their time of being placed in detention via the criminal court, they were all awaiting-trial. Some were detained in police custody and then brought before the court. Thereafter, they were either sent to a place of safety/secure care centre or correctional facility whilst awaiting trial.

Selected participants talked about the feelings of being locked up:

a) Feeling of loneliness

- *Ek het sleg gevoel. Hoekom, ek het alleen in die sel gelê, juf. Sê maar die hele naweek, juf. Dit was nie lekker nie, juf. Jy is toegekap, jy kannie eers sê maar 10 treë loop nie (police cells). (I felt bad. I was alone in the cell. I think it was for the whole weekend. It wasn't a nice feeling. You were locked up and you can not walk ten paces)*

b) Experiences about relationships with other detainees and staff at detention

Participants indicated that they had meaningful relationships with staff and other older detainees within the detention centers.

- Ek het maar net gehou van die menere en juffrouens daar. Hoe dit gegaan het daar. Hoe ek my geniet het daar – as daar miskien mense kom – dans ons – sulke goete. Net daai geniet daar. (I liked the sirs and teachers there. And how it was, there. I enjoyed myself, when people came to dance and do programs, stuff like that. Only that did I enjoy)

The following participants reported on their connection with two inmates that were in prison with her. She called them her “mother” and “grandmother”, which illustrates that the respondent formed a close relationship with her inmates, but who were older than her.

- *‘It was vir my baie lekker daar. Maar net die meisies daar was baie ombeskof. Ek het nog nie much met hulle gepraat nie vriendskappe of so iets nie. Ek was alleen in ‘n kamer gewees toe kom ek nou daar. – toe kom ‘n ander vrou ‘n ouma daar – daar’s oumas ook wat daar bly wat miskien in die tronk bly. Dan loop ek saam met die ouma en so. Ek het ‘n ma by the way ek het ‘n “tronk ma” daar gehad daar – ook ‘n ouma. Sy’t altyd in die aande, dan koop sy my, daars ‘n huiswinkel daar dan koop sy vir my chips, dan bring sy vir my doughnuts, dan bring sy vir my jam & brood en ‘n snytjie koek, en so iets – dit bring sy vir my en klere en so, en dan praat sy saam met my en dan bid ons in die aande, of so. En dan baie keer dan gaan slaap ek net, in die oggende dan moet ons vroeg opstaan - dan kom sluit hulle die hekke oop. Dan kom kyk hulle watter wie moet nou voorkom en wie moenie voorkom nie. En die wat se saak uitgestel is....tot wanneer toe. (It was pleasant there. But the girls were very rude. I did not talk or befriend them. I was*

alone in a room. When I came there, there was another woman a grandmother. There were grandmothers also in prison. Then I walked with the grandmother. I had a mother while I was in prison, a prison-mother as well as a grandmother. At night, she would always buy me chips and bring me doughnuts. Then she would bring me jam bread and cake and also clothing. Then she would speak to me and pray for me at night. Many times I go to sleep only in the morning. Then they would open the gates and I would wake up. They would come to check who is going to court and whose case is postponed and until when)

Abrams (2006:71) explains that “offenders tend to maintain positive relationships with facility staff, which often became mentors and parental figures for them”. According to Abrams (2006) this close relationship with staff was particularly visible in the cases of those residents with chaotic family systems as staff members came to represent a new, more consistent form of authority.

Bigelow (2000:563) stats that institutionalization, such as juvenile detention centres, exposes at-risk delinquents to high levels of deviant peer group experiences that accelerate their life course of offending.

Putnins (2002) notes in this regard, that part of the “culture” that youngsters adopted in these centres is getting a tattoo. The author continued by indicating that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between having tattoos and the risk of offending, among both adolescent and adult males. Having tattoos is also used as a prognostic sign in criminal

assessment measures (Putnins, 2002). The following participants' response indicate how he made a tattoo whilst in a detention centre:

- *Ek het nog nie geworry nie. Ek het net gecheck, hulle het mos gesê dis 'n place of safety. Toe gaan ek, toe dink ek toe, "a plek of safety". Toe agterna, toe kry ek my vriende daarso, wat ek op straat gekry het, en so-aan, mense van die Bellville-Suid. En toe aangegaan. Toe sien ek mense baklei nog nie daar nie, maar nie vir lank nie, toe sien ek mense baklei en steek tjappies(tattoes), en so-aan. Toe gaan ek ook vir my tjappies steek. (I didn't worry. I thought, they said a place of safety. Then I thought I am going to a place of safety. Thereafter, I got my friends there that lived with me on the street, and people from Bellville-South. Then I saw the people did not fight there, but not for long. Then I saw people fighting and making tattoos. And so I also made a tattoo for myself)*

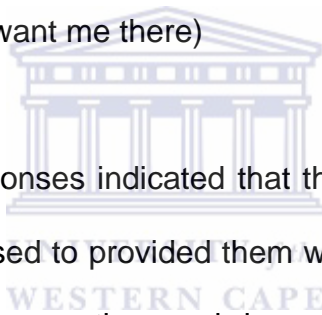
3.4.3.4 Intervention by service providers

All participants were part of the No Limits Programme for Street Children (day-care program). The latter NGO renders service to the street children in the Northern suburbs. The street children involved in the study, were also part of other prevention services rendered to street children, such as "Ons Plek" shelter and Homestead and Children's Homes. Children's basic needs, such as food, basic education, clothing and other needs are attended to in these places. Their experiences of interventions are summarized by the following quotes.

- *Baie uitgegaan (baie opgewonde).ons sal nou kamp toe gegaan het. Miskien is hulle klaar kamp toe al. Ek sal kamp. Ons was, alles, dis lekker daar. (Sport also. Went out a lot. We would have gone on a camp. Maybe they went to camp. I will camp. We wash, every thing, it's nice there)*
- *By Boys Town was daar 'n pool, daar's 'n groot dam aan die agterkant. En daar's ...hoe's dai goed se naam? Cottages- dit lyk soos huise, maar dis kamers. Hulle noem dit cottages een, twee, drie, vier tot by 6. So lyk dit daar. Daar's 'n tv saal en 'n eetsaal. By die rules was dit gewees...het elke dag 'n blaadjie gekry. So 'n wit blaadjie gekry. Nie elke dag nie. Elke Maandagoggend. Iets goed wat jy gedoen het moet jy neerskryf en soos by die skool. Dan moet die meneer nou sign wat jy gedoen het en so. Dan kry jy nou miskien 'n 100% of 50%. Aan die einde van die maand dan kry jy geld. Dit word op jou property gesit. En dan die next maand dan kan jy jou goeters koop. Hulle't gesê ek hoef net 6 maande daar te bly om te kyk of my gedrag gechange het . maar hulle sê dit was net bymekaar om 6 maande te word, toe hardloop ek weg. Dit was vervelig gewees. Hoekom, daar kyk jy net in bos vas en so antes. (At Boys Town there is a pool and a big dam behind the building. And there were cottages. Cottages look like houses, but rooms. They call it cottage 1,2,3,4 until 6. There is a TV -and dining hall. Every day you would get a copy of the rules on a white paper. Not every day. Every Monday morning you must write down something good that you have done just like at school. Then the teacher must sigh as recognition that you have done it. Then you get 100% or 50%. At the*

end of the month then you get money. This money will be put unto your property. The next month you can buy stuff. They said I must only stay for 6 months to assess whether my behaviour will change. But when it was nearly 6 months, I ran away. It was boring there. Because you are just surrounded by bushes)

- Net wanneer ek voel om daantoe te gaan dan gaan ek daan toe. Maar die ander tye wat ek nou vir so lank weggebly het, dan wil hulle my mos nie meer daar hê nie. (Only when I felt like going (to No Limits), then I went. But other times, when I used to stay away for a long period, they did not want me there)



The above-mentioned responses indicated that the prevention programs that the participants were exposed to provided them with the basic needs such as food, education, shelter, recreation and in one case, money. Although participants enjoyed all of the this, it was not enough to prohibit them from running away and going to the street and getting involved in repeated crime. They attended programs when they felt like it and some said that, being in a children's home was boring. It seemed as if the participants wanted to convey: "It is OK to be looked after and yes, it is hard to get caught, but I have to get back to my life on the street, this is where I can survive,"?

3.5 Summary

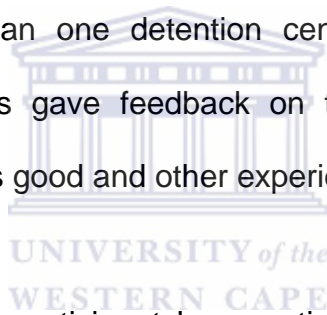
The data gathered, in this chapter, indicated that the life stories of street children relating to their repeated crime involvement whilst on the street are

due to various factors. The study suggests that there is a link to family instability and the reasons for street children moving to the street and committing crime.

Due to the harsh living conditions of the street, the participants turn to crime to cater for their basic needs and substance addictions. This chapter also highlighted the influence of peers whilst on the street and the reasons for getting involved in crime repeatedly.

The participants' involvement in repeated crime caused them to be detained in places of safety. Every participant was exposed to a detention centre, but was exposed to more than one detention centre as a result of repeat offending. The participants gave feedback on their experiences whilst in detention, where some was good and other experiences not good.

The data also include the participants' perceptions of the service that role players in the community renders. The responses indicate that the participants tend to determine for themselves whether to partake in programs or not.



CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The goal of the study was to explore the perceptions of the street children on recidivism. The research question was: “how do participants in this research construct the experiences of getting to the streets, staying on the street and getting involved in repeated crimes?” The summary of the findings are presented in an integrated way in relation to the main question themes that guided the stories of the participants. Examples of relevant literature findings are also included in the discussion.



4.2 Summary of the findings

4.2.1 Participants' experiences of family life and schooling

The analyses of stories of the influence of family life on going to the streets were categorized into the following themes:

- Social and emotional deprivation in family life before leaving home and school experiences while at home
 - Family violence
 - Substance abuse
 - Poverty and housing problem
 - Instable family life
- Limited family contact after leaving home
- Experiences of school while at home

Findings indicated that participants left home for the streets primarily because of their experience of family circumstances. It was clear from the story telling that they were exposed to extreme conditions of social and emotional deprivation. They reported that they witnessed their fathers abusing their mothers and also experienced physical and emotional abuse by their fathers themselves. A statement by one of the participants when reflecting on leaving home at the age of eight after having been abused by a drunk father, seemed to summarize feelings and experiences of the father- child relationship: "Daai tyd het ek 'n pa gehad juffrou..." ("During that time I had a father, miss"). The statement might indicate that the participant no longer acknowledged his father as his father (who is still alive), but it could also be indicative of a sub-conscious longing for times when he had a father. In the majority of the abuse cases the father was the perpetrator of the violence and the mother was the victim. This left the participants with negative experiences of a father figure and disrespect towards the father.

Aggravating factors, or maybe causative factors, were the substance abuse by fathers, and some mothers, and poverty conditions. . The participants reported seeing their parents drinking together and then fighting and arguing when they were under the influence. Narratives also indicated that some children had to go to the streets and find the drugs for their parents.

Due to poverty and low income or unemployment of the parents they were unable to provide for the daily basic needs of their kids. Participants reported that they felt the need to contribute to the household expenses and found

some type of income to assist the family. They reverted to begging for food and money from strangers and going to the street to “work”.

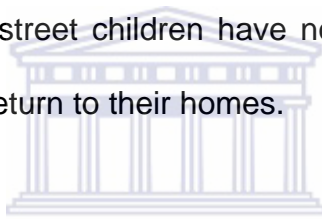
Reflecting on housing conditions a number of participants indicated that they were exposed to instability in living conditions, moving between homes of extended family members, foster care parents and institutions. One participant remembered that the whole family slept on the street when he was 8 years old.

Literature consulted supported the findings that lack of parental care and supervision and emotional and social deprivation are primary reasons for children to leave home. Barrette (1995:31) for example, noted that, “among the reasons most often heard from street children, the most common was to explain their departure from home as family circumstances”. According to Barrette (1995) children move to the streets when there are problematic child-parent relationship and the domestic circumstances are unbearable. Glanz (1990:133) states that broken homes are providing an opportunity for adolescents to associate with other delinquents.

Simpson (2003:149) supports the findings that the lack of parental care, caused children “to be left to their own devices, which could result in deviant behaviour.”

Andrews et al. (2007) on the other hand report that street children also tend to run away as a result of their strong drive towards autonomy. The participants in my study were indeed left to their own devices by their parents. They

stayed away from home for long periods and even when family members came to fetch them from the street, they were not able to keep them at home. Findings also indicated that although the street children move away from home, they have the need to make contact but on their own terms. If the home environment could be tolerated, the participant would stay at home. As soon as the home environment became too harsh for the participants to deal with, they moved back to the street. One participant stated that he when he did go home during December holiday times he always went to bed hungry. When the festivity was over, he returned to the street. A study by Laylor (1999:763) supports these findings and indicates that in spite of the varied family backgrounds; most street children have not broken contact with their homes but do not want to return to their homes.



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Findings also indicated that parents apparently did not play a supportive and motivational role in getting and keeping participants in school. Some of them moved from one school to another due to deviant behaviour and others did not bother to attend school. Consequently they were all deprived of potential positive influences of school education. Sigelman and Shaffer (1995:433) reflect on the role of the school on the development of children. They report that teenagers are affected by their school environments and their futures are shaped by their educational experiences. Lerner and Spanier (1980:459) states that “those adolescents who dislike school because they do not do well or who would rather be somewhere else, or who see no value in education or going to school, consider the school to be oppressive rather than educative.” This was also the case with participants in my study.

4.2.2 Experiences of life on the street and repeated criminal involvement

The stories continued with a reflection of life on the street and experiences of recidivism. Findings were categorized as follows:

- Influence of peers whilst on the street
- Survival on the street
- Criminal activities

Sub-themes:

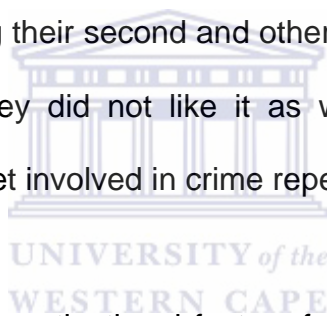
- Experiences of offences and recidivism
- Reasons for repeated offences
- Detention experiences
- Interventions by service providers

The following summary integrates the findings related to the abovementioned themes.



The participants indicated that their survival on the street depended on befriending other street children; begging on the street; abusing substances and getting involved in crime. This became a vicious cycle. They were exposed to harsh conditions on the street, but had managed to stay on the street. They adapted to the living environments on the street and moved into a “sub-culture” of living, which included specific ways to meet their basic needs. Some of the participants were taught by peers how to beg for money, how to use drugs and how to survive on the street.

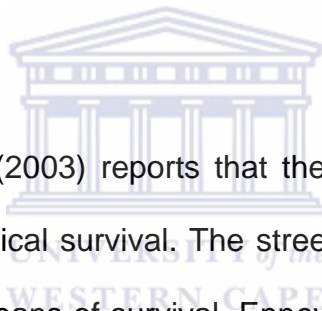
Being on the street also exposed the participants to deviant behaviour. This behaviour leads to more criminal activities. They were inducted to their first criminal activity by “ou menere” on the street. The first offence was recalled vividly by the participants and they reported how they were filled with excitement, fear and adrenalin. They did not, however reported the stories of the repeated offences with the same enthusiasm. They spoke of their criminal history vaguely and without many details, listing the charges and criminal activities only and also what they did with the stolen goods. It was as if the criminal activities had become part of their daily (boring?) life, like something they had to do. The participants knew what the consequences would be, if they were caught regarding their second and other offences. They did not fear the consequences, but they did not like it as well. This impacted on the participants’ decisions to get involved in crime repeatedly.



The participants also gave motivational factors for repeatedly being involved in crime i.e. peer pressure, substance abuse, no fear of prosecution and opportunity/mischief. This study indicated that participants could voice their experiences of getting to the street and staying on the street and repeated crime involvement. They had difficulty talking about how the situation could be changed for them.

Many participants were detained in places of safety or prison, awaiting trial. Each participant reported on their experiences whilst in detention. The only female participant formed close relationship with older female detainees, who she referred to as her “mother” and grandmother.

Many participants were repeatedly detained in places of safety or prison, awaiting trial. A participant who was detained in police cells expressed feelings of loneliness when being confined to a small space. Another participant reflected on how he loved the staff who worked at the detention centre. This study shows that the street children, whilst in detention are able to form meaningful relationships with adults, male and female. The developing of close relationships “role-models” at the detention centres was confirmed by Abrams (2006) who states that, this close relationship with staff are particularly visible for those residents with chaotic family systems as staff came to represent a new, more consistent form of authority.



Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) reports that the role of the street group is significant in terms of physical survival. The street children shares recourses and the group is often a means of survival. Ennew et al. (2003) further states that members of a street child subculture draw new comers into the fold and teach them survival skills and socialize them.

Regarding recidivism, Carcach and Leverett (1999:22) confirms that, “recidivism among juvenile offenders is affected by multiple factors ranging through early development issues, personal characteristics that remain stable over the entire life, the social and economic environments surrounding individuals, the age of onset to delinquency, the length and intensity of delinquent careers and the responses of the justice system.” The participants in the study explains their recidivism by referring to their social and economic

environments, their early development issues, age of onset to delinquency and the response of the justice system.

4.3 Conclusion

This study set out to answer the question “how do participants in this research construct the experiences of getting to the streets, staying on the street and getting involved in repeated crimes?” The findings of this study indicated the importance of supportive family relationships and stability in family life in the lives of children. Parents need to create a safe home environment for their children otherwise the children will seek safety and care elsewhere. Families in South Africa, especially those who are classified as poor or living under the bread line are struggling to create a stable family environment for their children.



Street children choose to leave their homes for a “better” life on the street. On the street they are supported by peers for survival, including getting involved in drugs and other criminal activities that provide income. Repeated crimes are perceived as part of their lives and interventions fail to keep them off the street.

The methodology applied was found to be effective in eliciting participants’ recidivism experiences. The researcher found the findings to be enlightened and they contributed to the understanding of the life-world experiences of the street children and their involvement in repeat offending.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- Preventative work focus on family preservation and family support. Findings indicated that the family was one of the primary reasons for moving to the street, staying on the street and therefore also repeated involvement in crime. This research confirms that family violence has devastated consequences on family unity and children's emotional and physical well-being.
- All role players working with children (like parents, teachers, health care professionals, social workers and psychologists) should be alerted to possible risk behaviours for leaving home and going to the streets.
- The Department of Social Development should identify and strategize services for juveniles who are involved in repeated crimes and moving from one detention centre to another. Programs for repeat offenders need to be developed for use in trial awaiting facilities.
- Teachers should be educated to identify risky behaviour like truancy and drug abuse. They should also have a resource list in order to refer these learners to social workers or special programs.
- Staff at detention centres should be involved in continuous educational and development programs for the demanding role they play in prevention and intervention of recidivism. This should include supportive help from psychologists and social workers to empower staff for acting as role models and parental substitutes.

- Intervention programs like day-care programs need to be continued. Building trust with street children and responding to the needs of children seemed to be a prerequisite if we want the children to utilize these services and refrain from crime. Non-government organizations need the full support from the relevant state departments for resources to provide effective services
- Responding to the findings that institutional care can breed more delinquency, it is recommended that staff at detention facilities should focus strongly on preventing a “gang culture” to infiltrate their facilities. In this regard supervision and monitoring children
- Within the South African context of poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS all relevant local, provincial and national government departments should take hands in planning and implementing strategies to address the plight of the increasing numbers of children on the streets. This is not an issue that can be resolved by individuals or selected non-government organizations only.
- In view of the danger that South African citizens can become desensitized to the plight of street children advocacy and lobbying strategies should be promoted. In this regard, I believe, social workers have not done enough to form strong bonds with the media and to utilize relevant public structures for raising awareness and community involvement.

- It seems as if there is a dire need for applied research focusing on evaluating current intervention strategies and adapting and developing relevant programmes. In this regard the relevant program managers should continuously strive towards “consumer oriented” evaluation and listening to the voices of the street children themselves.
- The research findings were based on content analysis. Street children seemed to have developed their own “language” and way of communicating. A study utilising discourse analysis should be done to explore and describe the depth of meanings that they want to convey.

5 FINAL CONCLUSION

This was a mini research project of limited scope. I believe that it did contribute to the building of the knowledge level of Social work. It addressed a very actual topic and listened to the voices of street children about recidivism. The study answered the research question; how do participants in this research construct their experiences of getting to the streets, staying on the street and getting involved in repeated crimes?

With regards to the participants’ experiences of service providers, it can be said that the participants attend programs rendered by service providers, but when they choose to. The participants reported on the activities and structures of the programs attended, but ran away and stayed away for a long period before returning. Andrews et al (2007) agrees that street children tend to run away as a result of their strong drive towards autonomy.

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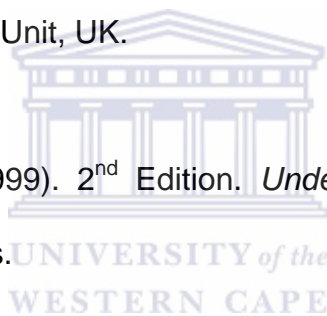
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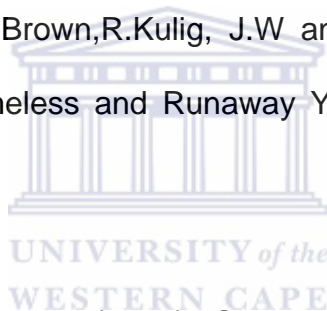
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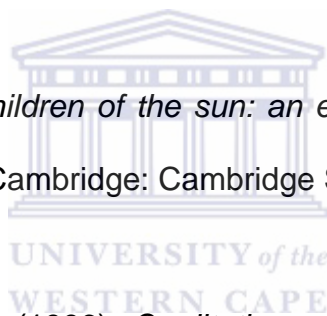
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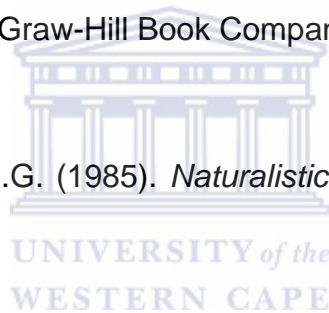
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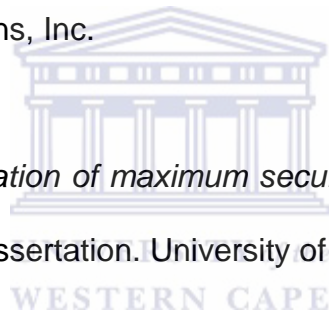
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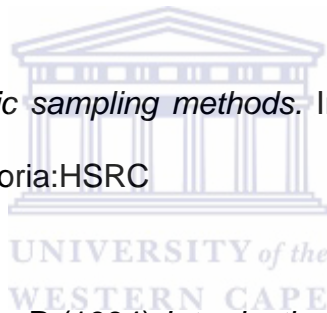
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