

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY INTO THE PSYCHOSOCIAL
WELL-BEING OF DURBAN'S HOMELESS YOUTH**

Frances Hills

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Social Science in Health Promotion in the School of Applied Human Sciences,
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**Supervisor
Professor Anna Meyer-Weitz**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in Health Promotion, School of Applied Human Sciences, Psychology, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science (Health Promotion) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signature:

Frances Hills, 208 525 618

Date:

DISCLAIMER

The Researcher(s) of this study specifically disclaims all responsibility for any liability, loss or risk, personal or otherwise, which is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of use of this report or any of the material in it.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

my husband
Sean Richard Carte

&

my parents
Peter Sabin Hills and Hazel Audrey Hills

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of a sample of six male and four female homeless youth living on the streets of Durban, South Africa. It focused on their concepts of 'home' and their ideas around homelessness, as well as on the psychosocial and contextual factors that support their resilience and coping. In this qualitative study, participants were interviewed utilising a semi-structured interview schedule. Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Two main themes emerged around the idea of 'home', namely family and belonging, and safety and protection. Homelessness was rejected as an undesirable way of life by all participants. Drug use and, particularly, violence were found to be endemic, with several allegations of violence and harassment made against the Durban Metro Police. Intrapersonal (physical and emotional strength, and religiosity/spirituality), Interpersonal (help from peers) and Community Resource factors (help from the public, sport and help from organisations for street children) emerged as factors contributing towards resilience in the sample.

Key words: street children; homeless youth; home; homelessness; resilience; coping; substance use; violence; religiosity.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

“All those who pass by see them, but they are invisible. They do not exist.” This is how researcher Elena Poniatowska describes homeless youth on the streets of Mexico City in the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) report on *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible* (p. 42). It is, however, not only Mexico City's homeless youth who are invisible... the same might be said of those in South Africa, in whose cities homeless children and youth have been estimated to number in the thousands (HSRC, 2008; Sewpaul, Osthus, Mhone, Sibilo & Mbhele, 2012). To a large extent, the general public hardly notices street children while going about their daily lives, unless, of course, one of these youths asks for money or gets in the way.

Recently, UNICEF (2006) estimated that there are up to 150 million children living on the world's streets. This figure, which is dramatically higher than UNICEF's 100 million estimate in 2006, is merely an estimate, and exact numbers are difficult to ascertain (UNICEF, 2006). Whatever the figures, they are likely to be on the increase (UNICEF, 2006), and homeless youth are found in both developed and developing countries (Le Roux & Smith, 1998a). Indeed, anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick (2004) claims that attention to street children has increased because of rising numbers in both the developed and the developing world. In contrast, the UK-based Consortium for Street Children (2009) stated that this estimated increase might merely be a reflection of growing awareness of the plight of homeless youth and questions the 100 million figure. Either way, there is no doubt that there are a large number of children living on the world's streets, providing a challenge to governments, policy-makers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) the world over, South Africa included.

Working with data obtained in the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) 2005 to 2008 large-scale study of the homeless in the Gauteng and Cape provinces of South Africa, Ward and Seager (2010) note the myriad difficulties inherent in counting homeless youth. In 2006, the World Bank estimated that there were around three million children and young adults living on the streets of Africa at the time. The latest available census information provided by Statistics South Africa

estimates the 2011 mid-year population of South Africa to have been 50.59 million (2011), with 40 percent of the population estimated to be under the age of 18, and the largest percentage of children living in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in 2009 (SA Presidency, 2009).

Richter (1991) found that children living on the streets of South Africa were between the ages of seven and 18, with most of them aged between 13 and 16. She says that this is typical of poorer, developing countries compared with richer developed countries. For example, the homeless youngsters that Zingaro, a Canadian activist, deals with are usually up to 24 or 25 years of age (Le Roux, 1996). Most of South Africa's homeless youth are black and male (HSRC, 2008), with the gender disparity attributed to the wide-spread practice of girl children being tasked with responsibilities such as child-minding and other household chores (Le Roux, 1996). Le Roux (1996) also claims that South African and other Third World homeless youth tend to remain on the streets for longer than their First World counterparts. In fact, the HSRC (2008) found that the majority of homeless people (adults and children) surveyed had been on the streets between two and five years, with some for far longer. According to Le Roux (1996), the longer a youngster has been on the streets, the more difficult it is to rehabilitate and reintegrate him or her into society.

Durban, situated on the Eastern coastline of South Africa, is a port city that is one of the most rapidly-growing cities in the world. In 2004/5, the Durban Branch of Street Wise, an organisation that works with street children in the city, claimed that over 10 000 children were living on the streets of South Africa, but made it clear that exact figures were unknown. A general impression was that the number reduced as a result of 'sweeps' conducted by the authorities in the run-up to the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Bourdillon (1994) reported similar round-ups of street children as quite common in Zimbabwe, and gave an example of one such sweep that took place just before the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 1991.

In terms of location, Umthombo (2012), another street children's organisation in Durban, says that while street children live all around the city, they can mostly be found near the International Convention Centre (ICC), which is in the centre of the city, and frequented by many international tourists and convention attendees. They can also be found in the Point district and along the Golden Mile, which are closer to the Indian Ocean. The organisation estimated that in 2012, around 200 children under the age of 18 called the streets of Durban home and reported that a range of

strategies are being put into place by various organisations and authorities to reduce this number even further. The literature review of this dissertation elaborates on the question of how many street children there are in Durban.

1.2 The 'Problem' With Street Children

'Street children' – the term conjures up images of poverty, neglect and abuse; youngsters living on the streets, undernourished, ill-treated, under-educated and often addicted. According to Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003), the recognition of a street children 'problem' began by relying on Latin American models, but this recognition has become far broader since then. This section briefly deals with the realities of life for homeless youth and makes a case for increasing attention from various stakeholders on this group of young people.

Kok, Cross and Roux (2010), working with the HSRC's data mentioned above, looked into the health and well-being of people living on the streets of South Africa. The study revealed some characteristics of people living on the streets: most of the homeless have low levels of education; they under-use available health services; and are liable to experience low-grade and discriminatory treatment by health service professionals. Compared with the national population average, the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) is far higher in the homeless population, although this portion of the study used an all-male sample. If left untreated, TB is potentially fatal (WHO, n.d.). The homeless children who participated in the HSRC study reported significant levels (45 percent) of depression, and 37 percent of them reported current abuse of both legal and illegal substances, such as marijuana, solvents and other drugs. What the HSRC termed 'transactional sex' was common among homeless females, a finding that was confirmed by Osthus and Sewpaul (2014) in their qualitative study on sexuality, relationships and identity among Durban street youth.

Continuing with the HSRC's findings, over a quarter of the children (under 18 years of age) reported having had sexual intercourse within the previous three months, with few reporting condom use, and over five percent of respondents reported having contracted a sexually transmitted infection (STI) within the last year. The HSRC also found that this sub-section of the population is particularly prone to injury and assault, including beatings, stabbings and being hit by vehicles.

Seager and Tamasane (2010), working from the HSRC's data, reported that homelessness has a significant impact on health, such as those resulting from exposure to the elements, like skin diseases, hypothermia and respiratory infections. In addition, they reported both direct and indirect consequences of substance abuse as common in this group. These include liver disease caused by alcohol abuse (direct consequence), and risky sexual behaviour such as prostitution and multiple partners (indirect consequences). Younger boys, they found, are vulnerable to robbery, violence and sexual assault carried out by older street boys, and gang violence resulting in injury is not uncommon. Wounds from stabbings and gun shots were reported as common by outreach workers and participants alike. The street children surveyed in this study reported being harassed and assaulted by members of both the Metro Police and the South African Police Services (SAPS), which, as the reader will later see, corresponds with findings of the current study. Both key informants and homeless youth interviewed during the course of the HSRC study confirmed that the homeless, including the youth, are prone to premature death.

In a review of the literature on homeless youth, Le Roux and Smith (1998a) found that they are usually malnourished, and are subject to fears about events and people such as the police and being arrested, suffering harm and becoming sick. They often feel unloved and unwanted, and frequently suffer loneliness. They are distrustful of adults and authority, and frequently suffer from poor self-esteem.

The current study focuses on the street child as defined by the Children's Act of 2005: the child who

“... because of abuse, neglect, poverty, community upheaval or any other reason, has left his or her home, family or community and lives, begs or works on the streets; or because of inadequate care, begs or works on the streets but returns home at night.”

Street children can also be said to form part of the group dubbed the “absolute homeless”, those who “... sleep in the open, one or more nights per week, and those making use of shelters specifically for the homeless,” (Seager & Tamasane, 2010, p. 64).

As can be seen from the above, being homeless is risky and unpleasant, and programmes to assist such persons are clearly needed. Several organisations to assist the homeless, both adults and children, operate around the country. The need is, however, greater than resources allow, and more

needs to be done to help the homeless people of South Africa. The following section explains the rationale for the current study.

1.3 Rationale for the Current Study

1.3.1 Previous research.

The HSRC's large-scale study into homelessness in South Africa referred to above took place from 2005 to 2008, and is the largest study into the realities of homeless people's lives that has been carried out in recent times in the country. The study yielded important data for those concerned with the welfare of homeless people in South Africa, and serves as a critical resource for subsequent research such as the current study. It is important to note, however, that the Council's study covered only the northern areas of South Africa, as well as Cape Town in the south. It excluded the province of KwaZulu-Natal, of which Durban is the largest city.

Other notable research has been conducted into street and township youth in South Africa by Theron and colleagues (Theron, Cameron, Didkowsky, Lau, Liebenberg & Ungar, 2011), who discovered that while homelessness as a child is dangerous, there existed strong evidence of resilience-promoting protective factors among the youth they interviewed (Theron *et al.*, 2011). Theron and colleagues' studies have, so far, not included Durban homeless youth.

Some research into Durban's homeless youth has, however, been conducted. Triangulated research incorporating both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms was conducted by Sewpaul *et al.* (2012), who engaged with a group of Durban street children over a period of two years. This research, in which the participants decided the direction of the research and what they wanted to do with the results of the study, looked at issues such as age, gender and prevalence of street children in Durban, as well as reasons for leaving home and the challenges participants faced as a result of life on the streets, such as violence, difficulties with shelter and survival on the streets. In the conclusion to their research paper, they reported that they had gained insight into the survival strategies and experiences of children youths who live on the streets of Durban, and that their research led to a film in which their street youth participants performed. This film went on to be shown at township schools in an effort to discourage other young people to remain with their families and not go to the streets.

Many 'gaps' in the literature around Durban street children, remain, however. No study on how street children in Durban cope with the challenges they face has been conducted, and the literature has not covered these young people's views of home and homelessness. This is where the current study proves informative, and fills in another part of the jigsaw puzzle of Durban street children's lives. After all, the more knowledge we gain into the lives and needs of Durban's homeless children, the more effectively relevant authorities and non-governmental organisations can customise interventions and policies affecting this highly-disadvantage section of the population.

As Seager and Tamasane (2010) point out, most of the literature on the homeless is based on research carried out in developed countries, particularly the United States and Canada. They clearly point to a 'gap' in the literature in terms of street children in developing countries. They also note that most of the research emanating from developing countries at the time they recorded their findings had based their findings on small samples. Although the current study also utilises a small sample, the broader Accra/Durban study (see below) for which this study forms a small, qualitative starting point, will utilise both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and far larger samples.

Despite the fact that there are several organisations working with street children in Durban, little academic research appears to have been conducted pertaining to homeless youth and the challenges they face on a daily basis as reiterated by Kok *et al.* (2010). It is likely that with deeper insight into the lives of homeless youth, the relevance of local policies can be further developed and more specifically targeted work can be carried out to possibly help to reintegrate them into mainstream society.

1.3.2 The law.

It is also important to note that research with homeless children, with the intention of informing assistance programmes, is directly in line with the law. As the HSRC's (2008) report points out, Article 20.1 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states:

“A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment ...
Shall be entitled to special protection and assistance by the State.”

Africa's Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child echoes the United Nations' contention (HSRC, 2008). With the global incidence of homeless youth appearing to be on the rise, there is a

growing need to develop improved programmes of assistance. To this end, this disadvantaged group deserves proper scientific research into their lives and well-being. Only with research that yields deeper insight and understanding into the phenomenon of street children will the authorities, relevant NGOs and faith-based organisations be able to inform interventions to assist homeless youth.

1.3.3 The qualitative nature of the study.

The qualitative nature of the current study is important. In contrast to the quantitative approach, studies of a qualitative nature are able to study phenomena in “... depth, openness, and detail ...” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, pp. 47). As Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 91) state when elaborating on the qualitative method:

“... human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood. Because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptions are involved, the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction and observation in the natural setting.”

This would, of course, be impossible with quantitative research. Taking a qualitative approach also allows more freedom for research participants to answer open-ended questions (guides) and probes in a way that comes naturally to them, rather than being forced into choosing an option that might not 'fit' their circumstances as with the questionnaires that are often used to collect data for quantitative studies.

1.3.4 Street children: concepts of home/homelessness and resilience.

The current study aims to address some areas where we have little or no knowledge. For example, we have not discovered Durban street children's concepts of home and homelessness, and we know little about what psychosocial and contextual factors contribute to their resilience. On the subject of resilience, South African researchers Malindi and Theron (2010) are of the opinion that street youth should be viewed as “resilient young people” who possess “streetwise savvy, ingenuity, and flexibility” (pp. 324), while their paper of the same year claims that street youth are “asset-rich within themselves” (Theron and Malindi, 2010, pp. 732). Some of the resilience-promoting protective resources explored in these studies include religion (Malindi & Theron, 2010) and cultural heritage/pride (Theron & Malindi, 2010), both of which were found to be important factors

contributing to street youngsters' resilience, and which factors are both explored in the current study.

Indeed, there is a great deal more that needs to be discovered about Durban's homeless youth, but that is beyond the scope of the present study. The current study will, however, provide at least some insight into Durban's street children and their lives.

1.3.5 Broader study

It is also important to note that this study will form a qualitative springboard for a broader, more ambitious quantitative study to examine various similarities and differences between street children in Durban and in Accra, Ghana. This broader study will focus mainly on the mental health of street children in the two cities, especially the role of mental health in the engagement in risky behaviours. The study will also look at the role of protective factors that ameliorate the impact of adverse conditions for street youth in South Africa and Ghana, which is where the important issue of resilience emerges. For the broader study, which will contribute to closing various gaps in the literature around street children in Africa, the insight gained from qualitative findings are critical for the refinement of the quantitative phase of the study.

1.4 Scope and Aim of the Study

Due to the fact that the current study has been undertaken to fulfil a short dissertation, its scope is understandably limited. Given space and time limitations, the objectives of this study were confined to the following areas: to discovering how homeless youths conceptualise 'home' and homelessness; and to exploring what psychosocial and contextual protective factors (intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental) shape resilience among the youth. To this end, the specific critical questions to be answered are as follows:

- How do homeless youth conceptualise 'home' and homelessness?; and
- Which psychosocial and contextual protective factors shape the resilience of homeless youth, i.e. intrapersonal factors (eg religion, culture), interpersonal factors (eg peer support, significant others) and environmental factors (eg shelters).

1.5 Ethical Considerations

Once clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) School of Psychology's Higher Degrees Committee, from the University's Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences Higher Degrees Committee, and from UKZN's Ethics Committee had been obtained, permission from a Centre that assists homeless youth in Durban was sought and granted.

1.6 Outline of the Dissertation

In Chapter one of the dissertation, a brief outline of the incidence of homeless youth, both globally and in South Africa, was presented, with special emphasis on its largest East Coast city, Durban. Next, the 'problem' surrounding street children was outlined, with reference to the literature. Then, the rationale for conducting the current study was explained, followed by an outline of the scope and aims of the research. Brief reference was then made to the ethical considerations of the study. Lastly, an outline of the dissertation is provided below.

Chapter two consists of a thorough review of the literature on street youth. Chapter three discusses the study's research methodology. Chapter four presents the study's findings, and discusses these findings. The final chapter, Chapter five, presents the conclusions, challenges and recommendations emanating from the study. The next chapter consists of a review of the literature on street youth.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, the issue of homeless youth is of global concern, and a growing body of literature illustrates this. In this chapter, an overview of the literature on street children will be given. Firstly, attention will be given to homeless youth globally, in South Africa and then in Durban, then some of the reasons why homeless youth live on the streets will be explored. This will be followed by a discussion of some common characteristics and health-related issues with respect to street children, and then a look at the life of street youth will be taken. Next, attitudes towards homeless youth will be explored, and then consideration will be given to just how at risk street youth really are. Then, shifting perspectives on homeless youth as well as issues of 'home' and homelessness will be considered, whereafter a look into violence and street youth, including assault, rape and death, and police abuse and harassment of street youth, will be taken. Thereafter, the concept of coping strategies will be considered. Lastly, coping and resilience will be explored, followed by a discussion of what factors operate in respect of resilience among street youth.

At this point it is worth noting that anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick (2004) criticises the term 'street children' saying that it is an unhelpful categorisation that leads to an extremely limited understanding of the lives of these young people. In fact, she claims the term has a highly stigmatising effect on these children, and has also led to manipulation of welfare and funding agencies' socio-political agendas. For the purposes of this dissertation, the terms 'street children', 'street youth' and 'homeless youth' will be used interchangeably and in awareness of Panter-Brick's concerns and criticisms. Next, homeless youth globally, in South Africa, and in particular, in Durban, will be considered.

2.2 Homeless youth: globally and in South Africa

Globally, millions of children live on the streets, deprived in many ways, but notably with little or no access to health care or education, and often having been victims of violence before taking to the streets (Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch & Scanlon, 1998). According to Panter-Brick (2004), numbers of homeless youth are on the rise in both the developed and the developing world. In the developing nation of South Africa, the population is a majority young one, with an estimated 40 percent under

the age of 18, and the highest proportion of youth living in South Africa's Eastern-most province, KwaZulu-Natal (The South African Presidency, 2009). Although it is difficult to estimate the number of youths on the streets of South Africa, research to date shows that South African homeless youth tend to be mostly young (usually between 13 and 16) (Kok *et al.*, 2010; Richter, 1991), black and male (Kok *et al.*, 2010). After a review of the literature, Baker, Panter-Brick and Todd (1997) confirm that most homeless people (children included) in developing countries such as South Africa, India, Ethiopia, Sudan, Brazil, Honduras and Colombia are male. In fact, a UNICEF study on homeless children in neighbouring Zimbabwe found that only five percent of their sample was female (Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy, 1991). Earlier, Richter (1988) estimated that, although street girls were “barely visible” (p. 11), they comprised around 10 percent of the street child population. In Zimbabwe, Muchini and Nyandiya-Bundy (1991) found that girls were more likely to remain at home because they are perceived as more useful at performing household chores than boys, and are usually taken in by relatives when there are problems with the parents. In another Zimbabwean paper outlining research conducted by Rurevo and Bourdillon (2003), the authors claim that in some (unspecified) cultures, girls are socialised to stay at home to ensure that their 'purity' is preserved and, as a result, to make them more desirable as women and mothers.

From 2005 to 2008, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) carried out large-scale research on the homeless in South Africa. Although they did not sample homeless people living in KwaZulu-Natal, they estimated there were around 3 200 under-eighteens living on the streets of Gauteng, the smallest province in South Africa. Now, attention to Durban, the current study's research site, shall be given.

2.3 Street children in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Durban is KwaZulu-Natal's largest Eastern coastal city. It is a rapidly expanding city, which is frequented by thousands of visitors every year for both business and leisure. Estimating the number of street children on Durban's streets is extremely difficult due, in part, to this population's high mobility (Sewpaul *et al.*, 2012). In the following section, the reasons for children ending up on the streets will be discussed.

2.4 Reasons for living on the streets

“When you become aware of the harshness and deprivation of street life, you begin to realise just how personally devastating a child's life must have become for him to have sought refuge in so inhospitable a place as the streets ...,” Swart (1987, p. 6).

Millions of children around the world suffer abuse, poverty and neglect, and yet only a small percentage choose to leave their homes and head for the streets (Le Roux & Smith, 1998c; Richter, 1988). An obvious question to ask is why homeless youth appear to 'choose' life on city streets over home? The answer to this question is complex and multi-factorial, and factors exist at both individual and societal level (Rurevo & Bourdillon, 2003).

Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) importantly point out that before the 1980s, most of the available literature tended to focus on individual-level reasons for living on the streets. For example, depression, an 'anti-social character', 'personality pathology', involvement with sexual deviance, drugs and alcohol, looking for excitement and fun, not wanting to follow rules, and wanting independence. They go on to state that nowadays, family- and society-level factors such as poverty, in particular, as well as abuse, HIV/AIDS and illiteracy are acknowledged as playing major roles. In fact, many of the studies referred to elsewhere in this section cite family- and society-level factors.

Interestingly, Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) claim that reasons for living on the streets should be divided, according to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) schema, into immediate, underlying and structural. An immediate reason might, they say, be a sudden drop in family income or the death of a parent, or an episode of domestic violence. Underlying causes, they claim, include chronic poverty, cultural expectations (such as a boy being expected to go and work on the streets as soon as he can), a desire for consumer goods or the lure of the city lights. Structural factors include social exclusion, regional inequalities, development shocks and structural adjustment. In fact, Richter (1988) states that socio-structural factors cause what she calls “distortions” (pp. 13) in family and community life, all linked to urbanisation and poverty.

In a review of the literature, Le Roux (1996) found that worldwide, and in spite of cultural differences, the backgrounds and reasons for youth living on the streets were remarkably similar (see also Swart, 1987). For instance, a study carried out by Kerfoot, Koshyl, Roganov,

Mikhailichenko, Gorbova and Pottage (2007) in Kyiv in the Ukraine, Eastern Europe found the following reasons for youths living on the streets: overcrowding, rejection by family, violence from other family members, parental illness, poverty, parental alcoholism and violence, and rejection of parents' lifestyle and behaviour. Similar findings have been shown in studies in other parts of the world, including South Africa (HSRC, 2008; Le Roux & Smith, 1998a; Sewpaul *et al.*, 2012;).

Le Roux (1996) also conducted research into street children in Pretoria, South Africa, revealing reasons for leaving for the streets such as parental alcoholism, family violence, family desertion and absenteeism, financial problems and stress. Interestingly, Richter's (1988) work with Johannesburg and Cape Town street children revealed that only eight percent of participants were orphans.

In a later review of the literature, Le Roux and colleague Smith (1998a) found a wide variety of reasons for leaving home, including urbanisation, rapid industrialisation, inner-city decay and widespread unemployment, as well as drought and famine, depending on whether or not the area was urban or rural. They discovered community- and family-based reasons such as the breakdown of traditional family values and structures, family disruption, as well as family shrinkage from extended to nuclear, which often resulted in poor, mother-headed, single-parent households. As a result, children in these situations are vulnerable, they maintain, made even worse by lack of community and government support. These researchers also cite school-related reasons such as the humiliation, failure and boredom some children experience at school. Others, they said, wanted to be 'part of the action' on the streets.

Also in South Africa, Ward and Seager's (2010) paper based on the HSRC's homelessness research describes both 'push' and 'pull' factors for leaving home (see also Fall, 1986, as cited in Le Roux, 1996). Most of these youth leave home to escape difficult situations. Only 9.8 percent surveyed had left for pull reasons such as looking for jobs or money, while the majority (91.2 percent) described push factors such as abuse, poor family relationships, alcohol abuse, loss of caregivers (10 percent from HIV/AIDS), poverty, dropping out of school, fleeing war or poor economic conditions in country of origin, peer pressure and fear of retribution. In a much earlier study, Le Roux (1996) made similar findings. He showed that although some of these youngsters leave their areas of origin in search of excitement, freedom, adventure and self-fulfilment, most leave for socio-economic and other factors within the family or immediate environment. An interesting study of Nepalese street

children found that those homeless children who had step-parents left home more for push factors, whereas those with biological parents present, were more likely to leave for pull reasons (Baker, Panter-Brick & Todd, 1997). Indeed, Evans's (2004) study with Tanzanian street children found that step-mothers, who were said to be particularly prone to abusing, neglecting or harassing their step children, were frequently cited as the reason for children landing up on the streets. Likewise, abandonment and abuse by step-parents were cited by Young (2003) among street children in Kampala, Uganda. Further afield, Beazley's (2003) Indonesian study found that homeless children often came from families with step-parents, and step-siblings, and they spoke of victimisation and unequal treatment at home leaving them feeling unwanted and unloved. South African research by Swart (1988) also found that step-parents were particularly negative towards children who were not their own, and that the children's lives sometimes become intolerable as a result. Baker *et al.* (1997) found a higher ratio of pull reasons, at 23 percent, than the HSRC's (Ward & Seager, 2010), study did.

Ward and Seager (2010) also found that most of the homeless children surveyed by the HSRC were functionally illiterate, citing extreme punishment at school, failure and lack of funds for school fees or uniforms as reasons for this phenomenon. Rew, Taylor-Seehafter, Thomas and Yockey (2001), whose work was carried out in the United States, also discovered education-related reasons for leaving home such as change of schools, failing a grade, problems with teachers and abuse at school.

Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) discovered that poverty, unemployment, death of a parent, family conflict, alcoholism, and physical and sexual abuse, often in combination, were the major factors behind migration to the streets, which they found to be “no easy process” (pp. 251). In reference to the Durban area in particular, they emphasise the social impact of HIV/AIDS in a region that has been hard hit by the pandemic. They also place blame on the extreme inequalities that exist in South African society, where a few are ultra-rich, but the vast majority are poor, the reason for which, they say, is the country's neoliberal economic policies.

When considering Durban street children's reasons for leaving for the streets, two Durban-based street children's organisations, Street Wise (2004/5) and Umthombo (2012), cite factors such as rapid urbanisation, migrant labour, substance abuse and alcoholism, lack of community resources

such as schooling, neglect, community violence and the breakdown of family life and cultural values, as well as traumatic events that trigger movement to the street, such as sexual abuse, threats, beatings, or parental death or illness.

Beazley (2003) refers to poverty as a frequently cited reason for leaving for the streets, but claims that there is usually some additional family problem at play such as violence, neglect or physical abuse, parental depression or alcoholism, or the child not doing well at school.

Evidently, the reasons for youngsters moving to the streets are many, varied and intertwined. While reasons are similar around the world, they are clearly affected by local conditions. As Beazley (2003) states, street children leave home as a solution to a personal predicament, be it an impoverished, abusive or boring home. This is evidence of agency, for taking responsibility for their own actions, and of exerting some control over their lives, she continues. In the next section, some of the characteristics shared by many homeless youth, as well as their health, will be explored.

2.5 Characteristics and health of homeless youth

Although researchers of street children in several countries (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003; Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003) claim that painting a picture of a 'typical' street child is impossible, a review of the literature by Le Roux and Smith (1998a) discovered a number of characteristics common to many children living on the streets around the world, a contention supported by Aptekar and Heinonen (2003). These youngsters, Le Roux and Smith (1998a) say, seem younger than their actual age because of malnutrition, but at the same time appear more mature than their age in other ways. They said that street children are mostly male (see also Sewpaul *et al.*, 2012), but not exclusively, with females quite common in Asian countries. Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) report that research conducted in other African countries, *viz.* Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, Ethiopia and Sudan, confirm this preponderance of male youth on the streets. Indeed, Young (2003) reports that most children on the streets of Kampala, Uganda are male. In Latin America, surveys found that just 10 to 15 percent of street children were female (Scanlon *et al.*, 1998), and Beazley (2003) and Young (2003) state that girls are not as visible or as prolific as street boys in Indonesia and Kampala, Uganda, respectively. Aptekar and Heinonen (2003) found that girls in Kenya, Colombia and Ethiopia begin their street life later than boys.

Le Roux and Smith (1998a) cite other characteristics common among homeless youth such as the fact that these youngsters usually fear harm, incapacitation, arrest, police intimidation and becoming ill. They are also concerned about being unloved and lonely, they say. In the same article, the authors also report that homeless children yearn for respect and to 'be' someone. Most are not drop-outs, but are victims of difficult circumstances and come from lower socio-economic strata. They very often come from female-headed households and have no positive father figure in their lives. They usually do not trust adults, and dislike authority or control being exerted over them. Most, they say, would like to return to school, and turn to each other for companionship, thereby forming a replacement family group that offers solidarity, friendship, protection and support. They show strong loyalty towards each other, often utilising their own identity-providing jargon. In order to protect themselves from danger, homeless youth have been reported to usually join groups of other such youngsters, in exchange for making some sort of contribution to the group's survival such as begging, prostitution or other crimes (Umthombo, 2012). While they might band together, Le Roux and Smith (1998a) claim that these youngsters place a high premium on personal freedom. Indeed, Beazley (2003) refers to the importance of displaying one's autonomy among street children, and to the value they place on freedom and independence.

Le Roux and Smith (1998a) found that the longer youth remain on the streets, the more likely they will become engaged in criminal activities and show signs of emotional or cognitive dysfunction. They also claim that HIV/AIDS is spreading among street children at an alarming rate.

In research carried out with Johannesburg street children, Richter and Van der Walt (2003) claim that street children might be expected to show higher levels of psychopathology than the rest of the population for a variety of reasons. Their study found that most of their research participants had adjustment problems, particularly in the interpersonal realm, and some were found to be more seriously emotionally disturbed. They point out, however, that nearly a third of the children were rated as adequate to good in terms of psychological adjustment.

Panter-Brick (2004) cites research carried out by Aptekar (1991) showing that most of the street children they studied in Latin America were "clearly without pathology" (p. 89) and displayed better mental health than other poor children in different circumstances. Evidently, there is disagreement as to the mental health of street children and youth.

In terms of physical health, street youth suffer the effects of drug use, malnutrition (Le Roux & Smith, 1998a), trauma and certain infections (Scanlon *et al.*, 1998). The HSRC's homelessness study (Seager and Tamasane, 2010), showed that drug use is common among South African street children and youth, who show both direct and indirect symptoms of substance use, for example, liver disease (direct consequence) and risky sexual behaviour resulting in STIs, including HIV (indirect consequence). Indeed, Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) point to visio-spatial disturbances (making them more vulnerable to being hit by cars), hallucinations, poor attention span and concentration, memory impairment, and problems with cognitive and educational development. I now take a look at what the literature says about the lives of homeless youth.

2.6 The life of street youth

“Street life is dangerous: it hurts and it kills”! This is the conclusion that Sewpaul *et al.* (2012, pp. 251) and their street child research participants came to over a two year period. Life on the street is certainly dangerous, exposing street youth to high levels of violence such as rape, stabbings, beatings and being hit by cars (Umthombo, 2012). Durban residents will be familiar with the image of a youngster with a plastic drink bottle raised to his nose. Such children are sniffing glue in order to get 'high', a cheap way of forgetting their troubles and traumas (Umthombo, 2012).

Durban's Street-Wise (2004/5), an organisation caring for homeless youth in Durban, makes the point that children who live on the streets are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by the public, and to harassment by the police. This, they say, leads to further alienation of these children, fostering their distrust of adults. As they say:

“... they are often regarded as part of the grime that needs to be swept off the streets and their needs and vulnerabilities as children [are] forgotten.” (www.street-wise.co.za/streets.htm)

As Le Roux and Smith (1998a) in their literature review state, street children lack education, care, guidance and, for the most part, affection. They are abused by most, harassed and arrested by the police, treated with contempt, and even maltreated by older or other street children.

Ward and Seager (2010) found that street children in Gauteng's basic needs such as clothes and food were donated by the Salvation Army, ordinary people and church groups. In regard to accommodation, they state, these children occupy taxi ranks, unoccupied buildings, parks, streets and so forth. The majority of these youngsters were found to rely on begging to earn money, while others worked as self-employed car guards (26.6 percent), car washers and recyclers. The research did not delve into illegal means of cash generation. Girls and boys, say Ward and Seager (2010), differ in their approach to earning money, with girls more likely to engage in gambling, but often relying on boyfriends, who are often street children themselves, for material goods.

In her research with Johannesburg street children Swart (1987) heard stories and fears of physical maltreatment, but found that it is the fear of being alone and unloved that is most common among street children. Indeed, to sum up, Swart-Kruger & Donald (1994) state that street life involves many problems that need to be coped with, such as basic survival needs as well as emotional needs for support, companionship and protection. Next, attitudes towards street children will be considered.

2.7 Attitudes towards homeless youth

Seen as worthless by many people, street children are sometimes victim to punitive and violent treatment, as well as vindictive measures to remove them (Sanclon *et al.*, 1998). Indeed, these researchers found that in Latin America, for example, so-called 'death squads' had been set up to kill street children. This, they say, is an extreme manifestation of the attitudes of business, the judiciary, the police and the media towards street children. Society at large, they say, believes that street children “... represent a moral threat to a civilised society – a threat that must be exorcised” (pp. 1598).

In reference to her study of street children in Indonesia's big cities, Beazley (2003) says that society views street children as violators of social norms, and that their presence offends state-level discourses on family values, as well as dominant ideas about public order. Such a contravention, she continues, justifies 'clean-up' operations, arrests, imprisonment and, even extermination. She goes on to say that in Indonesia, street children are either constructed as deviant criminals, or portrayed as passive victims of society's brutality.

In South Africa, the issue of street children draws both positive and negative responses from both the public and the media, and they are marginalised and often victimised by most sections of society (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). Indeed, children of the street are seen as “... both criminal and morally depraved ...” (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994, pp. 118) and are rejected and socially marginalised by almost all parts of the broader community (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994). Further evidence of the community's attitudes towards street children was found by Swart (1988) in her Hillbrow, Johannesburg study. She found that attitudes of the public were generally negative, including pity, anger and frustration, and that residents and traders sometimes resorted to chasing the children by means of teargas, 'sjamboks' (leather whips), beatings and other means.

In reference to the literature on street children, Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) refer to an important “paradigm shift” (pp. 81) in the academic discourse on street children, which has concluded that individuals (and, therefore, also street children) are “active agents in the construction of social reality,” (pp. 81). This new construction, they claim, manifested in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which established children as being in possession of rights and as active agents. In the next section, the issue of how at risk street youth really are is discussed.

2.8 Just how at risk are street children?

Anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick (2004) claims that it is poverty, and not homelessness, *per se*, that poses the greatest risk to children's health. She also claims that a discourse centring around risk runs the risk of stereotyping children as particularly vulnerable and further leading to more discrimination and exclusion. The risk discourse, she claims, can, however, be helpful if it centres around ways of dealing with adverse circumstances.

Of course, children living on the streets do face various risks, a fact that even Panter-Brick (2004; 2002) acknowledges, although she is at pains to point out that they are not necessarily the *most* at risk of the world's children. Indeed, she goes on to say that studies undertaken in the United States, Ethiopia, Nepal, Indonesia and Honduras found that street children cannot easily, from a health point of view, be demarcated from other poor children. In fact, Scanlon *et al.* (1998) contend that in Latin America, street children are no worse off than other children from similar backgrounds. These authors do, however, ascribe street youth to an 'at risk' category which includes engagement in

survival sex, drug use and vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and Panter-Brick (2002) includes death from violent trauma, suicide, accidents and murder.

Earlier, Richter's (1988) research found that the longer these children are on the streets, the worse their chances of “educational rehabilitation” (pp. 13). She found that they not only lost basic educational skills from prior to street life, but also began acquiring handicaps such as cognitive and perceptual dysfunction as a result of glue-sniffing, injuries and accidents to do with glue intoxication, violence and exploitation. She also says that it is possible that the longer a child is on the street, the more likely s/he is to become involved in criminal activities. Although, she claims, only about 20 percent of street children are involved in anti-social activities, this minority is highly visible, antagonising the public. Research by Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) found that there was ample evidence that street children face developmental risks and vulnerabilities in various developmental areas, including emotional, social, cognitive and educational.

Of course, some youngsters on the street face the very real problem of where their next meal is coming from, and one is unlikely to come across a homeless child who is overweight. Lack of adequate shelter, clothing, education and recreational facilities are daily issues faced by these youngsters, and youth on the street face victimisation by peers and stigmatisation by the general public (Kidd & Shahar, 2008). Le Roux and Smith (1998a), commenting on the global plight of street children, report that in some countries these youngsters are imprisoned or even killed and that they represent a serious worldwide challenge. Perspectives of homeless youth have, however, been changing, as is shown in the following section.

2.9 Shifting perspectives of homeless youth

According to Panter-Brick (2004), there has been a change in emphasis in recent years from viewing children who live on the streets merely as primarily homeless and poor, to the children themselves, to the diversity of their experiences and to their own views on adversity. She also challenges our views of children on the street in light of modern, Western notions of childhood as carefree and safe. The youths in question, she maintains, challenge us in their “visible marginality” (pp. 85), and they inevitably attract an inordinate amount of attention in contrast with the 'ordinary' poor child living in slums and shack towns. As we will later see, the concept of resilience and protective factors in relation to homeless children are receiving growing attention from researchers,

emphasising the ability that many of these youngsters appear to have: an ability to deal with their difficult lives. In the following section, the concepts of 'home' and homelessness are explored.

2.10 'Home' and homelessness

As far back as 1960, Rovit (1960) stated the following:

“The concept of home, as I see it, may be regarded as one of the major structuring forces of the human psyche, basic not only to the individual's search for and sense of identity, but fundamental, as well, to the group's collective attempt to achieve a cohesive image of itself,” (pp. 521).

Over the course of several years' research with street children in Brazil, Ursin (2011) was surprised to find study participants referring to the streets on which they lived as 'home'. Similarly, in Kampala, Uganda, Young (2003) found that street children deemed the streets to be their home, and viewed their friends as their family

According to Hill (1991), the Industrial Revolution (in the West) saw a major shift in society's conception of home, for which there are multiple meanings (Somerville, 1992; Ursin, 2011). In fact, Somerville (1992) claims that in the early 1990s a battle raged as to the meaning of home. He also refers to “... the multi-dimensional complexity of meanings of home and homelessness ... ” (pp. 530), which, he says, are ideological constructs of both logic and emotion. He also makes a distinction between “home as ideal” and “home as experienced in actuality” (pp. 530).

Referring to modern notions of home, Finch and Hayes (1994) state that the literature reveals a number of distinctive features. For example, the home is “ ... the embodiment of the modern domestic ideal,” (pp. 417), “ ... suitable to be occupied by 'a family',” (pp. 418), and a place of comfort, privacy and security. There is, they claim, an interplay between the physical, material significance of the home, and the more symbolic sense.

Narratives of home among Brazilian street children revealed that safety is an important issue when it comes to home, as some youngsters are more likely to experience violence and threats to their safety in their family homes than on the street (Ursin, 2011). Ursin (2011) also found that belonging

was an important feature of feeling at home, and that this belonging appeared to embrace social networks, being 'someone' to somebody and knowing a particular place and how to get there. As one participant said "I know every hole in the ground, therefore I felt at home" (Ursin, 2011, pp. 230). Ursin (2011) asserts that we should refrain from thinking that the longer a youngster is away from his/her family home, the more homeless he/she becomes, and that we should realise that it can be the very opposite: the young person often does not feel at home in his/her family home, and finds a home on new home territory, a place where he/she finds safety, belonging and autonomy. In other words " ... the homeless may live in houses and the 'homed' live on the streets," (2011, pp. 232).

According to Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003), children actively construct their worlds, and street children's worlds cannot simply be divided into opposing notions of 'home' and 'street', but rather into several domains which include both public and private spaces (Lucchini, 1996 [French language] in Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003). Indeed, Beazley (2003) refers to the " ... appropriation of urban niches ...[that] have become territories in which identities are constructed, and where alternative communities are formed," (pp. 105).

When it comes to definitions of homelessness, Somerville (1992), says that many definitions are inadequate because they take only two dimensions of the phenomenon into account, namely lack of control and privacy, and poor material conditions, excluding perhaps the most important aspect, that of emotions. "An issue of deep human misery is thereby reduced to a problem which is merely technical ... and legal," (pp. 530). He found that in terms of homelessness, people distinguish between the absence of 'real home' (in other words, failing to experience home in the 'ideal' sense) and the lack of abode.

Although he found that street children sometimes feel at home on the streets, Ursin (2011) emphasises that this does not negate the very real danger and destructive conditions these youngsters encounter, nor does it absolve politicians of their responsibilities towards these young people. As he asserts, more attention needs to be paid towards the conditions to be found in the homes of origin of these children who choose to live on the streets.

Although research on street children is on the increase, little attention has been paid to children's own experiences and perspectives of homelessness (Ursin, 2011). To this end, the current study

explores a group of street children's conceptions of 'home' and homelessness. The next section of this chapter explores the important issue of violence and homeless youth.

2.11 Violence and street youth

2.11.1 Introduction

Violence appears to be part and parcel of the lives of homeless youth. According to a Durban-based street children's organisation (Umthombo, 2012), the streets are full of violence in which street children often get caught up. Stabbings, beatings, rape and getting hit by cars are common, sometimes resulting in death (Umthombo, 2012), as we shall see in the following sections, namely assault, rape and death, and police abuse and harassment.

2.11.2 Assault, rape and death

The HSRC's research into homelessness (Seager & Tamasane, 2010) found that homeless people are extremely susceptible to assaults, including sexual assault, and injuries. Their male youth respondents mentioned beatings and robberies carried out by older street boys, who themselves talked about drug- and alcohol-related violence, abuse from the public, and gang fights. Outreach workers they spoke to also claimed that the younger boys are sexually assaulted by the older street boys, but participants in the study did not confirm this, possibly, say Seager and Tamasane (2010), due to embarrassment. This research showed that girls were usually protected by their boyfriends from assault, something that was confirmed in Osthus and Sewpaul's (2014) Durban research. The HSRC's (Seager & Tamasane, 2010) research found, however, that fights between street girls over boyfriends were commonplace, often resulting in serious injuries. Stabbings and gun-shot injuries were found to be common, due to both fights between homeless youth, and to assaults on these youngsters by members of the public who accuse them of carrying out criminal acts. In fact, they found that 22 percent of the street children interviewed reported being injured or assaulted in the previous six months, with about half the injuries the result of being beaten up or stabbed. Sometimes the victims of these assaults die, and as the researchers point out, the statistics could be substantially higher due to the fact that the only people interviewed were the ones who had survived.

Sewpaul *et al.*'s (2012) Durban research found a prevalence of violence among street children themselves. Nearly half of the males and over 60 percent of the females claimed to witness violence

“several times a day” (pp. 248). They claim that violence is a way of asserting control over others such as males over females, and older boys over younger ones. Gang violence is common, they said, with the city divided into different territories controlled by different gangs. It is when people from different territories meet that there is a risk of severe violence. They found, however, that most violence took place within groups of friends or between members of different sub-groups from the same territory. They also found that violence was frequently carried out on girls as a way of controlling their sexuality, of subjugating them as females under male dominance, and to keep other boys away from them. Osthus and Sewpaul's (2014) research showed that the issues of sexuality, violence and male provision were deeply intertwined.

Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) claim that data shows that both street girls and boys experience rape. In fact, they found rape to be a common theme among the youth they spoke to, especially in the lives of girls, but also in a substantial number of boys. A high percentage of the rapes were carried out by other street youth or adults, but also by gangs, by men who do not live on the street, by boyfriends and by the police. One of the girls interviewed in the study said she had been raped so many times she had lost count. On the international front, British anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick (2004) reports that street children suffer death as a result of violent trauma, accidents, suicide and murder all over the world. The next section deals with the issue of abuse and harassment suffered by street youth at the hands of the police.

2.11.3 Police abuse and harassment

The HSRC's (Seager and Tamasane, 2010) research raised the concerning issue of police harassment and abuse. Homeless youth reported that they had been harassed and/or assaulted by the South African Police Services (SAPS) or the Metro Police. This, they said, was because the police automatically assumed street children were guilty of criminal offences, and looked to them as the perpetrators of many crimes reported to the authorities. They also said that the police chase these youth away from buildings in the Johannesburg central business district.

Police harassment and abuse against street children is nothing new. In fact in 1986, during the apartheid era, the Detainees' Support Committee reported the widespread detention and imprisonment of street children (Le Roux & Smith, 1998c). Indeed, Le Roux and Smith (1996) earlier refer to “inhumane treatment” (pp. 1) by the police of street children, and go on to list the

many violent acts carried out by police that have been reported by various researchers. Mathiti (2006), in his exploration of the quality of life of street children in Pretoria shelters, claims that police brutality is common for street children.

Le Roux and Smith (1996) cite international authors when they report that that this sort of victimisation by the police is not restricted to South Africa, and happens in many other countries around the world. In fact, close to home, in Kampala, Uganda, Young (2003) found that street children are afraid of being arrested or reprimanded by the police, and were frequently victims of police beatings and removals, sometimes ending up in detention centres or adult prisons. In the following section, the concept of coping is considered.

2.12 Coping

2.12.1 The concept of coping

Although the current study looks mainly at street youth's resilience, a related concept, that of coping, requires elucidation to avoid confusion. Coping has been defined in many ways, but a useful definition is provided by Andersson and Willebrand (2003, pp. 1), namely "... the process of managing demands (external or internal) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." Although the concept 'coping' has a relatively short history, an enormous amount of research has been generated about it since the 1960s (Parker & Endler, 1996).

Aldwin (2011) discusses coping and its history as a concept as follows. Coping, she says, has its roots in several theoretical traditions, such as the original psychodynamic approach which focused on defence mechanisms, which are largely unconscious, distort reality and are "inherently pathological" (pp. 21). She says that the issue of how conscious and voluntary coping actually is remains a matter for debate, but it appears that strategies can swap between being voluntary and involuntary, and that people are not always aware of what behaviours they are using to manage stress. So, she adds, coping, from a psychodynamic perspective, might be seen as a complex dynamic between conscious, semi-conscious and unconscious strategies.

Then, in contrast to viewing coping as largely unconscious defence mechanisms, coping responses began to be conceptualised as conscious strategies for responding to upsetting or stressful situations (Parker & Endler, 1996). Eventually, they state, among a number of coping responses identified and

studied, two of the identified coping dimensions continue to attract particular attention, namely problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Definitions of problem-focused coping can be summarised as those strategies that involve solving or reconceptualising the stressful situation, or attempts to minimise the effects of the stressor. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping involves conscious activities aimed at affect regulation such as fantasy or self-preoccupation (Parker & Endler, 1996).

Another basic dimension identified by early coping researchers, that of avoidance-orientated coping, continues to attract research attention (Aldwin, 2011; Parker & Endler, 1996). This dimension, say Parker and Endler (1996), has been conceived of as involving task-orientated responses, such as engaging in a different task, and/or person-orientated responses, such as seeking out another person.

Later on, researchers began to move away from coping as caused by factors to do with the person, to an emphasis on the contexts in which coping takes place (Aldwin, 2011). In other words, the new focus was now on situational factors, with the added realisation that coping is a process (Parker & Endler, 1996). Psychological and environmental factors have drawn attention from researchers studying coping resources, they continue, with self-esteem and self-efficacy identified as potential psychological variables, and social support networks, education and financial resources as examples of environmental factors.

Later, Aldwin (2011) speaks of what are known as the cognitive or process approaches to coping, which focus on particular strategies in specific situations. According to these approaches, coping strategies are guided by an appraisal of the situation to begin with, and are conscious, flexible and situation-responsive, including both problem- and emotion-focused strategies (attempts to balance the situation and one's emotional state). Aldwin (2011) states that research shows that coping is influenced by both situational characteristics and personality, and that most people use both emotion- and problem-focused coping in most situations. There have been criticisms of these approaches, but a review by Skinner, Edge, Altman and Sherwood (as cited in Aldwin, 2011) discovered hundreds of coping strategies that are currently assessed, including five basic types: problem solving (including behaviour, cognition and motivation), support seeking (including seeking out others for emotional, cognitive and behavioural support), avoidance (including

behavioural and cognitive strategies like denial), distraction (including positive behaviours and cognitions to minimise stress), and positive cognitive restructuring (such as reframing a problematic situation and looking for positive aspects and outcomes). Four other categories are, they continue, up for inclusion in general coping scales, namely rumination, helplessness and social withdrawal as negative strategies, and emotional regulation as a positive strategy. Other researchers, says Aldwin (2011), have proposed other, more positive strategies such as prayer and meaning-making or benefit-finding.

According to Parker and Endler (1996), another way of looking at coping theory is to make a distinction between interindividual and intraindividual approaches. They state that followers of the interindividual approach to coping will focus on the identification of basic coping styles that are habitual coping strategies used by particular people across different types of stressful situations, while the intraindividual approach stresses the identification of basic coping behaviours or strategies used by people in specific types of upsetting or stressful situations, somewhat like choosing an arrow (coping strategy) from a 'quiver' full of available 'arrows'.

Aldwin (2011) importantly states that coping strategies arise at different times in the life span, and are used at different stages. In fact, “... coping tends to be a complex of different strategies that may be directed at various facets of the problem and/or show dynamic change over time,” (Aldwin, 2011, pp. 22). Of interest to the current study, is her assertion that adolescence is the time at which more sophisticated forms of problem-focused coping emerge, as well as humour, self-soothing and self-regulation. It is also at this stage, she says, that maladaptive strategies arise such as risky sexual behaviour, substance use, rumination and social withdrawal. Next, coping strategies utilised by street youth are discussed.

2.12.2 Coping and street children

Research by Moran (1994) shows that the Durban street children who participated in her study most frequently used acceptance, self-blame and growth as coping strategies, all of which, she points out, are emotion-focused strategies. The reason for these being such commonly-utilised strategies, she claims, is that street children do not have much power to change or prevent the kinds of stressors they face. This results in the use of emotion-focused coping strategies, rather than problem-focused ones, so that the individual's approach is the most adaptive way of coping (Moran, 1994). She

claims, for example, that self-blame as a coping strategy sees the child taking responsibility for the stressor instead of seeing him/herself as a “helpless victim” (pp. 67). One particular coping strategy utilised by street children, that of substance use, will be explored in the following section.

2.12.3 Coping and substance use

Of particular relevance to the current study, is the example of the theoretical relationship between coping and substance abuse, of which several have been posited. For example, behavioural models characterise substance use as a learned behaviour, and deviancy models, which view substance use as a type of deviant behaviour motivated by a rejection of society (Wills & Hirky, 1996). These researchers also mention other models of the relationship between coping and substance use. In the Coping Functions of Substance Use Model, a substance is seen to effect a change in affect (reducing negative affect and increasing positive affect), or as providing a distraction from problems and unpleasant self-awareness, or as providing performance enhancement. Another possibility is offered by Lazarus and Folkman (as cited in Wills & Hirky, 1996) in their Transactional Model. According to this model, both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping are protective in regard to substance use. For example, problem-focused coping reduces the level of the problem that could create stress, and emotion-focused coping reduces the level of internal emotional discomfort or distress. Wills and Hirky (1996) talk about the later Active Coping *vs.* Avoidant Coping Model which posits that there is a primary distinction between a response that involves an investment of effort to deal with a problem, and a response that involves disengagement from any effort involved in dealing with the problem. This represents, in other words, the Approach-Avoidance Models mentioned earlier on.

Another approach, Wills and Hirky (1996) report, is the Coping Model of substance abuse, which states that some kinds of coping can increase or decrease the danger of substance abuse in the presence of factors that increase vulnerability. This Model assumes that someone is at higher risk for substance use as a result of a variety of factors, such as temperamental (eg. high activity level), social (eg. an environment in which there are few models of adaptive coping skills) or stress (eg. a large number of negative life events). These factors increase vulnerability and make substance use as a coping strategy more attractive. How people cope with not one, but multiple stressors will now be considered.

2.12.4 Coping with multiple stressors

As Lepore and Evans (1996) claim, it is not uncommon for people to be faced with not just one stressor at a time, but with multiple stressors, and they provide as an example poor people who face victimisation, housing difficulties and financial problems. This applies to street children, whose lives, as was elucidated earlier, are fraught with multiple sources of stress. Lepore and Evans (1996) state that some theorists claim that the more previous experiences people have with coping with stressors, the better they become at coping with subsequent stressors, while other theorists claim that coping with even one stressor might deplete an individual's resources, having negative adaptive consequences. For example, they say, coping with a stressor might impede a person's capacity, such as resources and ability, or motivation/incentive to cope with stressors that follow. They also claim that the psychological and physiological changes caused by one stressor might result in residual arousal, perhaps resulting in compromised ability to deal with subsequent stressors. On the other hand, they say, coping with one stressor might facilitate coping with another stressor, as well as in resilience. This brings us to the relationship between coping and resilience.

2.13 The relationship between coping and resilience

The concept of coping might remind one of another theoretical concept, that of resilience. According to Ortell-Pierce (n.d.), there is no consensus on the definitions of either coping or resilience, and some theorists believe resilience and coping measure the same constructs, while others believe the two concepts overlap. Sometimes, she says, the terms are even used interchangeably.

In his critical comparison between resilience and coping, Lemay (2005) claims that coping, as a concept, relies too much on the individual and his or her personal abilities, while the concept of resilience is far broader, allowing for far more possibilities to explain data in a more convincing manner. He paraphrases Helmreich (1996) when he says: "Coping is the science of remarkable people whereas resilience is the story of how remarkable people can be ..." (pp. 15).

Lepore and Evans (1996) speculate that an individual who experiences what they call mastery over stressors may become 'inoculated' to subsequent stressors, that is, they say, resilient. It seems that resilience, to these researchers, is the outcome of serial coping with stressors.

Durban-based research into the relationship between resilience and coping in a group of unemployed women (Ortell-Pierce, n.d.) found that resilience and coping do not seem to measure the same construct, but rather to complement each other. According to this researcher, coping builds resilience, which, in turn, sustains coping. Zautra and Reich (2011) refer to a recent paradigm shift from a disease model of stress and coping to a resilience model of well-being, which shifts the focus to positive aspects of the human psyche. Resilience as a concept will now be considered.

2.14 Resilience

2.14.1 Defining resilience

The issue of resilience is becoming more and more important in the literature about homeless youth. Although resilience as a concept has been defined in various different ways, there is no consensus on a single definition (Herrman, Stewart, Diaz-Granados, Berger, Jackson & Yuen, 2011; Howe, Smajdor & Stockl, 2012;), although Zautra and Reich (2011) claim there is a surprising degree of agreement on the meaning of the concept. According to Rew, Taylor-Seehafter, Thomas & Yockey (2001), resilience as a concept does seem to include an ability to 'bounce back' or recover from added pressure or strain, with an emphasis on coping and adaptation.

Well-known resilience researchers, Ungar and Liebenberg (2009, p. 259) define resilience as follows:

“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these healthy resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways.”

They go on to point out that

“ ... there are global aspects of resilience across culturally diverse populations, but unique patterns in how resilience is understood and expressed locally.”

Regardless of the exact definition, resilience is a useful theoretical concept that helps us to understand why most people, including children, do well in spite of adversity. Next, factors operating in respect of resilience will be explored.

2.14.2 Factors operating in respect of resilience

A number of protective factors and risk factors operate interactively in respect of resilience (Kolar, 2011). According to Johnson and Howard (2007), it is an individual's internal assets as well as systemic external strengths that can be called protective factors or protective mechanisms. For example, their research into adolescent resilience points to sociability and intelligence at the individual level; a close relationship with a caring adult and belief in the child at the family level; and socio-economic status, school experiences, and supportive communities at the social environment level all as protective factors for the adolescent. Kolar (2011) refers to protective factors and mechanisms as resources or assets that make a positive outcome in the face of adversity more likely. Homeless youth appear to enjoy few of these protective factors at the family or community levels.

Risk factors, on the other hand, make a negative outcome more likely. Kolar (2011) argues that resilience connects the concepts of risk factors and protective factors:

“... for an individual to experience resilience, they must have been exposed to some risk and have adapted positively via access to protective factors which mitigate that risk ...” (2011, pp. 428).

Panter-Brick (2002) points out that it is difficult to evaluate how protective factors might operate in interaction with one another and to find out how these factors become more or less important across the lifetime, and Kolar (2011) says that risk factors can, on their own, have complex interactive effects. The next section will consider resilience and street children.

2.14.3 Resilience and street children

Le Roux and Smith (1998c) cite research that shows the resilient nature of children in general, who, while not remaining unaffected by what happens to them, are able to avoid becoming overwhelmed by it. Certain factors, they say, might act to protect the child and prevent him/her from becoming

overwhelmed. Other researchers (Rew *et al.*, 2001) found that a lack of resilience was significantly related to hopelessness, loneliness and life-threatening behaviours.

Typically, street youth are characterised as needy and vulnerable, say South African researchers Malindi and Theron (2010). This, they say, echoes the medical-model approach, focusing as it does on deficits and on 'fixing' these deficits. This deficits-based approach stands in direct opposition to an assets-based approach, they say, which emphasises people's assets. Beazley (2003) points out that street children are usually portrayed as total victims or cunning criminals, so that, she claims, it becomes important to focus on these children's agency.

Indeed, homeless youth are not usually seen as resilient (Malindi & Theron, 2010). Instead, they are regarded as vulnerable individuals who are maladaptive and deviant, and who suffer from various psychological disorders (Malindi & Theron, 2010). The authors claim, however, that these young people exhibit what Ungar (as cited in Malindi & Theron, 2010) calls 'hidden resilience' which allows them to bounce back from adversity and hardships. In spite of the very real dangers they face in living on the streets, these youth are hardy and resilient, and actively navigate towards and negotiate for resilience resources, even if these tactics and resources are sometimes unconventional (Malindi & Theron, 2010). These unconventional tactics, they claim, include petty theft, glue-sniffing to numb themselves, wearing scruffy old clothes so that members of the public will pity them, prostitution and begging.

Indeed, Rew *et al.* (2001) maintain that resilience is particularly important for homeless youth as a moderating process during times of stress such as victimisation, illness and other periods of difficulty. They even claim that running away can be a form of resilience that can protect one from emotional stresses from the past that could lead to outcomes as serious as suicide. They speculate that resilience might develop in homeless youth because they develop self-reliance and independence instead of interdependence with others and accessing social resources. As they state, resilience theory seems to be an important theory for discovering how homeless youth 'get by' in their everyday lives.

According to Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994), street children are both vulnerable and resourceful. Indeed, homeless youth do face serious risks, not least of which are problems related to their

physical and mental health, but as Seager and Tamasane (2010) observed on data collected in the HSRC's homelessness research in South Africa (2005 to 2008):

“Children who are on the streets are inevitably vulnerable but their resilience should not be underestimated by those who are looking after them.”

Indeed, Seager and Tamasane (2010) opine that street children are usually far from helpless, and often demonstrate remarkable resourcefulness.

Malindi and Theron's (2010) study into street children in South Africa's Free State and Gauteng provinces found that the youngsters they interviewed demonstrated higher levels of resilience than both South African and international resilient youth who participated in the International Resilience Project in 2006. Delving deeper, they found that humour, assertiveness, agency and the ability to regulate themselves socially were important individual resources that contributed to the youngsters' resilience. The authors say that while study participants displayed many pro-social, normative, resilience-promoting mechanisms such as making the most of shelters, reciprocating support, asking for help and being assertive, other more unconventional practices such as violence, vandalism, humour, telling lies and bonding with other street children, as well as values not typically associated with street children such as religiosity and purposeful regulation of behaviour, also contributed strongly to the youths' ability to rebound from adversity.

Regarding studies on street youth and resilience, Theron and Malindi (2010) claim that previous studies have failed to take cognisance of socio-cultural forces that “... shape the resilience of street youth who negotiate the challenges of their contexts ingeniously,” (pp. 720). Their study showed that two broad groups of factors encourage street youth resilience in tandem with each other: socio-cultural resources and personal strengths, an example of the former being cultural heritage, and of the latter, stoicism. It is notable that their study found that participants were unable to articulate how culture had encouraged their resilience. Later research (2011) by the first author and colleagues (Theron, Cameron, Didkowsky, Lau, Liebenberg & Ungar, 2011) discovered that factors such as cultural practices and values, as well as religious affiliation are protective factors underlying resilience. The latter research did not, however, involve homeless youth, but young South African township teenagers who had been orphaned but re-homed with relatives.

As Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) claim, street children present us with a paradox:

“ ... with evidence of developmental risk and vulnerability on the one hand and of resourcefulness, adaptability, and coping on the other ...” (pp. 169)

One of the aims of the current study is the discovery of which protective factors shape the resilience of some of Durban's street children. It pays particular attention to the roles of cultural wisdom and religiosity as potential protective factors. The next section concludes this chapter with a look at a few of the points that emerged during this review of the literature.

2.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on homeless youth. Firstly, homeless youth on both a global and South African level, and then in Durban, were considered, followed by a discussion of street youth's myriad reasons for living on the streets. It emerged that estimating numbers of street youth on the streets of both the world and in South Africa is extremely difficult, and that according to Sewpaul *et al.* (2012), attention has turned from solely individual-level reasons for ending up on the streets to taking family- and society-level factors into account, particularly poverty. After this, the common characteristics and health of homeless youth were considered. Here, it emerged that although there no picture of a 'typical' street child can be described, street children around the world share some common characteristics (Le Roux & Smith, 1998a). Next, the the life of street youth was discussed and found to be fraught with dangers. Then, attitudes towards street children were examined and found to vary according to country, but were found to be generally negative. Thereafter, just how at risk street children really are was considered and it was found that although they might not be the most at risk children in the world (Panter-Brick, 2004), they are certainly at significant risk of suffering a variety of ills and injuries, as well as premature death. Next, perspectives on homeless youth were considered and found to be shifting to more positive viewpoints that emphasise these youngsters' resilience. Then, the concepts of 'home' and homelessness were discussed. Some researchers, it appears, found that street children in some countries consider the streets to be their home, and it also appears that the concept 'home' is a complex and contested one. Violence and street youth was then discussed, concentrating on the reportedly common acts of assault, rape and death, as well as on police abuse and harassment of street youth, which were found to be commonplace globally. Next, coping as a concept was considered, with special reference to street children, and it was found that substance abuse was a

prevalent strategy used by street youth. Then, the relationship between coping and resilience was discussed. With no consensus on the definition of either concept, these notions are said to relate to each other in a number of different ways, including complementing each other (Ortell-Pierce, n.d.). Finally, both risk factors and protective factors operating in respect of resilience in street youth were considered, whereafter evidence of resilience in street youth was provided. The following chapter details the current study's Methodology.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

When referring to a study's methodology, one is referring to one's choice of appropriate methods for studying the social phenomena of interest in a scientific way. Such a choice can be made only when taking the objectives of the study into account. In the case of the current study, the main purposes of the research were to provide a deep understanding of street children's lives, focusing specifically on their conceptualisations of 'home' and homelessness, and on which psychosocial and contextual protective factors shape the resilience of homeless youth. In other words, the design was exploratory and aimed to provide insight into a relatively unknown area. It is important to note that this study forms a first stage of inquiry in which we become familiar with the basic facts of life on the street for homeless youth, so that a more systematic and extensive quantitative study can be designed and undertaken similarly to what Neuman (2006) outlined.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the aim of the study, then goes on to explore the research methodology used. In regard to the latter, I provide a synopsis of the qualitative approach, discuss the research instrument and preparation for the research, as well as the sampling procedure (study site, sampling of participants), data collection and data analysis, including the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 A qualitative approach

From a theoretical standpoint, this study took a qualitative, interpretive, phenomenological approach that focused on the individual lived experiences of homeless youth (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The study avoided closed-ended questions that prompt particular types of responses and that are more appropriate for quantitative studies, opting instead for open-ended questions which allow what researchers Dierckx, de Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon and Denier (2012) call the rich insights of qualitative data to emerge.

The goal was to explore the day-to-day lived experiences of homeless youth, and to understand the meanings these youths assign to their experiences (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002).

A qualitative research method enabled an in-depth understanding into the youths' subjective understandings and experiences in an area that is relatively poorly understood in the South African context (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). The researcher also sought sufficient weight of description and maximum coverage into the phenomenon in question (Holliday, 2002).

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), the qualitative approach is appropriate if the reality to be studied is that of people's subjective experiences. This, they say, leads to a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participant. This stands in sharp contrast to the more detached approach adopted in quantitative research. Because we do not know enough about the world of homeless youth to be conducting a quantitative study, complete with hypotheses and important variables, a qualitative approach is appropriate for identifying variables and generating possible hypotheses about the relationships between these variables so that further research can be conducted (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006).

To continue with Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006), the interpretive perspective entails taking people's subjective experiences seriously, relying on first-hand accounts and seeking meaning within the personal and societal contexts in which these experiences take place. Such an approach entails studying individuals or groups within natural settings, rather than artificial conditions as is often the case in quantitative research. As they argue, interviews are far more natural forms of interaction with participants than questionnaires that need to be filled in. It must also be noted that in the case of the present study, some of the participants have a very low level of education, making illiteracy likely so that written responses would be inappropriate. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) point out, it is important to study behaviour in real-life natural settings as human behaviour is significantly influenced by the context or setting in which it takes place. The interviews conducted for the study in question took place at a drop-in centre that the youngsters frequent on a daily basis, an example of the natural setting referred to above.

3.3 Research Interview Schedule

A semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was used to collect data during individual in-depth interviews with the youth. This was believed to be appropriate on consultation with the literature. According to Marshall & Rossman (2011), qualitative research relies heavily on the in-depth interview for data collection, while Kvale (1996, as cited in Marshall

& Rossman, 2011) describes qualitative interviews as “... a construction site of knowledge ...” (pp. 2). In fact, Marshall and Rossman (2011) point out that methodologists and others maintain that we live in an “interview society” (p. 142). While the interview is ubiquitous, *viz.* television and radio talk shows in their profusion, the in-depth qualitative interview might differ in latitude, structure, width and depth, according to Marshall and Rossman (2011). The interview guide, which is scheduled rather than unscheduled, is more structured than the informal, conversational type of interview, and consists of a list of questions, but “... respects the way the participant frames and structures the responses,” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 144). This 'attitude', they continue, is fundamental to qualitative research, so that the researcher facilitates uncovering the participant's perspective on the issue as s/he views it, not as the researcher views it. The intention was for a natural, conversation-like interview to take place in an attempt to elicit both expected and unexpected responses on which to build something of the rich tapestry of participant's lives. The interview schedule, which was developed based on a review of the literature, both global and South African, and upon the theoretical framework, was used as a guide, with further probes used, as appropriate. Marshall and Rossman (2011) argue that these follow-up, elaborative questions are crucial for a rich interview. The benefit of interviewing, they say, is in the combination of quick data collection and observations such as touch, smell, hearing and sight, both of which allow an understanding of the meanings that everyday activities hold for people. The interview schedule was translated from English into isiZulu, and this version used in eight of the ten interviews, while the English version was used in the remaining two.

3.4 Preparation for the Research

As the home language of most of the youths who frequent the Centre is isiZulu and the researcher is not conversant in this language, she employed two isiZulu-speaking University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Psychology Honours students to conduct the in-depth interviews required for the research. While the selected research assistants, by chance one male and one female, had some knowledge of qualitative research and of interview technique, the researcher conducted some training with them to prepare them for the interviews. On the first data-collection visit to the Centre, both research assistants conducted a pilot interview with one youth each. The research assistants then transcribed these pilot interviews, then translated them from isiZulu to English. The researcher then scrutinised the translated interviews with the help of her supervisor and a Doctoral student at UKZN, whereafter she provided feedback to the research assistants, as well as further training in an effort to assist them in conducting better quality interviews from then on.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

3.5.1 The study site

A Durban Centre working for the reintegration of street children into society was contacted on the basis of a pre-existing working relationship between members of UKZN's Psychology Department and a temporary staff member of the Centre. The Centre management agreed to consider a proposal written and sent to them by the researcher. After two meetings with the Centre, the researcher gained permission from the Centre management to conduct the research. It is worth noting that the Centre had received over 200 other proposals to use the Centre as a research site, but agreed to only the current research study. Clearly, homeless youth are of great interest to researchers, a fact confirmed by Ennew and Swart-Kruger who said in 2003 (p. 1456) that street children and youth have been the focus of “... intense academic interest and welfare concern.” This is obviously still the case.

The Centre, which will remain anonymous, provides meals, clothes, education, recreational and sporting activities, social work and other services to homeless children and youth, the majority of whom are Black African and male, although there is a relatively high percentage of female youth who frequent the Centre. The researcher learned during the research that some of the males sleep at the Centre, but that the Centre is, by and large, a drop-in Centre that provides a full day of activities for street children every day.

3.5.2 Sampling of participants

The non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling was used to select ten homeless youth from the safe space drop-in Centre referred to above. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) remind us that non-probability sampling does not involve the statistical principle of randomness, and that purposive samples are used when sampling depends on both availability and willingness to participate. In the case of the current study, it would have been impossible to draw a random sample from all the street children in Durban. We do not even know how many there are! Also, purposive sampling was particularly appropriate and, indeed, a necessary technique to use as there could be no guarantee of availability of potential participants or of willingness to participate.

The Centre and the researcher arranged for the researcher and her two research assistants to visit the Centre on four particular days. On each day, when the researchers arrived, a Centre staff member asked all the youths present if they would like to participate in the research. He or she explained that participation was entirely voluntary, that they would remain anonymous and that everything they said would remain confidential (see Data Collection for further detail on ethical procedures adhered to).

For the in-depth, qualitative interviews, six male and four female youth, aged 14 to 18 years of age, volunteered to be interviewed and were included in the research by virtue of the fact that they were available at the Centre at the time of the researcher's visits and willing to participate. Centre management and the researcher had previously agreed that participants would be provided with a fizzy drink and a packet of crisps after the completion of the interview, and it is believed that this reward went quite some way to encouraging prospective participants to take part in the research. If there were more than the required number of potential interviewees, the Centre staff member made the decision as to who would participate.

The issue of gender requires addressing. There is strong evidence that there generally fewer females than males living on the streets (Kok, Cross & Roux, 2010; Le Roux & Smith, 1998a; Seager & Tamasane, 2010). This fact goes for both children and adults, according to Kok *et al.* (2010), who reported that girls represented a mere seven percent of the sample of children (12 to 17 years old) in the HSRC's study. In spite of this, a higher number of female participants was sought for the study, making the sample less representative or typical of the street youth population. The reason for choosing a higher percentage of females than would be representative was to gain better insight into the lives of girl street children.

Eight of the participants identified themselves as Black South Africans, while two were of mixed race. All were homeless and living either at the Centre on a part-time basis, or entirely on the streets of Durban.

3.6 Data Collection

One of the research assistants interviewing participants was female, and the other was male, so it was thought appropriate for the female research assistant to interview females, and the male to interview males. The researcher, supported by the Centre, believed the youths would be more comfortable talking to someone of their own sex than not. The researcher believes the higher percentage of females interviewed yielded some unique data from female participants. It is speculated that the data collected from the female participants might not have been as rich if they had been interviewed by a male research assistant.

Before each interview, each research assistant and participant pair were shown to private rooms so that the interviews could take place in quiet and private surroundings. Before the interviews began, the research assistants explained the aims of the study in the participant's home language: isiZulu in eight cases, and in English in two cases. Each participant was informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as the important issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Permission to audio-tape the interviews was also sought from each participant before the interview began, and every participant signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the interviews. The consent form was provided in both isiZulu and English. Each participant was given written advice that should participating in the interviews upset them or prompt them to wish to talk further about the issues that arose, they could seek assistance from social workers at the Centre or from psychologists at UKZN's Psychology Clinic.

Interviews took approximately an hour each, which is the length of time agreed upon in advance with the Centre management, who said that the youngsters were unlikely to be willing or able to concentrate for longer than that period. The interviews were recorded with digital recorders, with the research assistants equipped with new batteries for each interview, and, for safety's sake, a spare set of batteries. I met with the research assistants after interviews had taken place in order to discuss and record their experiences and impressions in detail.

3.7 Data Analysis

The research assistants later transcribed each interview verbatim, and then translated the interviews into English, if necessary. Once the transcription and translation process had taken place, the research assistants e-mailed the English translations to the researcher. Note that two of the interviews were conducted in English rather than isiZulu as English was the two participants' home

language. Demographically-speaking, these two particular participants, one male and one female, were both of mixed race, while the other eight participants were all Black African.

Once I had received all ten interviews in written form, I integrated the interviews into the qualitative data analysis computer software package, Nvivo version 9, which obviates the necessity for physically huge piles of data, for index cards and sundry other handwritten documents (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Instead, each interview was read and re-read in Nvivo, then chunks of the data arranged into themes informed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) explained in relation to this study below. It must be noted that at all stages of the analysis, the data was backed up and, when possible, printed out to maximise data safety.

3.7.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): an overview

The aim of the data analysis process was to uncover the experiences of homeless youth, their conceptualisations of home and homelessness, and their experiences of coping and survival in everyday life. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was deemed appropriate for data analysis.

According to Jonathan Smith (n.d.) of Birbeck University of London's School of Psychology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach to data analysis that has its origins in the field of psychology. IPA's aim is to uncover, in detail, the meanings that lived experiences and objects hold for individuals and seeks a subjective, personalised, 'insider's perspective' of such events or objects, rather than something more objective (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith and Osborn (2003) write that IPA acknowledges the impossibility of doing this completely or directly, pointing to the necessity of a double hermeneutic, a two-stage process of interpretation with the intervention of the researcher's own perceptions. Nevertheless, in IPA the research takes the participant's side, trying as best s/he can to understand what objects or events are like from the participants' point of view (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith and Osborn (2003) also claim that IPA is committed to the perception of human beings as physical, affective, linguistic and cognitive beings whose speech, thoughts and emotional states are connected, albeit complexly. They further emphasise the researcher's task of interpreting participants' emotional and mental states from their speech. It should be noted that there is, however, no single way to 'do' IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

3.7.2 IPA and the current study

In relation to the current study, IPA was chosen as a suitable approach because the researcher was attempting to discover how homeless youth perceive the situations they face and how they make sense of their social and personal world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As with other typical IPA projects, the research questions were broadly-framed, with no attempt to formulate an hypothesis for testing (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith and Osborn (2003) continue to help us explain our choice of IPA as follows. The sample size, as is usual, was small and fairly homogeneous. A purposive, rather than random, sampling strategy was used so that we could be sure that the research questions were relevant to those who were selected for interviewing. Painstaking and detailed analysis of each transcript took place after completion of in-depth interviews. It is important to note that the IPA approach is ideographic (Smith, n.d.; Smith & Osborn, 2003), rather than nomothetic, and is similar to that of the social anthropologist whose ethnographic research in a community reports about that culture but refrains from making generalisations about all cultures. As appropriate with IPA research, the current research is not attempting to make premature sweeping generalisations about homeless youth. Rather, the researcher wants to say something about these particular youth and their understandings and perceptions.

According to Smith and Osborn (2003), semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions are the benchmark and most flexible method ideal for IPA studies. This, they argue, allows a form of dialogue to take place between researcher and participant, with the researcher modifying following questions in light of the participant's earlier responses, allowing for probing of important or interesting areas that arise. They also claim that the semi-structured interview allows for rapport to be built between researcher and participant, with its flexibility allowing for novel areas to be explored so that richer data is produced.

3.7.3 IPA and the data analysis process

In terms of data analysis in IPA, Smith and Osborn (2003) point out that the researcher wishes to learn about aspects of the participant's psychological realm such as constructs and beliefs that are suggested by what the respondent says. Meaning, they say, is central, but the researcher does not set about trying to count or measure the frequency of a particular meaning, but to try to understand the complexities and content of such meaning. Sustained engagement with the text, they say, is the way in which such understanding is attained.

While Smith and Osborn (2003) emphasise that qualitative analysis is a personal process, they suggest a procedure for data analysis under the IPA banner as follows. The study in question followed this procedure. Firstly, one interview transcript was studied in detail before looking at others, case by case, so that the researcher was working ideographically from examples up to general categories or claims. This first transcript was read several times with a view to making notes or annotations, and then identifying themes. Then, the researcher looked for connections between the themes that had emerged, eventually developing superordinate themes that clustered lower-level themes logically together. During this process, the researcher consistently returned to the transcript to ensure that the actual words of the participant fitted with the developing connections. The superordinate themes were then named, and apt and relevant quotes from the original transcript were tied to them. As Smith and Osborn (2003) mention is possible, some original themes were dropped because they do not fit in well with the emerging structure.

The next step was to continue the analysis with other cases, which involved using the themes from the first case. Here it was important, as Smith and Osborn (2003) point out, to pick up on recurring patterns as well as new issues that emerged. Once all the transcripts were analysed, a final list of superordinate themes was drawn up and a decision as to which themes to focus upon needed to be made. This decision was made not only on prevalence within the data, but also on richness of quotes that might highlight particular themes and how the themes might shed light upon other aspects of the account. Because this sort of analysis is iterative, it is always possible to go back and review earlier transcripts with newer superordinate themes in mind, and this is what took place.

The final step in Smith and Osborn's (2003) IPA analytical procedure is writing up of the analysis. Here it was necessary to develop a narrative account in which themes are explained and illustrated by means of verbatim quotes from the transcripts. All of the analysis was achieved by utilising Nvivo 9. The following chapter presents the findings of the study, as well as a discussion thereof.

Chapter Four Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

As stated in an earlier chapter, this study aims to answer the following critical questions: How do homeless youth conceptualise 'home' and 'homelessness'?; Which psychosocial and contextual protective factors shape the resilience of homeless youth?; and What is the role of cultural wisdom and religion in the health and well-being of homeless youth? These research questions informed the interview schedule which, in turn, resulted in a number of corresponding major themes emerging in the data.

These are explored in this chapter as follows. After attempting to demographically describe the participants, the chapter will then explore respondents' concepts of 'home' and 'homelessness'. It will then look into spontaneous descriptions of violence in these young people's everyday lives, and then at some of the psychosocial and contextual protective factors that shape the resilience of homeless youth, *viz.* intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental factors. Finally, having emerged strongly as a way in which some of the participants cope with their lives, experiences of drug (and alcohol) use will be explored as atypical coping mechanisms reminiscent of hidden resilience.

4.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Before discussing the findings of the study, the chapter will now look at the socio-demographic characteristics of participants. To summarise, a table is provided below, followed by a discussion of the socio-demographic details of this study's sample.

Table of Socio-demographics of Sample

Gender	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F
Age	14	14	16	16	16	17	14	15	16	18
Level of education	G3	G6	G8	G6	G6	G10	np	G10	G8	G8
Years on the street	2y	2y	1y	4y	12y*	3y	4m	2m	6m	1y

M = Male. F = Female. G = Grade. y = years. m = months. np = not provided. * see later for discussion.

4.2.1 Age and gender

Ten homeless youth were interviewed for the study. Six of them were male, and four were female. Two of the males were 14 years old, another three were 16, and one was 17 years old. The females were aged 14, 15, 16 and 18 years old. In other words, the boys and girls were of approximately similar ages. This does not correspond with Aptekar and Heinonen's (2003) finding that girls in Kenya, Colombia and Ethiopia begin street life much later than boys.

Many of the participants in the current study looked significantly younger than their stated ages, perhaps due to “acute and chronic malnutrition” (p. 1) that Le Roux (1998a) blames for stunting these youngsters' growth. Likewise, Richter and Van der Walt's (2003) study in Johannesburg found stunting in 20 percent of their participants, while 53 percent were found to be underweight. They importantly point out, though, that their respondents, all male, were found to be no more underweight than Black urban South African boys of the same age.

Also, as Sewpaul, Osthus, Mhone, Sibilo and Mbhele (2012) found in their Durban research, the ages of street children tend to be quite arbitrary, and over three-quarters of those who answered their questionnaire did not own identity documents or birth certificates. Indeed, Le Roux and Smith (1998c) claim that many street youth do not have a clear concept of time, and often do not know how old they are.

4.2.2 Ethnicity

Five of the males identified themselves as Black when asked for their ethnicity, while one said he was Coloured, i.e. of mixed race. Three of the girls said they were Black, while the fourth said she was of mixed race, explaining that her mother was Black, and her father Indian. So, the majority of participants were Black, corresponding with the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) findings in their large-scale study of homeless adults and children (Ward & Seager, 2010) and with Swart's (1988) earlier research with street children in Johannesburg. As Swart (1988) points out, street children throughout the world tend to come from the lower end of the socio-economic scale, and this is where most Black people in South Africa are placed.

4.2.3 Area of origin

While one male participant did not say where he had originally come from, the other boys said they had originated from a number of different areas: eFolweni, Newlands West and KwaMashu, all townships near Durban; Newcastle, in northern KwaZulu-Natal; and one from as far afield as Cape Town. Only one of the girls, who said she hailed from Pinetown, part of Durban, stated where she had come from.

4.2.4 Level of education

In terms of schooling, one of the boys had had very little education, having reached only Grade Three. Three of the boys had reached Grade Six, one Grade Eight, and the oldest boy had entered Grade Ten. Interestingly, the girls had mostly received more education than their male counterparts: Two had proceeded to Grade Eight, and one to Grade Ten. One of the female participants did not reveal the level of education she had reached. The HSRC's (Ward & Seager, 2010) study found that the majority of street children surveyed had a Grade Seven education or less. Roughly half of our sample was slightly better educated than the HSRC sample, but minimally so. In their Johannesburg study with street children, Richter and Van der Walt (2003) found that two thirds of their participants had received less than five years of schooling, which, they claim, renders them illiterate. The researcher of the current study was unable to find other South African references to levels of education attained by homeless youth. Also, Ward and Seager (2010) do not mention whether or not the HSRC's study found any major differences in education levels between boys and girls. No other South African researchers appear to have addressed this issue either. Interestingly, a UNICEF (Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy, 1991) study carried out in Zimbabwe, one of South Africa's neighbouring countries, found generally lower levels of education among the street children they interviewed than in our sample, with over a quarter of their participants never having attended school at all. The Zimbabwe study, it should be noted, was carried out at a time of great socio-political upheaval.

4.2.5 Length of time on the streets

As a part of the interview in which demographic information was sought, participants were asked how long they had been living on the streets. Their responses should be viewed in the light of research by South African researchers Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994), who found that street children often report that they have been living on the streets for shorter periods of time than they actually have. This, they say, is because the children often cannot remember and also because of

embarrassment. In fact, Aptekar and Heinonen (2003) go so far as to say that researchers should not trust anything that street children say in answer to questions from researchers or other adults because these youngsters rely on manipulation to survive.

When asked how long they had been living on the streets, the males answered as follows: one for a year; two for two years; one for three years; and one for four years. The remaining boy said he had been on the streets since 2001, which meant that he had been homeless for 12 years, since the age of four. From what he said in other parts of his interview, this is highly unlikely. Indeed, Le Roux (1996) claims that many street children do not have clear concepts of time, and often do not know how old they are or how long they have been on the streets.

The females had been living on the streets for far shorter periods of time: two months; four months; six months; and a year. The HSRC's (Ward & Seager, 2010) study revealed a large variation in time spent on the streets among their child research participants, a factor that Ward and Seager (2010) say is important for reintegration reasons. They found that the shorter the time the youngster had spent on the street, the easier it was to reintegrate the child back into broader society. By this reckoning, the girls would seem to have a greater chance of reintegration than most of the boys in the current study. Research on this subject is scarce, but the findings of research carried out by Guntzberger on behalf of War Child UK and others, and which looked at the reintegration of street girls in Kinshasa, DRC (2013), confirm this assertion. Guntzberger (2013) found that for street girls in the Congo, reintegration into the family of origin or into the extended family becomes progressively more difficult the older the girl gets and the more time she spends on the street. This is due, she claims, to various factors, including relationships made on the streets, work found, and differences in benefits between shelters and home. South African researchers Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) report that a majority of girls who go onto the streets get involved in prostitution networks as opposed to staying on the streets as long as boys do.

4.2.6 Reasons for living on the streets

Participants were asked to explain how they came to be living on the streets. Two of the males cited the death of a parent, while another said that after the death of his mother, he had been taken in by his aunt, who had abused him. Another boy said that after the death of his father, he had gone in search of his mother, who had rejected him. The oldest boy, who hails from Cape Town, said that his father had disappeared. He said he had come to Durban to try and find his brother, but failed,

resulting in him getting lost until he found the Centre. Another boy said he had stopped going to school because he was “*naughty and unruly*” and had “*beaten up*” another child. He then left home with a friend who had also stopped attending school. So, with one exception, the loss of a caregiver or caregivers resulted in these boys landing up on the streets. This corresponds with the HSRC's (Ward & Seager, 2010) finding that most street children left home because of losing one or more caregivers. This reason could also be described as one of Ward and Seager's (2010) 'push' factors as explained in an earlier chapter, while the boy who deliberately left school to come to Durban with a friend was clearly motivated by a 'pull' factor, perhaps the thought of the excitement of living in a city. This preponderance of push factors corresponds with the HSRC's (2008) findings.

The loss of a caregiver features large in the reasons for the female participants leaving home, often accompanied by abuse. Of the girls, one said she was motivated to travel to Durban after she lost her father, suffered severe poverty and was abused by her mother. Another girl had suffered the death of her mother, whereafter her caregiver, an aunt, had physically abused her. A further female said she had been a foster child, having not known her biological parents. Her foster family, she said, abused and neglected her, causing her to leave for the streets. UNICEF's (Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy, 1991) study into Zimbabwean street children found that many children left home to escape frequent beatings. Similar findings emanated from a Tanzanian study in which it was found that 68 percent of their (male and female) street child participants cited being beaten by adults as their reason for leaving home (Evans, 2004). This was confirmed by project centre staff.

The oldest girl in the current study cited family conflict, fighting and abuse as her reasons for leaving home. Indeed, family conflict and poor familial relations are often given as reasons for leaving home. For example, Baker *et al.* (1997) found this to be the case among Nepalese street boys, but noted that there is usually a complex mix of family, personal and economic reasons for leaving home which interact with one another in an intricate manner. Evans (2004), in her work with Tanzanian street children, makes a similar observation when she says that it is for a “complex myriad of factors” (pp. 89) that children leave home, but also cites family conflict and breakdown as one of the most important factors involved. The findings of Latin American studies have zeroed in on poverty and family breakdown (Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch & Scanlon, 1998), but these researchers make an important point about the sub-continent, namely that most children from families that are poverty-stricken and dysfunctional remain at home and do not leave for an

alternate life on the streets. They point to a mixture of interrelated political, social and economic factors behind the street child phenomenon.

More locally, in a study conducted in Durban in 2002, Motala and Smith (2003) found that although there were certain gendered differences in reasons for living on the streets, the reasons were mostly similar for boys and girls. This is also what the current study found.

Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) do make a very important point, namely that to blame poverty and family breakdown for the street child phenomenon is to stigmatise the poor. Instead, they say, it is crucial to realise that most poverty-stricken families do not break down, neither do these families abandon or discard their children.

4.3 Concepts of 'Home' and Ideas Around Homelessness

In an earlier chapter, the concept of 'home' was discussed with reference to the literature. As Ursin (2011) pointed out, there are multiple meanings of home. He also claims there is a need to discover homeless children's perspectives and experiences of homelessness as scant attention had been paid to this aspect of homelessness research. To this end, the current study included interview questions on what the concept 'home' and what homelessness meant to the participants.

4.3.1 Concepts of 'home'

Two major themes emerged in participants' concepts of 'home', namely family and belonging, and safety and protection.

Family and belonging.

Although only a few participants have living parents or family members, almost every one of them mentioned family when explaining what 'home' meant to them. For example, one boy explained as follows:

“... it is a place where you sleep and a place where you know your family.”

One female participant said that when she sees her mother, she feels at home. Another said:

“Home for me is a place where there's a mom and a dad taking care of their children.”

It seems that this emphasis of family as something necessarily connected with home points to broader issues, namely those of belonging and feeling cared for. Participants clearly want to be where they 'belong', with people with whom they are connected and who care about them, and where they feel nurtured and safe. This corresponds with research carried out among Brazilian street children, who, in their narratives of home, emphasised the importance of belonging (Ursin, 2011). The issue of people with whom you are connected also arose in Finch and Hayes's (1994) review of the literature on notions of home, where they found that home was almost always seen to be “ ... suitable to be occupied by 'a family'” (pp. 418).

Another of the girls defined 'home' as:

“... a space where it's the parents that take care of you and worry about everything for you.”

While this once again points to family and belonging, this quotation also poignantly illustrates the fact that street children have to take on many of the challenges and worries that so many others only face in adulthood, and powerfully illustrates the burdens under which this girl suffers.

Safety and protection.

The issue of safety arose in many of the interviews as something inextricably linked to the idea of home, and emerged as a clear priority for both the boys and the girls included in the study. The concept of safety is linked with the concepts of protection and family. Some of the comments made around safety were as follows:

“The streets is [sic] not a place for a child,” said a female respondent.

“It [home] means a place that is safe,” said a boy.

“... being free and being safe ...”, said one girl.

“... a place that is safe, where one feels protected,” said another girl.

The last three excerpts illustrate the fact that the themes of family and care, and safety are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. They appear to be associating safety and protection with family and with connections with people who care about them.

Here, the current study corresponds with Ursin's (2011) findings on street children in Brazil where the issue of safety as a feature of home emerged as a strong theme. It also accords with Finch and Hayes's (1994) findings about security as a distinctive feature of notions of home. It is also noteworthy that, as expounded elsewhere in this chapter, homeless youth experience and witness high levels of violence, making a preoccupation with safety unsurprising.

Gender differences between concepts of 'home'.

In general, the boys' responses to the question about home were briefer and more concrete than those of the girls. The female respondents' explanations were, for the most part, more elaborate, explanatory and specific 'pictures' of home as a place where they would feel appreciated, welcomed and respected:

“It's a place where I have my parents taking care of me and loving me and talking openly, honestly and respectfully to me about anything I would like to know ... where we are welcomed and appreciated,” said one of the girls.

Another girl elaborated:

“... it's a comfortable place where one feels welcomed and at ease.”

Love emerged as important to most of the girls. For example, one girl said:

“It's a home filled with love and harmony.”

Another girl mentioned happiness, as well as love:

“Home for me is a place full of love ... a real home is a place where the children are happy.”

So, once again, family and belonging emerged as important, but the additional qualities of welcoming, appreciation, comfort, respect, love and happiness clearly form part of most of the girls' conceptualisations of home. Also, the girls were notably keener than the boys to talk about what home meant to them, and their accounts seemed more idealistic, detailed and fantasy-like than those of the boys. This seems to resemble the results of Hill's (1991) research with shelter-based homeless adult females in the United States in which he found that the women regularly fantasised about future homes. An interesting finding of his research was that the nature/details of the home fantasy depended heavily on the nature of the women's previous home lives. For example, if a woman came from a troubled background that was marked by periods of happiness and harmony, she was more likely to fantasise about homes that contained components of previous happy residences. He found that the women who came from intensely troubled backgrounds fantasised about security from the outside world, which once again echoes the findings of the current study. Hill (1991) also contends that the homeless use their fantasies about home life as a way of dealing with the stress of being homeless. Perhaps the same might apply to the homeless girls interviewed interviewed for the current study. It is also possible that because they had been on the streets for a relatively short time, especially when compared with the boys, they had a clearer, more recent image of what they would like home to be for them.

By contrast, when asked what 'home' meant to her, the eldest girl, who had been on the streets the longest out of the girls, concentrated on only the physical things she needed:

"... where ... I get my own cosmetics, pads and my own space."

On the street, but also at the Centre, the youngsters have to share resources such as toiletries. This respondent shows us that she has little to call her own, even space. This is a feature of life on the streets. After all, where these youngsters sleep is usually public property, and they have access to limited resources.

Some of those interviewed mentioned their homes of origin as their 'real' home, but their images were intertwined with negative images from their previous lives.

One of the probes used when asking the question about home was whether or not the participants considered the streets to be their home. In contrast to Ursin's (2011) and Young's (2003) findings, the current study's participants did not say that they considered the streets to be their home. Instead, 'home' was somewhere far away from the realities of their current lives.

Views of 'homelessness'.

Participants were also asked what 'homelessness' meant to them. As could have been anticipated, responses were mostly negative:

“I do not like being homeless. Sometimes it feels like I'm being punished when it's cold,”
said one female participant.

This participant, who had experienced high levels of violence at home and at school, often precipitated by herself, was clearly feeling guilty for leaving home, but said she knew her mother did not want her and that it was her own choice to be on the streets anyway.

One young male gave a very despondent response when asked about homelessness:

“Uhm, it's hard because I do not care any more. I don't care what happens to me. Even if someone would stab and kill me, no-one will care.”

Sadly, this young man's hopelessness and vulnerability have resulted in him almost giving up. It seems that this youngster would benefit from counselling or treatment for what this author suspects might be found to be clinical depression. Although the literature expresses conflicting views on whether or not psychopathology is higher in street children than in the general population (see earlier chapter), there is no doubt that depression is a feature of some of these youngsters' lives. In fact, a study carried out by Kerfoot, Koshyl, Roganov, Mikhailichenko, Gorbova and Pottage (2007) in the Ukraine found that 74 percent of the street children they interviewed suffered from depression. More locally, in research carried out among Johannesburg street children, Richter and Van der Walt (2003) found that although street children might be expected to show higher levels of psychopathology than the rest of the population, nearly a third of the children who participated in their research were rated as adequate to good in terms of psychological adjustment. As with all the participant, the young man in question was advised about where to get help for his problems.

One of the boys succinctly summed up his attitude towards homelessness as follows:

“It doesn't mean anything to me at all other than that it's just bad. There's nothing more I can say about it other than that.”

This young man did not want to talk further about what it meant to him to be homeless. It was obviously a painful subject on which he did not wish to dwell.

A female participant was slightly more positive and quite profound:

“Being homeless is not freedom, neither is it suppression because sometimes it's nice to be your own boss and have no-one to tell you what to do. I would say that being homeless is inbetween freedom and suppression.”

Although this respondent left home for 'push' rather than 'pull' reasons, she seems to have come to appreciate what Ursin (2011) calls an important 'benefit' of living on the streets, namely autonomy, and the authority and power that emanate from it, all of which, he says, are in short supply for the poor.

Street child organisations like the Centre in the current study, although it is not a shelter, provide some of the basic components of a home, such as bathrooms, meals, and activities organised and supervised by adults. No matter, says Hill (1991); it seems that no institution or organisation is able to provide a properly home-like entity because of the frequent intrusions by others that they endure (referring partly to a lack of privacy, which one of the girls in the current study mentioned) and general loss of control. None of the participants, however, expressed a feeling that the Centre was trying to control them. In fact, the opposite was true, namely the participants appeared to appreciate and, often, enjoy the Centre's influence, assistance, advice and/or activities.

In summary, the current study's findings echoed those of others in regard to the importance of family and belonging, as well as security and protection as necessary components of home. They did not, however, confirm studies suggesting that street children consider the streets to be their home. When asked to talk about homelessness, respondents were without exception negative, and it

is clear that these children do not like being homeless. In the following section, we explore a theme which, although not specifically asked about, emerged strongly, namely violence.

4.4 Violence as an everyday experience of living on the streets

Notions of living on the streets and being homeless are intertwined with the experiencing and witnessing of aggression and violence. While the interviewers did not raise the issue of violence, they did focus on trying to understand how street youth cope with their lives. It is inevitable, then, that the issue of violence was often spoken about. Three main themes around violence emerged, namely rape, violence and harassment from the Durban Metro Police, and other acts of violence and aggression.

4.4.1 Rape

While none of the boys mentioned it, rape was spoken about by most of the girls. Commenting on the problems associated with being homeless, a female participant brought up the horror of violence in her everyday life, specifically rape:

“It's not good at all to be homeless ... because it is so unsafe, especially for us girls because there are boys here on the streets that target us to rape us.”

“ ... it's actually dangerous. There are a lot of rapes; lots of girls get raped,” said another female respondent.

Particularly horrifying is this testimony from one of the girls who clearly lives in fear:

“Recently, my friend got stabbed in her private parts to death by a group of guys that wanted to rape her and she tried to fight them. She died three days after the incident. My friend died a slow and painful death. This incident was hard to deal with because I'm also a girl and therefore I am a potential target for rape as well.”

Another girl had this to say:

“ ... at times we sleep by the park or by the passages and sometimes boys come and rape us by cutting the girls' pants slowly with a razor and then rape her at night.”

Another female interviewee poignantly disclosed that she, herself, had been raped:

“There are boys that rape us, who don't see us as sisters, but as girls that are there to get raped. I myself was raped by a guy. When it happened I felt so violated and alone. I felt so powerless when I got raped I did not even try to fight back. I just let him do whatever he was doing and I just kept on crying.”

This girl was clearly overwhelmed and totally powerless. From what these female participants said, it is clear that rape is a common occurrence on the streets of Durban, at least for females. Indeed, one of Motala and Smith's (2003) participants reported having been raped three times in her four years on the streets of Durban. Seager and Tamasane (2010), when reporting on the HSRC's findings, reported that sexual assault is a common occurrence on the streets, and that outreach workers claimed that young boys are also sexually assaulted by older boys. No mention of sexual assault was made by the male participants in our study, in contrast to an earlier study which found widespread fear of rape among both its female and male participants, some of whom, both female and male, had already been raped (Motala & Smith, 2003). In fact, the boys interviewed in the Motala and Smith (2003) study disclosed they slept in different places each night to avoid being raped.

Our findings, however, also correspond with findings by Durban researchers Sewpaul *et al.*(2012), who claim that the females in their study were frequently the victims of violence as a means of controlling their sexuality, subjugating them to masculine dominance and keeping other boys away from them. Like the current study, they found that rape was a common theme in the lives of the street girls they spoke to. They also found that fear of violence, including rape, were identified as common methods of males exerting control over females.

It is not very surprising that rape is so common among street youths; South Africa is reported to have one of the highest statistics of violence against women in the world (Kalichman, Simbayi, Cain, Cherry, Henda & Cloete, 2007), and the fact that South Africa marks sixteen days of action against violence against women every year shows that levels of violence against women are of national concern. Because of their lack of protection and shelter, homeless youth must arguably be at even higher levels of risk for rape than the general population of South Africa, whose women, in particular, are at high risk of being raped (Kalichman *et al.*, 2007).

4.4.2 Violence and harassment from the Durban Metro Police

Most of the respondents, when talking about what life is like on the streets, spontaneously mentioned acts carried out by the Durban Metropolitan Police. Two respondents said that the homeless boys, in particular, are badly treated by this city police force. One of the boys said this:

“Metro Police was, and still is, a big problem. They abuse us, and chase us out of town, and it has happened to me once before.”

On being asked why this had happened, the boy said he did not know because the police never told the children the reasons. Further allegations went as follows:

“Metro Police ... treat us harshly. They take away our blankets and sometimes even beat us,” said one boy.

“Metro Police abuse ... people living on the street and beat them ...”

“... they don't want us in town and they always harass us ... or they take you in a van and deport you to some other place far outside of the CBD [Central Business District].”

“At night, the problem is Metro Police ... they kick us, beat us, stomp on us as if they were white people, not black people,” said another boy.

These findings in regard to the Durban Metro Police echo those of Sewpaul *et al.* (2012), who conducted focus groups and interviews with Durban street youth over a period of two years. They describe the accounts of violence and abuse at the hands of the Metro Police they heard from participants as “horrific” (pp. 247), saying that such reports also formed a common theme in their research. In fact, these researchers were forced to start a focus group late one day because the participants only arrived late and exhausted after walking 74 kilometres from Stanger, far north of Durban, where they said the Metro Police had dumped them after beating them up the night before.

In Johannesburg, research conducted by the HSRC, and reported by Seager and Tamasane (2010), reported that street youth described harassment and assault at the hands of both the Metro Police

and the South African Police Services (SAPS). These youngsters also said that whenever a criminal act had been discovered, they were the first to be suspected by the police, who also chased them away from buildings in the Johannesburg CBD.

A qualitative study with Durban street children in 2002 found that most of the children interviewed said that the ones they feared the most on the streets were the police (Motala & Smith, 2003). Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) found that harassment and arrest by the police was common, and claimed that the lives of street children amounted to a “constant cycle of arrest, release or escape from arrest and re-arrest” (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994, p. 109). The participants in the current study did not mention actually being arrested, but spoke of harassment, being taken far away from the streets and dropped without transport, and violence from the Durban Metro Police.

Violence and harassment at the hands of the police is not confined to South Africa as research shows. Baker, Panter-Brick and Todd (1997) found that among street boys in Nepal that the boys' earnings were frequently confiscated by the police. Bourdillon's (1994) study into street children in Zimbabwe also found that these youngsters were frequently harassed by the police, and even that some police officers accepted bribes to stop them from harassing the children and to encourage the police to warn the children of forthcoming police round-ups. In Latin America, one study showed that 40 percent of Honduran street children had been arrested, despite scant evidence of illegal activities among street children (Scanlon *et al.*, 1998).

As Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) point out, this sort of treatment at the hands of the police violates a number of children's rights as laid out in the South African Constitution, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the legislation and policies drawn up to protect children that operate at regional and national level in the country (see also Panter-Brick, 2002).

4.4.3 Other acts of violence

Other acts of violence, apart from rape and those acts allegedly carried out by the Durban Metro Police, are also commonly experienced or witnessed by street children. A female participant mentioned other acts of violence that take place as part of street life:

“There are a lot of stabbings, and a lot of people get beaten up”.

Some of the boys mentioned that they were picked on by older boys on the streets. For example, one boy said he had been beaten up and otherwise ill-treated by boys who had been on the streets longer than he had. He continued as follows:

“Since I have arrived in the streets, there are so many people I know who have died on the streets, stabbing and killing each other. You know, things like that.”

The allegations against older street boys confirms earlier research with Durban street children who reported being beaten by older boys on the street, gangs, homeless adults, security guards and the police (Motala & Smith, 2003).

Referring to threatened physical violence from others, another boy said:

“Usually I deal with it by banding with other kids my age group, and we run when we see a gang of older kids approaching us.”

One of the boys went on to confess that he, too, resorted to violence once he realised that no-one cares about anyone on the streets. Another boy reported a similar story:

“Especially when I first arrived, they [older boys] used to abuse me, beating me up, demanding my money, giving me 'blue eyes'. But I also ended up fighting back after having had enough.”

Indeed, personal acts of violence or aggression were mentioned by more than one respondent. One girl had the following to say:

“I left school because I was always involved in fights with other children. I have a temper and I easily get angered, and so I can quickly get into a fight.”

This same respondent said she had been starved by her aunt (her caregiver) and had suffered other abuses. As one young female respondent put it:

“Most people here cope by literally fighting for what they want. Whoever wins, gets it. Everyone fights to live.”

These findings correspond with those of Seager and Tamasane (2010), who found that homeless people, in general, are very prone to assault and injury. They found strong evidence of drug- and alcohol-related violence, beatings and robberies carried out by older boys on younger boys, gang-related violence and assaults by members of the public.

The findings of the current study also correspond with what Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) found in their Durban study, namely that violence was endemic, with most of their survey respondents witnessing violence several times a day. They go on to observe that while friendship bonds exist between these youngsters, such bonds are fragile, and that it takes only the slightest provocation for violence to ensue. These researchers emphasise the importance of paying attention to the issue of control when considering violence among street youth. They argue that violence can be seen as a strategy towards exerting control over others, such as older boys over younger boys. Their research delved deeply into the issue of violence amongst street youth, and discovered territorial disputes to be common, and gang violence endemic.

According to an organisation that works with homeless youth in Durban (Umthombo, 2012), the streets are full of violence in which these youth often get caught up. They say that street children die every year in Durban as a result of incidents such as stabbings, rape, beatings and getting hit by cars. That they have a high mortality rate is confirmed by Seager and Tamasane (2010), who reported on the HSRC's study, in which participants and shelter staff all reported a high rate of death of street youth, often as a result of violent injuries. It is clear then, that living on the streets is fraught with danger. It is in the face of this danger that these children's resilience is tested.

4.5 Psychosocial and contextual protective factors that shape the resilience of homeless youth

One of the research questions that this study seeks to address is the question of the roots of resilience in street children. Indeed, Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) claim that it is important to discover the protective factors that contribute towards street children's resilience. As prominent South African researchers, Theron and Malindi (2010), whose study focused on street children in the Free State and Gauteng, say, it is only quite recently that street children have begun to be conceptualised as resilient. Before now, they have been characterised as vulnerable and needy (Theron & Malindi, 2010). The latter, which, they say, takes a medical-model approach, focuses on deficits and on 'correcting' such deficits, rather than on an assets-based approach. Resilience

research, these researchers maintain, is asset-focused, like the current study, which seeks to uncover those factors that support these youngsters' resilience. Indeed, Panter-Brick (2002) says that there has been a major shift in attention from the street to the children themselves, their diverse experiences and the strategies they use to cope with adversity. She also says that modern work with homeless youth tends to concentrate on issues such as coping strategies and resilience in adversity. Interestingly, earlier South African research by Richter (1988) found that street children have a greater sense of control over their lives than children of that age are usually expected to have.

The fact that some of these young people have lived on the streets for years points to adaptability and to a strong ability to cope with adversity and the harsh circumstances of street life. Indeed, although research by Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) found considerable evidence that street children face developmental risks in various developmental domains, they also show evidence of coping and adaptation under extremely difficult circumstances. To explore this issue, respondents were asked about how they cope with life on the streets and the challenges they face. The factors that were identified by participants as helping them cope with the adversity of their lives have been grouped as follows: Intrapersonal factors; Interpersonal factors; and Environmental factors.

4.5.1 Intrapersonal factors

Several factors that could be described as intrapersonal and as instrumental to resilience emerged during the interviews such as personal strength, both physical and emotional, and cultural values, including spirituality and religion.

4.5.1.1 Personal strength – physical and emotional

Participants were asked if they saw themselves as strong people. Several of them said they did, but their concept of the phenomenon was quite often as a physical ability rather than as an internal quality.

Physical strength.

As mentioned, several participants said they perceived themselves as strong people, interpreting 'strong person' as a person who is physically able to defend themselves.

For example, one female said:

“Yes, I do see myself as a strong person who can face a lot of challenges from anyone because I can fight and defend myself very well.”

A couple of participants emphasised physical strength when asked how they coped with their problems. They said they physically run away from them:

“When I can't cope with something, I just tend to run away from it,” said one of the girls.

Referring to threatened physical violence from others, a boy said:

“Usually I deal with it by banding with other kids my age group, and we run when we see a gang of older kids approaching us.”

Given that homeless youth so often become the victims of violence, running away from a dangerous situation seems sensible, even though only two of the participants mentioned this way of dealing with their problems. Interestingly, Rew, Taylor-Seehafter, Thomas and Yockey (2001) claim that running away can be regarded as a form of resilience in that it can serve as a protective factor against emotional stress from past life experiences that might lead to adverse health outcomes such as suicide.

Another girl claimed she was strong and able to survive street life because she is able to stand up for herself. She also expressed pride in her ability to control herself and not be angry for too long:

“I try to control and contain myself in all situations so that I can cope and survive. I try to be calm.”

The problem is, she says, that she is easily irritated by other people and that when she is “*pressurised or provoked*” she ends up in a fight. This participant shows how physical strength can sometimes get out of hand when she speaks of her difficulty in controlling her anger and impulse to fight. This girl appears to have some difficulty with impulse control. The same participant, however, also expressed pride in managing to refrain from acting violently, and is clearly conscious of what she expressed as a need to control herself and “*remain calm in all situations*”. This girl spoke of

other incidents of physical fighting in her history, a problem that constituted a prominent reason for why she ended up on the streets. In this respondent's preoccupation with self-control and restraint, the influence of Bess, the older street girl spoken about by the girls during their interviews, is suspected. Bess behaves like a mentor to these girls, and they clearly look up to her, as well as relying on her for advice and material goods. It seems likely that both Bess and other significant persons in this participant's life, perhaps her family, as well as the Centre, have impressed upon her the importance of not losing one's temper and of physically controlling oneself.

Some participants expressed pride in their physical prowess, and this went for both girls and boys. Clearly, physical strength is important for survival on the streets. As one female participant implied, without at least some physical strength, most of these youngsters could easily turn into victims of violence. As previously mentioned: *“Everyone fights to live.”*

To lack physical strength, then, seems to mean greater vulnerability to the very real physical dangers that come with life on the streets. It also seems that these youngsters do not only require physical strength, but also to physically demonstrate that strength. This possibility arose on considering the words of a female participant who seemed to feel a sense of failure because she did not use physical force against her rapist. In spite of her horrific experience, however, this young woman is still resilient enough to survive on the streets and dream of becoming a Chartered Accountant one day.

Emotional strength.

On the other hand, some of the respondents conceptualised 'strength' as something other than physical strength, but as more of an inner quality. For example, one of the male interviewees said he saw himself as a strong person:

“You see, there's a difference between a kid from the township and a street kid. In the street, there is no-one to coddle you whenever you're sick or have 'flu and stuff like that.”

He is clearly referring to the fact that he has no adult caregiver to act with his welfare in mind; there is no buffer between him and harsh reality, and he has been forced to grow up before nature intended. References to inner strength echo Theron and Malindi's (2010) finding of what they called

“personal strengths” (pp. 727) such as stoicism. In fact, they found strong evidence of what they call “feistiness and stoic staying-power” (pp. 727) among the homeless young people they spoke to in the northern regions of South Africa. This “staying power” resonates strongly with the concept of resilience, showing the contribution of inner strength thereto. This respondent also seems to be saying that it is your experiences on the streets that make you tough, and that you learn to be independent when you live on the streets. This insightful response shows strength of character, and also demonstrates an ability to overcome tough experiences and to survive the harshness of life on the streets.

Another male respondent seemed to be saying something similar:

“Yes, yes I would say I'm a strong person because if you can survive on the streets, then you are a strong person because not just anyone can survive in the streets.”

Another young man firmly claimed that “*money is the root of all evil*” and said that he was strong because he had “*been able to teach myself to live without money.*” This boy is showing that he fully realises his position as one of the 'have nots', and that he perceives the lives of the 'haves' to be less than perfect. He seems to associate money with all the negative aspects of humanity, perhaps greed, corruption and lies, and perceives himself to be a strong person because he has been able to avoid such evils by learning to live without money, a fact in which he appears to take pride.

So, while most respondents related 'strength' to physical ability, others were less literal and spoke of inner qualities. These inner factors echo Theron and Malindi's (2010) findings that personal strengths such as stoicism and reflexivity form a broad group of factors that encourage resilience in street children, and operate in tandem with socio-cultural resources.

An interesting response to the question about strength came from a male participant. He said he considered himself to be a strong person because he was “*still willing to be helped*”. From this it would seem that he values a personal characteristic that could be described as an open and accepting attitude, and that he considers this to be a form of strength. Perhaps he is still willing to be helped because he has been on the streets for the shortest length of time of all the boys and has received the highest level of education. What is pertinent here is something mentioned in an earlier

chapter: the longer a youth has been living on the streets, the more difficult it is to rehabilitate and reintegrate him or her into society (Le Roux, 1996). Interestingly, Rew *et al.* (2001) found that those youth who perceived themselves as being resilient reported lower levels of life-threatening behaviours, loneliness and hopelessness.

To summarise, in the current study, when responding to a question about personal strength, participants' responses fell into three sub-themes: physical strength; emotional strength; and strength as openness to accepting help. The interpretation of strength as physical strength was most common. This brings us to another Interpersonal Factor, that of cultural values.

Cultural values, with special emphasis on spirituality and religion.

Consultation with the literature reveals evidence of culture as a means towards towards resilience. South African researchers Theron and Malindi (2010) found very definite evidence of cultural pride among 20 adolescent street youth they interviewed both individually and in focus groups. They found that these youth showed pride in their ethnicity and their cultural heritage, both contributing factors towards resilience (Theron & Malindi, 2010). Likewise, Canadian researchers Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips and Williamson(2011), who recorded autobiographical narratives from indigenous Canadian people, found core cultural values to typically emerge as a strategy towards resilience. These cultural values manifested as collective history, sacred teachings and myths that have persisted in spite of adversity.

To explore this issue with our sample, all participants were asked if they knew of any cultural values that had kept them going when they have a problem. Examples such as rituals, cultural norms, the ancestors, the words of relatives, and so forth were given to encourage participants' responsiveness. This question received surprisingly scanty responses from most interviewees, and many respondents focused their attention on whether or not they 'believed' in the ancestors, in a religious or magical sense, as intermediaries between humans and a god.

One young male answered that he did not believe in “*any of that*” but that:

“I just believe in God ... He is the only one who helps me through tough times.”

Another boy echoed these sentiments:

“No, no, I just believe in God only, not ancestors ... I grew up knowing that a witchdoctor does not go to Heaven ... God is the person who created me, and I see that this is His will that He is doing with me, so I just leave everything to Him.”

He said culture and related rituals do not help him during difficult situations:

“Like I said, my friend, I don't do anything that has to do with ancestors or cultural rituals. I trust in God only.”

Another boy was reported to have virtually no understanding of what he was being asked. When prompted further, he said:

“At home they do like traditional stuff, especially my grandmother, but I personally don't know anything about them and I do not care for them.”

Another boy dismissed anything to do with culture and said point-blank that his culture does not help him at all. The mixed race boy, the oldest of the male respondents at 18, was reported to have no understanding of what was being asked of him and what was meant by 'cultural values'.

The only youngster (female) who actually said she placed her faith in the ancestors credited them with her protection:

“My ancestors have helped to protect me during some difficult situations in my life. When there are fights here in the streets where I am involved, somehow I never get stabbed, nor am I taken to jail like my friends and brothers.”

So, in contrast to Theron and Malindi's (2010) study, where they found a preponderance of accounts of resilience-inducing cultural pride, participants in the current study said very little about their culture. In fact, when asked about their ethnicity, all the Black youth, except for one, identified themselves as Black rather than Zulu or Xhosa, and so forth. Most of the participants appeared keen to distance themselves from what one boy called “*any of that*”, and dwelled upon the issue of whether or not they 'believed' in the ancestors. All except one of the girls rejected the veneration of

ancestors as a cultural/religious practice. Subsequent questions to participants about cultural rituals or norms, or sayings that they might have heard when younger and now looked to as a source of help met with flat denial. It is almost as if these youngsters have shed their cultural 'mantle' as a way of rejecting their origins, and accepted the 'culture' of street life instead. Another possibility is that the mention of the ancestors in the question about culture proved too provocative for participants; it is possible that in their efforts to distance themselves from a 'belief' in the ancestors, they ended up distancing themselves from their entire cultures, along with their norms, teachings and practices. It is important to note that Theron and Malindi's (2010) participants were unable to articulate in which way culture had encouraged their resilience. Perhaps this problem resided with our study participants as well. Both Theron and Malindi's (2010) and the current research has highlighted the need for further research into the relationship between culture and the promotion of resilience.

In contrast to responses about culture in general, religion (which can be said to constitute a specific element of culture), appears to play an important role in respondents' lives and in their ability to tolerate the difficulties they experience as street-dwellers. Of particular interest to this study is a finding by Ortell-Pierce (n.d.) who showed that religiosity appeared to assist in building resilience. Eight of the current study's participants identified themselves as Christian, while one was Muslim and another placed her faith in her ancestors (as discussed above).

The Muslim girl was quite despondent about Allah's ability to help her:

“I do sometimes pray to Allah ... But, to be honest, I do not see His significance in my life because I have not seen Him do anything for me. But I do pray, nonetheless.”

Despite her doubt in Allah's benevolence towards her, she did believe that He sometimes protected her:

“... at times, when there are fights, I sometimes see myself saved from extreme damage...”

She also, however, blames Allah for her plight:

“I do not like being homeless. Sometimes it feels like I'm being punished when it's cold; it feels like God is punishing me for running away from home.”

One of the Christian girls, however, displayed a lot more faith and confidence in God's benevolence:

“I have seen God play a major role in my and my family's life because I see Him protecting me from a lot of things. I pray every morning and I thank God every time for all the things He does for me ... my religion plays a major role because I think that God protects me from a lot of bad things that I am facing here on the streets, living and surviving.”

Another Christian girl confirmed her strong faith as follows:

“... I tell other people about Christ and I defend the Bible. Being a Christian helps me to feel protected from bad things that might happen to me here on the streets ... I particularly pray when someone says they are going to beat me up, but then, because of God, they end up not beating me up.”

This girl's faith in her god's ability or willingness to help is not water-tight, however:

“ ... I sometimes pray but it seems like my prayers are not being answered, like I just sometimes don't see anything happening because of the prayer that I said, but sometimes it does help me.”

Yet another girl who identified herself as Christian said it helped her to believe in God because she had had proof that prayer works. She said that the very fact that she is still alive and not sick is proof of God's intervention:

“My prayers really do work ... For example, I wanted so bad to go to school and I prayed for it, and just yesterday they called me in to tell me that they have gotten a school for me and I'll be able to start next term.”

One of the Christian boys said that God guards him and helps him through tough times. Another said :

“God is the guardian of my life; He protects me all the time ... I can see because I wake up in the morning still alive and not dead.”

In reference to the hardships involved in street life, one boy said he placed his hope in one “*person*”, God:

“God is the person who created me, and I see that this is His will that He is doing with me, so I just leave everything to Him ... He has kept me alive while living in the streets all this time; I could be stabbed or get beaten up by people and died, but I'm still alive. That's how I know that God exists and answers my prayers.”

The oldest boy, who also identified himself as a Christian, said he feels that if he does not pray that things do not go well; when his day improves, he credits God, and when he fails to pray, “*bad things happen*”.

In summary, all the participants had a strong belief in a god or, in the case of one girl, the ancestors, as protectors from harm, while one blamed her harsh and difficult life on Allah as a punishment. Returning to the literature, religion, which can, according to Malindi and Theron's (2010) thinking, be defined as a conventional coping mechanism, makes up a major aspect of their young participants' resilience, mostly as a way of making them feel strong. They also found that for their participants, prayer was fundamental to their hardiness. They also said that religion was something not typically associated with street children, but that it was a major resource in these youngsters' ability to rebound from adversity. Our study confirmed their findings. Unfortunately, it appears that very little research into the relationship between the homeless and religion has been conducted. In fact, a thorough university library database search turned up only two articles: a small one on religious faith in a sample of chronically homeless adults in the United States; and a study by Ozel (2012), which was in Turkish, apart from the abstract, therefore not accessible to this author. The first study, by Tsai and Rosenheck (2011), found that most of their homeless adult participants rated their religious faith as “more than slightly important” (pp. 1224) in their lives, and that their faith helped them to deal with their personal problems.

Participants in the current study echoed another of Malindi and Theron's (2010) findings when they expressed belief in a higher power as navigating them towards beneficial outcomes. They also spoke of God/Allah/the ancestors as protectors who helped them to survive on the streets.

In summary, religion emerged as important to participants' ability to handle their lives as street children, a finding that corresponds with that of Malindi and Theron's (2010) study. As they said, the association between religion and street children is seldom made, but it turns out that religion is an important resource in the resilience of these youngsters. As little research appears to have been conducted into the area of religiosity and the homeless, specifically street youth, this area requires further investigation. This chapter now turns its attention to interpersonal factors that might support resilience in these youngsters.

4.5.2 Interpersonal factors

When asked how they cope with life on the streets, respondents did not only rely on intrapersonal attributes and factors, but spoke about one important interpersonal factor, namely help from peers.

Help from peers

A major source of resilience that emerged during the interviews was the help that respondents received from other street people. Only one of the interviewees mentioned receiving some assistance from a family member. One particular older girl features large in the lives of several of the female respondents. This girl, to whom the fictitious name of Bess has been given, seems to have provided a great deal of help to the girls:

“When I first got here [on the streets], my friend [Bess] whom I got on the street, used to hustle for me and she would also give me some of her clothing ... she helps me a lot here on the street because she knows a lot of things ... When I am about to get into a fight, she is there immediately to break up the fight before it starts.”

Another girl said that Bess had been a big help at the start of her life on the streets:

“When I first got here, [Bess] used to help me a lot because I'd get everything from her from the money she would get from selling CDs to people on the streets.”

So, it appears that these girls have been 'shown the ropes' by Bess, who seems to act as peace-maker, guide, protector, advisor and what Theron and Malindi (2010) call a “local role model” (pp. 722). Indeed, Le Roux and Smith (1998c) found that street youth often adopt one another or other street people as role models. The help offered from an older homeless female in this study, contrasts

sharply with the treatment respondents reported receiving from groups of older street boys who were reported to behave in a violent and threatening manner towards the respondents, both male and female. In contrast, a Zimbabwean study (Bourdillon, 1994) found that very often, once street boys got older, they began to act as guardian to a group of younger boys, helping them with money, food and, crucially, protection. Sometimes the guardian expects favours in exchange, Bourdillon (1994) reports. Research into Nepalese street boys found similar social strategies that facilitate dealing with the poverty of street life (Baker *et al.*, 1997). For example, boys who might have a little extra money to spare often gave money or food to friends. The researchers said that this was in expectation of a similar favour being granted to them in lean times. Counter to these findings, the girls who spoke of Bess in the current study did not mention that she asked for anything in return

Another girl spoke of street boys and boyfriends as protectors:

“We as girls get protected by some of the boys, who some of them are our boyfriends. They ensure that other boys do not come and take advantage of us or abuse us.”

Another of the female respondents said that her friends help her to cope:

“I cope with the conditions on the street because I have all these friends around me that help me when I'm facing difficult situations. We see each other as a family here on the streets. However, there are those who are very mean to us girls.”

As one of the girls put it:

“We treat each other as a family here on the streets because we stick together as people who live on the street.”

Referring to threatened physical violence from others, one boy said:

“Usually I deal with it by banding with other kids my age group.”

Indeed, Malindi and Theron (2010) found that bonding with other street children was one of the factors that strongly contributed to the youngsters' resilience. Likewise, Le Roux and Smith's (1998c) paper terms this banding together as an “exceptional companionship system” (pp. 2) that

acts to replace the family in terms of economic and emotional support. Likewise, Beazley (2003), of her Indonesian study of street boys, claims that "... peer support is directly tied to personal survival," (pp. 126).

Research into friendship among children living on the streets of Accra, Ghana was carried out by Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010). This three-year qualitative project found that friendship among street child peers and a strong ethos of help between friends is so important as to constitute a survival strategy. In South Africa, Le Roux and Smith (1998a) found that these children turn to each other for companionship, thereby forming a replacement family group that offers solidarity, friendship, protection and support. Indeed, Le Roux and Smith's (1998a) research that found that when street children band together, they form a grouping that provides both emotional and economic support. Later research by Malindi and Theron (2010) showed that this bonding between street children acted as a strong contributor to the resilience of these youngsters. Beazley (2003) talks about street children in Indonesia as a distinct subculture that operates as a surrogate family, with its own discernible patterns of behaviour and a distinct system of beliefs and values.

Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994), however, state that peer groups on the street are often depicted as 'quasi-families' because of the support, companionship and protection that it affords members, but that this is a misleading analogy. This, they say, is because relationships within the street group are more erratic and temporary than within the family group, and that they operate at a very different level from relationships between adults and children in a family. Indeed, research undertaken in Ethiopia (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003) found street groups to be loose-knit as a result of the children's strong desire for autonomy, which, the researchers claim, actually prevents bonding. According to Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994), the peer group is still important.

According to Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010), terms such as reciprocity, co-operation and mutuality are largely absent from writings about street children, and they point to the general lack of research into friendship and street children. Although South African researchers Le Roux and Smith (1998a) and Theron and Malindi (2010) have paid some attention to this matter, there still seems to be room for further investigation into this interesting topic.

The issue of social capital, which Petersen and Govender (2010) claim is increasingly viewed as exerting a positive influence on mental health, must be considered at this point. Citing Carpiano's 2006 conceptualisation, Petersen and Govender (2010) state that "... social capital is understood to emerge out of social networks that provide the basis for the development of socially cohesive communities characterised by strong social organisations, common norms and social trust, which facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit," (p. 30). The participants in this study demonstrate social bonding in their creation of networks that contribute to their resilience. The Centre and its sports programme, specifically, have contributed on a social bridging level, providing support and additional knowledge and skills to the youth.

4.5.3 Community resources

Help from the public

Some respondents in the current study spoke about members of the public who also help them to deal with street life:

"People mostly give us clothes, blankets and food ... It's mostly Black people, white people and foreigners that usually donate to us," said one girl.

Although, as another girl put it:

"Other people hate us ... others run away ... Others actually care about us, and give us support, such as donations."

This girl went on to say that food, clothes and blankets are given to both the Centre and to individual street children on the street. One girl mentioned a particular member of the public:

"There's also another woman who comes with a lunch box with food inside, and she gives it to us every morning, and in the afternoon she comes again and takes the empty lunch box, so that the next morning she can come again and hand us food."

This same girl said that she has been offered homes by members of the public, *"but I'm scared to go to stay with some strangers."* One of the boys mentioned an innovative way of obtaining bedding or clothes:

“We usually get blankets by standing at a high residential building and shouting towards open windows above, and then hopefully someone will either throw or bring to us an old jacket or a duvet that they don't need anymore.”

For these youngsters, receiving help from members of the public is likely to offer hope, a motivation to carry on under difficult circumstances.

Sport as a protective resource

Without prompting, several respondents identified surfing as something they use to deal with their problems. Apart from formal education classes, the Centre offers a programme that includes daily surfing and soccer. Both of these sports, but mostly surfing, were spoken about by respondents in response to questions about coping with everyday life on the streets. One of the girls put it this way:

“Surfing also plays a major role in me being able to cope. When I am surfing, I am free and I am not in anyone's business.”

Her hopes for the future, which she says keep her going, centre around surfing:

“Yes, things could change for the better for me if only I could get a surfing sponsorship. The sponsorship will give me proper new clothes, all the surfing equipment I need for competitions, a monthly allowance, and other things as well.”

While she dreams of becoming an engineer in the long-run,

“... for now I would like to get a sponsor that would help me achieve my dreams of going world-wide to surfing competitions. Through the sponsorship, I could also get my own flat and not have to live on the streets.”

Her determination and the clarity of the picture she has of her future as a professional surfer then an engineer are confirmation of this young girl's resilience. One of the boys also expressed his hopes and dreams for the future as follows:

“Bro', it's definitely being more successful at surfing ... we also go to competition and get cash prizes, but it's only for number one until quarter-finalists, and I have never been a quarter-finalist and I want to do well so I can be better.”

His dreams and plans keep him going, he said, and reveal a young man determined to succeed and armed with the resilience that might help him do so.

It would seem, then, that the sports programme offered by the Centre offers the children major hope for a medium-term solution to their problems (sponsorship, getting prizes, accommodation and so forth), as well as hope for success in the long-term. This corresponds with wide-spread findings reported by Van Blerk (2011), who states that engaging 'at risk' groups such as street children in sport has been found to divert attention from the negative aspects of their lives. In contrast with the 'live for today' attitude that Beazley (2003) found to be typical of street children in Indonesia, most of the participants in the current study expressed hope and dreams for the future.

Organisations for homeless youth

Other organisations apart from the Centre where the youngsters were interviewed, also help them:

“[name of organisation withheld] helps us a lot by providing a place where we can go to school and get everything we need,” said one of the girls.

Not all comments about other organisations were positive, however. One of the boys negatively compared other street child organisations with the Centre:

“... in other places, there are no education classes, and the kids do whatever they like: smoke drugs inside the place, smoke cigarettes and glue.”

He even spoke of corruption within other organisations:

“I also heard that other people who work in those places sell cigarettes to the kids inside the places.”

This story was corroborated by another boy:

“... but it's bad there because they allow the kids to do drugs inside the shelter and there are no rules or discipline.”

But it is the Centre where the respondents attended lessons and activities that received the most praise for the help it renders to these youngsters. As one girl said:

“It [the Centre] also plays a role in helping me to cope with the harsh conditions of the streets. The activities such as education and surfing keep me busy and keep me out of trouble.”

Another girl said she relied on the Centre for food, education and donations, but also mentioned the Centre's Social Workers as a source of help. One of the other girls said:

“What helps me most in coping is [the Centre] because they cook for us and we eat because of them. They basically do everything for us.”

To sum up, street children possess individual assets that enable resilience when combined with ecological resources (Malindi & Theron, 2010) and look for creative solutions to their problems – “they are survivors” (Swart, 1987).

4.6 The use of drugs and alcohol in coping with life on the streets

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the use of drugs and alcohol has been found to be widespread among homeless youth. Even though participants were not asked about their or others' use of drugs or alcohol, several spoke spontaneously about these practices when discussing how they deal with adversity. For example, one girl said:

“To cope, I smoke cigarettes because I think it helps me to cope with the stress of living on the streets ... me and my friends love drinking, smoking and having fun at clubs.”

Another girl, a friend, echoed these sentiments virtually verbatim. Their behaviour is very different from their behaviour before they began living on the streets, and they seemed to derive pleasure from the comparative 'freedom' they have. In the literature, autonomy emerges as important to street

youth. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, Ursin (2011) claims that a desire for autonomy is an important reason for youngsters leaving home for the streets. He goes on to claim that autonomy is made up of authority and power, both of which he says are in short supply for all poor people, to which group street children certainly belong. South African researchers Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) also found that freedom was consistently reported by children as highly valued, and which, they say, has “implications for the development of a sense of autonomy and self-reliance that may be positive in the overall emotional development of street children” (pp. 171). The sense of freedom that the girls from the current study find in partying, drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes seems to contribute to the sense of autonomy to which Ursin (2011) and Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) were referring, and to operate to buoy up their ability to cope with the harshness of the rest of their lives.

Indeed, Scanlon *et al.* (1998) report that around 80 percent of street children in Latin America utilise drugs on a regular basis as a “ ... cheap way of coping with hunger, fear, loneliness, and despondency ...” (pp. 1597). South African researchers Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) reported that children claimed that 'smoking glue', which involves inhaling fumes from glue, thinners, cleaning fluids and solvents, generates pleasant feelings, as well as shutting out loneliness, hunger, cold and insecurity. Scanlon *et al.*'s (1998) review of the literature on Latin American street children also found that glue was the drug of choice for its cheapness.

A male participant spoke of sniffing glue (which provides a cheap and easy-to-access 'high') and how he perceives it to help him by allowing him to escape:

“You smoke glue if you don't want to keep thinking about your situation, because when you smoke it, you get high and you hallucinate; you don't have to keep thinking that you live on the streets and all that stuff ... I don't blame anyone who snorts glue bro', because glue takes away the sadness of living in the streets, plus glue is helpful in that it prevents a person from doing more dangerous and heavier drugs like woonga, cocaine and ecstasy. Heavy drugs are bad; I have tried them and I have seen other people vomit and cough up blood and be sick because of them.”

This same respondent also claimed that smoking glue made things “difficult' for him, and describes what life is like for a drug addicted street youth:

“It makes me physically sick. You also crave for it when you don't have money for it, but you still have to find some way to buy it. And then you end up not having any money to buy food and get high on weed [marijuana], and then when the high is over, you are very hungry, and you don't have food, and your money is gone because you spent it on glue. I try to only smoke weed and cigarettes.”

He said “foreigners” employed him to sell illegal substances such as cocaine on their behalf, and that these people beat up anyone who failed to do the job for them. Likewise, Swart (1988) found that it is common for a section of the public to exploit street children both sexually and in criminal activities. It appears that the boy in question is 'stuck' in a very dangerous situation from which it might be difficult for him to extricate himself.

The same participant tells a frightening personal tale of drug use that could have ended his life:

“I once smoked glue and got so high I ended up in a building that was in a part of Durban that I did not know, and I got lost for a few days not knowing where I was.”

This respondent also reported craving glue and desperately trying to find the money to buy it. His life appears to revolve around drugs, their use and their sale. According to criteria set out in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV-TR (Sue, Sue & Sue, 2006), what this youngster said revealed symptoms of a Substance-Related Disorder. For example, he knows that smoking/sniffing glue is not good for him, but he seems unable to cut down or control his use, and he devotes a considerable amount of time to activities that allow him to obtain glue. Other symptoms necessary for a clinical diagnosis might be in place, but were not revealed during the interview. He is also in danger of violence or arrest by the authorities as a result of his drug-running. As Wills and Hirky (1996) state, “... substance use is acknowledged as maladjustive with respect to the individual's own goals,” (pp. 280), and, as with all the participants, this young man was advised to approach the Centre's Social Worker or the University's Psychology Clinic for assistance with problems he might be experiencing.

Another one of the boys related a violent incident that took place after glue-sniffing:

“One day we [a friend and he] had a fight after we were smoking glue. After that, we fought over the actual glue bottle. We fought and he took out a knife and stabbed me, but I blocked

it with my arm and I got stabbed on my forearm. Then I took a brick and hit him on the head and made him bleed because he had made me bleed too.”

This incident shows how drugs gain 'currency' on the streets in much the same way as they are purported to do in prisons. When asked what had happened to his friend, this boy said his friend had “*moved on and is now doing heavier drugs like woonga and ecstasy.*”

One of the girls showed how normalised drug-use is and how it forms an integral part of her life on the streets:

“In the morning, I wake up, open my eyes, take a bath, brush my teeth, eat, go pick weed, come back, find a corner with my friends and smoke weed ...”

When this female participant spoke of picking and smoking marijuana in the same sentence as getting up and brushing her teeth, she reveals how drug use has become so normalised as to play an integral part of her daily life. Marijuana smoking also appears to act as a social bond between this participant and the friends with whom she smokes it. Bonds with peers have been found to strongly contribute to resilience in homeless youth (Malindi & Theron, 2010). In a rather unconventional way – communal marijuana smoking – this participant demonstrates bonds with her peers, clearly a source of resilience, according to Malindi & Theron (2010), but possibly what could only be dubbed a negative coping mechanism.

Another boy elucidated his misgivings about using drugs, saying that quitting marijuana and cigarettes would be his best-case scenario:

“... for us here ..., the only thing holding us back is the smoking that we do.”

This boy is clearly educated as to the negative consequences of drug use, and identifies it as a stumbling block to his success in life. The oldest of the boys, who also revealed himself to be educated about the risks of drugs, said he has turned his back on them:

“I only smoked cigarettes for a short time, but I have quit them also; drugs are bad for your health, and they just don't help with anything, you see.”

So, two of the boys showed themselves to be well-educated about the negative impact of substance use, and identified them as stumbling blocks in their lives. It is interesting to speculate as to where their information about drugs comes from. Efforts to discourage drug use in these homeless youth appear to have been heard by at least some of the participants.

So, although no participants were asked about their use of drugs or alcohol, or about that of others, the use of drugs (mostly) and alcohol (sometimes) were frequently mentioned as ways of coping with street life. Our findings confirm the findings of a study by Le Roux and Smith (1998c) who discovered the use of intoxicants such as glue, petrol and benzene to be widespread in their review of the international literature. Earlier findings by Richter (1988) in Johannesburg and Cape Town, as well as Motala and Smith (2003) in Durban showed that substance abuse, particularly the sniffing of glue, is widespread among South African street children. UNICEF's research in Zimbabwe (Bourdillon, 1994) found that members of the public complained about the aggression displayed by street children minding their cars because the youngsters were high on glue. Glue, as Bourdillon (1994) points out, is cheap and easily obtainable, and UNICEF's research showed that all ages of children and youth use it. Young (2003) reports the similar use of fuel among street youth in Kampala, Uganda.

The findings of the current study also confirm those of the HSRC (Seager and Tamasane, 2010), who showed how common drug use is among South African homeless youth. According to this research, it is commonplace for the homeless to exhibit both direct and indirect symptoms of substance use. These researchers reported various direct consequences of substance use, such as liver disease, as well as indirect consequences, such as risky sexual behaviour resulting in a high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Indeed, Richter (1988) links glue-sniffing to permanent organ damage and the constant threat of death. Scanlon *et al.* (1998) interestingly claim that communal drug use is one of the ways in which children become integrated into street life, and Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) state that because glue smoking is a communal activity, it acts as bonding process between participants.

Another pair of South African researchers, Le Roux and Smith (1998b), whose earlier study looked at street children around the world, found that drug consumption allowed these youngsters to

temporarily escape the harsh realities of their world. This desire to escape as a way of coping arose strongly in one interview when the male participant said that glue-sniffing means “*you don't have to keep thinking that you live on the streets, and all that stuff ...*”

In terms of the role of substance use in coping, a number of theoretical approaches to coping, as elucidated in an earlier chapter, might shed some light on our participants' substance use. For example, if an individual tends to use avoidant coping, they might use drugs to escape a problem, rather than a more active response to the problem (Wills & Hirky, 1996). The youth's drug use could also be considered from the Coping Model perspective, which, Wills and Hirky (1996) state, claims that an individual is at higher risk for substance use when various factors are present, including, for example, stress in the form of experiencing a large number of negative life events. This is certainly the case with street children. Factors such as this, they claim, increase vulnerability and make substance use as a coping strategy more attractive.

Wills and Hirky (1996) further point to what they call a 'theoretical paradox', namely: “Substance use may itself be construed as a coping mechanism, but it also may be a product of deficits in other coping mechanisms,” (pp. 284). In other words, they say, if other modes of coping are well developed in an individual, she or he may perceive that substance use is a less attractive or effective coping strategy. In terms of this thinking, those among our participants who utilise substances to cope might be short of other coping strategies.

In conclusion, drug and alcohol use were found to be common in these youngsters' lives, and even though substance use might be an unconventional, often illegal and usually socially unacceptable way of coping, it allows them to escape and 'check out' of their lives, at least for a while.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, respondents' concepts of home and their ideas of homelessness have been explored, as well as their experiences of violence in their everyday lives. The chapter also brought to life through respondents' own words a few of the psychosocial protective factors shaping the resilience of homeless youth, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal and community resource factors. Finally, drug and alcohol use by participants was discussed, with reference to the literature on coping and substance abuse. This dissertation concludes in the chapter that follows, with a look at conclusions

that can be drawn from this study, and attention to some of the limitations of the study, as well as to recommendations on interventions and future research.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Challenges and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter of the dissertation, the conclusions emanating from the current study's Findings and Discussion dissertation chapter will be discussed. This will then be followed by some study limitations and challenges that were faced. Finally, some recommendations for interventions and future research will be made.

5.2 Conclusions of the study

To summarise the socio-demographic details of the participants in this study, ten street youth aged 14 to 18 participated, six of whom were male, and four female. Eight participants identified themselves as Black, while the other two were of mixed race. Most participants originated from areas around Durban, the site of the study, with one girl coming from northern KwaZulu-Natal, and one boy from Cape Town. Although all of the participants had completed some schooling, none had completed their high school education, and the girls had generally received slightly more education than the boys. The girls had been on the streets for a matter of months, but the boys had generally been on the streets for a year or more, with one boy having been on the street for four years. Although it has been reported that most youngsters leave home for a complex set of factors, and not just one reason, the most common reason given by participants for being on the streets was the loss of a caregiver, mostly as a result of death. In the next section, the conclusions of the study are briefly summarised.

When it came to concepts of home, two main themes emerged, namely family and belonging, and safety and protection, which, as was pointed out, were in line with previous studies conducted by other researchers, both internationally and locally. Female participants' conceptualisations of the idea of home were generally more elaborate and fantasy-like than those of the males. Contrary to Ursin's (2011) findings in Brazil and Young's (2003) findings in Uganda, this study's participants did not consider the streets to be their home. Indeed, home was somewhere far away from the reality of life on the streets. On the topic of homelessness, participants were overwhelmingly negative and clearly did not like their current homeless status, although some participants told of

enjoyable activities they experienced in their lives. The current study, then, made important findings as to homeless youngsters' concepts of 'home' and 'homelessness'.

Corresponding with several other studies, the current study found that participants' lives were characterised by violence, both experienced and witnessed, including rape, assault and other acts of violence. In line with studies from several countries which detailed police brutality against street children and youth, many participants made particular mention of acts of violence and harassment carried out against street children by the Durban Metro Police. In light of what participants said and of the literature on the subject, it is abundantly clear that the streets are a dangerous place to live.

In keeping with current conceptualisations of street youth as resilient individuals instead of vulnerable victims, the current study explored the psychosocial and contextual protective factors that shape the resilience of homeless youth. Factors at three levels were discovered, namely the Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Environmental levels. At the level of Intrapersonal factors, personal strength, both physical and emotional, and religion and spirituality as aspects of culture emerged as important themes. Most participants viewed personal strength as something necessarily physical, something that emerged as important for surviving on the streets in both this study and in the literature. Other participants, however, conceptualised strength as something more internal, and involving the emotions. Interestingly, one male participant conceived strength to be the willingness to accept help, which is something he said he possessed.

While cultural values and heritage have emerged as important means towards resilience in the literature (see Theron & Malindi, 2010), the current study found only religion and spirituality, as aspects of culture, to have emerged as important factors towards these young people's resilience. No participant cited other cultural views, sayings or beliefs as supportive to them, marking a major difference between the findings of the current study and those of others. Religion, for most of the participants, and spirituality in the form of ancestor veneration for one girl, were found to be extremely important ways in which participants dealt with their lives as street youth. These findings correspond with other studies, where religiosity appeared to assist in building resilience (Malindi & Theron, 2010; Ortell-Pierce, n.d.).

In terms of Interpersonal factors contributing to participants' resilience, help from peers emerged as the major theme, confirming previous findings about bonding between street youth being a factor that strongly contributed to resilience (Beazley, 2003; Malindi & Theron, 2010).

Three factors contributing towards resilience in our sample operating at the Environmental level emerged as important, namely help from the public, sport, and help from organisations for homeless youth. Although attitudes towards street youth, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, are so often negative, participants revealed that members of the public do sometimes help them with things like food, clothes and blankets. The Centre's sporting programme, particularly surfing, was spoken about with much enthusiasm and hope, with some participants pinning their hopes for the future on professional surfing. Other organisations that work with homeless youth were spoken about by participants, but they singled out the Centre for doing “*everything*” for them. Other organisations came in for considerable criticism.

Without being asked about, a major theme to arise during interviews with participants was that of substance use as a way of coping with life, and substance use was found to be frequent among several participants. This finding echoes the findings of many other studies, both international and South African. Although, according to Wills and Hirky (1996), substance use might be considered to be a coping mechanism, it must surely be considered a negative one. This brings us to some of the challenges facing the current study.

5.3 Challenges that the study encountered

As with most research, the current study faced some challenges. The first of these was to gain access to street youth so that interviews could be conducted. This challenge was successfully negotiated as follows. The author had heard of the Centre with which she ended up working, and met with management, who had read a proposal from her. After agreeing to the research, the Centre facilitated interviews with street youth who happened to be at the organisation's headquarters at the times that the researcher and Centre had selected, and who were interested in being interviewed. The Centre gave the researcher and her assistants space in which to conduct the interviews, and advice on a number of matters. The Centre, in other words, acted as gatekeepers for the street children we interviewed, and provided us with access to our sample of homeless youth.

A further challenge was the issue of language and meaning. In relation to language, most of the children who live on the streets of Durban speak languages other than English as their mother tongue. As it turned out, eight out of the ten interviewees were isiZulu-speaking, while the other two spoke English. The problem was that the researcher does not speak isiZulu. She therefore advertised at the University and went through a selection process to find research assistants who speak fluent isiZulu and English. Two Honours students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Psychology Department were selected and then trained to conduct qualitative interviews. Although the students had learned about qualitative research to some degree during their undergraduate Psychology degrees, they were without experience in the practice of it and of interviewing research participants. Two pilot interviews were, therefore, conducted then recorded, transcribed into isiZulu and then translated into English. The researcher then consulted her supervisor and a Doctoral candidate about the interviewee transcriptions, whereafter the researcher conducted a further training session with the research assistants. The research assistants then conducted four other interviews each, transcribed them and then translated them into English, if necessary. Herein lies the challenge: because the researcher was unable to conduct the interviews herself, it is possible that misunderstandings and alterations in emphasis took place. Because of the translation process, the information and meaning conveyed to the researcher was, arguably, third hand, and this might mean that meaning could have been lost during the various translation processes. Such is the nature of research in an historically and currently unequal country like South Africa, where past legislation to keep different 'race' groups separate and alienated from each other did not allow children to learn each other's languages.

Another issue centres around the accuracy of data collected from street children and youth. In this regard, Swart (1988) claims that street children are so wary of sharing their personal experiences with strangers that the issue of veracity must be considered.

As can be seen from the above, the study was not without challenges, but the researcher believes that significant information and meaning were garnered by the study, and that the findings allowed at least part of the picture of Durban's street children to be painted, as well as providing a suitable platform for the broader, South Africa/Ghana study to come. After all, claim Afifi and MacMillan (2011), focusing on protective factors can provide us with insight into how resilience, overall health and well-being may be promoted in maltreated children.

5.4 Recommendations

Because most street children are male (Seager & Tamasane, 2010; Sewpaul, Osthus, Mhone, Sibilo & Mbhele, 2012), boys have obviously received most attention in respect of research. Sewpaul *et al.* (2012) point to cultural differences as an important reason for the gender variation, claiming that in patriarchal societies it is far more acceptable for males to leave home earlier than for girls. Also, claim Sewpaul *et al.* (2012), if a female on the streets engages in prostitution or in some form of domestic labour, she is less likely to be seen as part of the street children population. Considering this, for the current study to have had such a high proportion of female participants is unusual and allowed a disproportionately better glimpse at the lives of female street youth than would have happened had a sample more representative of estimated statistics been chosen. In spite of growing research on street girls (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; Rurevo & Bourdillon, 2003), there remains significant space for the study of the lives and experiences of girls who live on the street.

As so little literature could be found on the subject of homeless youth's conceptualisations of 'home' and ideas around homelessness, it appears that there needs to be more research conducted in this area to ensure that interventions are customised to suit the needs of these youngsters. A further area that seems to have been neglected in research with homeless youth is the matter of religiosity. Because it emerged as an extremely important aspect of participants' lives, and seems to foster resilience and coping with adversity, this area deserves further research attention.

Another area that requires additional research is that of friendship between street children/youth, and the importance of the peer group, which have received scant attention (Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2010), but emerged as important in the current study as factors promoting resilience in these youngsters.

The finding that several participants frequently use substances such as glue and marijuana to cope with their lives is concerning. Although two of the male participants appeared well educated about the negative consequences of substance use, perhaps more attention needs to be paid to the education of homeless youth about the dangers of substance use. In fact, a health and well-being intervention programme specifically tailored to the needs of street youth as revealed in research such as this appears appropriate. It is recommended that such a programme promote health and a

healthy lifestyle, and address a variety of areas which appear to need more attention. A group of issues that certainly requires attention is the issue of sexual abuse, rape and one's rights in regard to one's body. Another subject that appears to need addressing is the matter of substance use and abuse, the risks and realities thereof, how to stop using drugs and alcohol, and how to get help with substance abuse problems. Considering the levels of violence reported by participants, conflict resolution skills should be on the agenda of any intervention in an attempt to teach youth how to deal with negative emotions such as anger before violence or other negative outcomes have a chance to take place. In addition, because the lives of these youngsters, both before and after arriving on the streets, are beset by problems, it is recommended that such an intervention address the need for psychological support for these youth. Further, as was seen in the previous chapter, sport proved extremely popular among participants, who often viewed surfing, in particular, as a way out of their current lives, and who sometimes pinned their hopes on it for the future. Perhaps the children's enjoyment of surfing could form an appropriate springboard for a health promotion programme for street youth.

The allegations made about violence and harassment by the Durban Metro Police should be taken seriously by the authorities. Just because police brutality against street children happens around the world does not mean that it is acceptable, and it is the allegations of abusive and violent police behaviour towards these young people that raises the issue of these children's rights. South Africa's Bill of Rights specifically states that every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation (SA Department of Social Welfare, n.d.). The Children's Act of 2005, as amended, also specifically addresses these rights in respect of street children (2005). The official mandate from which the police are working could not be ascertained, but as representatives of the State, and subject to its legislation, all of South Africa's police personnel should behave in a way that respects the legal rights of street children.

On the matter of rights and the law, as Ursin (2011) says, even if, as some contend, someone does feel 'at home' on the streets, which the current study did NOT find, politicians should not be excused from their duties towards these children, and more needs to be done about the conditions of their homes of origin.

The current study focuses partly on the protective factors that contribute to resilience in a sample of street youth in Durban, South Africa. By focusing on these protective factors, intervention programmes may gain insight into how to promote resilience and well-being (Afifi & MacMillan, 2011) among homeless youth. These authors go on to explain that protective factors operate to promote resilience as follows: they may change how a person responds to adversity, or these factors may influence, modify or ameliorate the response process. It could be argued that organisations involved in the welfare of homeless youth have the development of greater resilience in these youngsters as one of several core goals, perhaps unstated, for it is resilience that allows one to “... get up again when life knocks us down,” (Brokenleg, 2012, pp. 12), surely an ability standing any street child in good stead.

This study contributes ideas for future research, theory and practice with homeless youth. Importantly, what this research has done is to give a voice to some of Durban's street youth. Although some qualitative studies have been done with homeless youngsters, it is rare to hear their actual words and what they have to tell us about their lives and their imaginings. What the participants in this research clearly stated is that being homeless is entirely undesirable, and that living on the streets means facing the sorts of daily problems and dangers that many adults are unable to imagine, let alone experience. Yet in the face of so many difficulties, these young people are mostly hopeful and often highly ambitious. They also have a pretty clear picture of what 'home' should be like, and their words paint a vivid picture of a future far away from the streets. These are clearly resilient human beings who, just like everyone else, deserve the opportunity to be heard and to thrive. One therefore hopes that the current research shines a light on street youth and encourages further research that engages with these youngsters. The hope is that greater research attention will paint an even fuller picture of the world of these youngsters, the ultimate aim being to assist with promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of these young people (Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy, 1991).

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS (English version)

Health and Well-being of Homeless Youth in Durban

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is (insert name) and Professor Anna Meyer-Weitz of the University of KwaZulu-Natal is conducting a study on homeless youth. The purpose of this study is to find out about the health and well-being of homeless youth in Durban. I would like to speak to you, but only if you agree to speak to me.

The discussion will take 60 minutes. I will ask you about what it is like for you on the streets, your reasons and circumstances for why you are on the streets, how you cope and survive, your ideas about what home is to you, as well as how you see life and your future dreams.

All the information you give me will be kept confidential and be used for research purposes only. The raw data will be destroyed as soon as the study is completely over. Also, we will not use your actual name or designation in reporting the findings of the study so that no-one will be able to identify you.

You will not be given money for participating in the study. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right not to talk to us if you do not want to. If you agree to take part in the study, we will ask you to sign a form as an indication that we did not force you to participate in the study. Please note that you will not be at any disadvantage if you choose not to participate in the study. You may also refuse to answer particular questions if you do not feel comfortable answering them. You may also end the discussion at any time if you feel uncomfortable with the interview. I will also need your permission to use audio-tape recorders to capture our discussion.

If you have any further questions you may call me or my research supervisor (numbers are below). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Phumelele Ximba in the research office at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on (031) 260 3587 or e-mail her on ximbap@ukzn.ac.za.

Thanking you

Frances 'Franki' Hills

Researcher

083 267 2767

E-mail: franki.hills@gmail.com

Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz

UKZN

(031) 260 7618

E-mail: meyerweitz@ukzn.ac.za

PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project as discussed with me based on the previous page of this document, and I give consent to participate in the study. I also grant permission for interviews to be audio-taped, and for the transcribed interview material to be utilised for research purposes only. I fully understand that all the information that I provide will be kept confidential and anonymous.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I so wish.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS (isiZulu version)

Impilo Nenhlalo Kahle Yentsha Ehlala Emgwaqweni Eghana

Sanibona! Igama lami ngingu (insert name of interviewer). Ngingumfundi wase nyuvesi yakwaZulu Natal, eThekwini, eSouth Africa. Ngifundela iPhd yami. Inhloso yami ukwenza ucwaningo ngentsha ehamba ihlala emgwaqeni. Inhloso yalo cwano ngokubhekisisa ngempilo nangenhlalo kahle yentsha ehlala eGhana. Ngingathanda ukukhuluma nani uma ningivumela.

Inkulumo izothatha imizuzu engange Hora. Ngizonicela ukuthi niphendule imibuzo ohlangene nokulandelayo: izinto enihlangabezana nazo ngokuhlala emgwaqweni, izizathu ezadala ukuthi nihlale emgwaqweni nokuthi niphila kanjani emgwaqweni . ngizoncela ukuthi ningithsela ukuthi ikhaya liqondeni kunina nokuthi ikusasa lenu nilibona linjani. Okokugcina ngicela ningithsele ukuthi ukuhlala emgwaqweni sekuyishintshe kanjani indlela ophila ngayo nezinto ozenzayo.

Ngithanda ukusho ukuthi yonke imininigwana enizongithela yona izosebenziselwa locwaningo kuphela. Angeke iphumele ngaphandle. Izoba phakathi kwami nani. Mase ucwaningo liphelile, yonke imininigwane wenu izolahlwa. Futhi angeke sisebenzise amagama eni angampela.

Ayikho imali enizophiwa yona uma ningisiza kulocwaningo. Ukungisiza kukuwena futhi unayo imvumo yokungakhulumi name uma ungathandi. Kodwa uma uvuma ukungisiza, ngizocela ukuthi usayine ephepheni lesivumelwano lokuthi uzikhethela ukuthi ungisize. Ngicela uhlale wazi ukuthi akekho noma ayikho into ezokuhlukumeza if uzikhethela ukungazihlanganisi nalo cwano. Uma ubona ukuthi awuzizwa kahle ngokuphendula eminye imibuzo, unalo igunya lokuthi ungaphenduli. Unayo futhi imvumo yokuthi ukuthi usukume uhambe uma ungazizwa kahle ngesikhathi sokuphendula imibuzo. Ngizocela imvumo yakho yokuthi ngisebenzisi iRecorder ngekikhathi ukhuluma.

Uma kukuthi unemibuzo, ungashayela isikole seApplied Human Sciences, esikoleni sePsychology eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natal ku +27 (0) 31 2607618. Uma unemibuzi ngamalungelo akho njengomsizi walocwaningo, ngicela uthinte uPhumelele Ximba kwamahovisi ocwaningo eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natal ku +27 (0) 31 2603587 noma ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Ngiyabonga.

Frances 'Franki' Hills

Researcher

083 267 2767

E-mail: franki.hills@gmail.com

Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz

UKZN

(031) 260 7618

E-mail: meyerweitz@ukzn.ac.za

Mina.....(amagama aphelele omhlanganyeli) ngalokhu ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyaqonda okuqukethwe kulomubhalo kanye nohlobo locwaningo lwale phrojekthi njengoba seluxoxiwe nami kulamakhasi adlulile alomubhalo, futhi ngiyanikeza nemvume yamiyokuba umhlanganyeli kuloluphenyo. Ngiyanikeza futhi imvume yokuthi kuthwetsulwe ingxoxo-nkulumo yethu, nokuthi ingxoxo-mbhalo yethu isetsenziswe ngenhloso yalolucwaningo kuophela. Ngiyaqonda ngokuphelele ukuthi yonke imininingwane engiyinikile izogcinwa iyimfihlo ngokuthi ngungakhishwa imininingwane yoqobo lwami.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukuhlanganyela kwami ngizikhethele mina ngaphandle kwenhloso nokuthi ngingahoxa kulophenyo kunomayisiphi isikhathi engisifisayo.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (English version)

A. Demographics

- A1. What is your age?
- A2. Which region do you come from?
- A3. What ethnic group do you belong to?
- A4. What is your highest level of education?

B. Experiences of Street Youth

- B1. How long have you been living on the street?
- B2. How did you come to live on the street?
Probe: Relationship with parents, their occupational status, and whether they are still alive.
- B3. What is life like on the street?
Probe: Difficults with regard to shelter, food, getting clothes, stigma.
- B4. Please give me an idea of what you do in a typical day.
- B5. How do you think society (individuals, community) see young people like yourself?

C. Meaning and Understanding of Home

- C1. What does homeless mean to you?
- C2. What does home mean to you?
- C3. Where is home for you?
(Probe: prefer Centre to home and why? Would like to go home?Is the street home? Are fellow street youth his/her family?)

D Experiences of Coping and Survival

D1. How do you cope with conditions on the street?

Probe: What or who helps you to cope with the bad things that happen to you?

Probe: Do you think you are a strong person? If so, what makes you strong?

D2. What do other people do to cope with the bad things that happen to them?

D3. What kind of resources/structures do you rely on on the street?

D4. What would you say the are the main challenges for you growing up here?

D5. Please give me examples of problems you have had and explain how you dealt with them.

D6. Do you know of any cultural values that have kept you going?

(Probe: when you have a problem, what do you think of, eg. Grandmother's words, cultural norms/rituals, ancestors)

D7. How does your culture help you to cope with difficult situations?

D8. Do you believe that things could change for the better?

D9. Do you think religion has a role to play in your life?

E. Future Aspirations

E1. What are your dreams for the future?

E2. How would you make your dreams come true?

E3. What does it mean to you when other people succeed?

E4. Are there any stories you can tell of people who were in difficult circumstances but are now successful in life?

Thank-you

Appendix D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (isiZulu version)

A. IMIBUZO:

- A1. Unomnyaka omungaki?
- A2. Uqhamukaphi nezwe?
- A3. Ungazichaza ngokuthi wiyini? (umlungu, umnyama)
- A4. Ugcine kuphi esikoleni? Usaya esikoleni?
- A5. Yini inkolo yakho?

B. UKUPHILA EMGWAQWENI

- B1. Usuneskhathi esingakanani uhlala emgwaqweni?
- B2. Kwakusukelephi ukuthi uze uhlale emgwaqweni? (buza ngomndeni, uma basaphila yini nokuthi basebenzaphi).
- B3. Injani impilo yokuphila emgwaqweni? (izinkinga zendawo yokulala, ukudla, ukuthola izingubo, nokuthi ababntu banibuka kanjani?)
- B4. Ngcela ungithsele ikuthi wenzani nje ngosuku?
- B5. Ucabanga ukuthi umphakathi unibheka kanjani njenghoba nihlala emgwaqweni?
- B6. Uke ucabange ukuthi mhlasipe izinto zingenzeke zilunge zishintshe?
- B7. Inkolo idlala yiphi indima empilweni yakho njenghoba uhlala emgwaqweni?
- B8. Likhona usizo enitholayo kubantu? (ukuthi, imali, izinighubo)

C. IZINKINGA ZOKUPHILA

- C1. Eyiphi nje inking enkulu ngokuhlala emgwaqweni?
- C2. Uphila kanjani emgwaqweni? (ubani okusiza ubhekelane nezzinto ezimbi ezenzeka kuwena?)
- C3. Abanye abantu ohlala nabo emgwaqweni babhekelana kanjani nezinto ezimbi ezenzeka kubona emgwaqweni?
- C4. Niphilisana njenomndeni emgwaqweni? Niphila kanjani? (niyahlalisana?, niyaphana?)

C5. Ikhona into ekuhlanganisayo nabangani bakho noma abanye abantu abahlala la emgwaqweni?

D. LIQONDE UKUTHINI IKHAYA

D1. Ngcela ungitshela ukuthi impilo ibinjani ngeskhathi usahlala ekhaya ?

D2. Ngcela uchaze ngekhaya lakho?

D3. Kuqonde ukuthini ukuhlala emgwaqweni kuwena?

D4. Ungakwazi ukubafonela ekhaya manje? (ngobani?)

D5. Injani impilo yokuhlala kwiShelter? (uncamela ukuhlala kwiShelter kunokuhlala ekhaya?)

D6. uncamela ukuhlala kwiShelter kunokuhlala ekhaya?

E. IMICABANGO NEMPILO NENHLALO KAHLE

E1. Injani impilo yakho?

E2. Kukhona okwenzayo ukuthi uzigcine unempilo nenhlalo enhle?

E3. Abanye obaziyo benzani bona?

E4. Impilo nenhlalo enhle iqondeni kuwena nabangani?

E5. Uke ughule njengoba uhlala emgwaqweni? (wawghuliswa yini? Kwakudalwe yini).

E6. Waluthola kanjani usizo ngokughula kwakho? (walutholaphi usizo lwakho? Wawathathaphi amaphilisi?)

E7. Uzizwa kanjani manje?

E8. Ukuzizwe engathi uwedwa? (kudalwa yini?)

E9. Uke uzizwe uphatheke kabi? (kusuke kudalwe yini? Yini eyenza ukuphatheke kabi kuphele).

E10. Ucabanga ukuthi umgwaqo indawo enhle yokukhulisa izingane?

F. IKUSASA

F1. Athini amaphupho akho ekusasa lakho? (uthanda ukusebenzaphi)

F2. Yini oyenzayo ezokusiza ufeze amaphupho wakho?

F3. Yini ucabanga ukuthi uyayidinga ezokusiza ufeze amaphupho wakho?

F4. Kuqondeni kuwena mubona ikusasa labanye lifezeka?

F5. Ubani onekusasa elihle? Ngicela ungiqambela amagama abantu obaziyo abenekusasa elihle?
(yini oyifundile kulabantu?)

F6. Bakhona abantu obaziyo ababehlala emgwaqweni kodwa manje asebenekusasa elihle
besebenza kahle?