Pathways through homelessness:
The perceptions of homeless children
in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

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Declaration:

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own work and that any work that is not mine has been rightfully and properly acknowledged and referenced. This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of a Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed   Date: 8th February 2016

Mrs Anna Wilshire Jones Bornman

Supervisor's approval of this thesis for submission:

As the candidate's supervisor I have approved this thesis for submission.

Signed

Ms. Carol Mitchell   Date: 9th February 2016

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study was to explore children's pathways through homelessness within the South African context. Particular attention was paid to factors influencing children's successful transitions out of homelessness, an aspect of homelessness which has not yet been specifically investigated in South Africa. The research focused on the perspectives of homeless youth on their pathways through homelessness and on their reintegration into their families. Factors influencing children's decision throughout their homeless trajectories and factors playing a role in children transcending the adversity of their circumstances were also explored. The study adopted a qualitative exploratory design using interviews with nine children who had exited or were in the process of exiting homelessness. Drawings as a means of data collection were included for data triangulation. Interviews were conducted at a children's shelter in Pietermaritzburg or in the children's home environments. Interviews and drawings were analysed thematically. The results were presented within an ecological framework, and factors influencing children's pathways in, through and out of homelessness that were prominent in the children's narratives included institutions, relationships and intrapersonal strengths and resources. The study suggested that constructive relationships with shelter staff and parental figures as well as intrapersonal strengths were the most prominent factors in children successfully negotiating their way through their homeless trajectories. Implications for policy and practice include the need for systemic change as well as greater support for shelters and shelter staff.

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Frequently used terms

DSD   Department of Social Development

The shelter   In order to protect its privacy, the children's home where this study was
               conducted will be referred to as *the shelter*.

UKZN   University of KwaZulu Natal

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Despite extensive research into child homelessness both internationally and nationally, the problem persists. Given the startling estimate of 100 million homeless youth worldwide (Arnold & Rotheram-Borus, 2008; Treanor, 1994), the problem is one that demands further and immediate attention. Considering the devastating developmental consequences of homelessness (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2010), research that succeeds in making positive contributions towards policies and practices that govern interventions for homeless children is valuable. Over the past two decades research has been increasingly exploring children's perceptions of their homelessness in the expectation of increasing the efficacy of interventions for them. Furthermore, international research has begun to place greater emphasis on exploring pathways out of homelessness. Thus this study sought to explore children's perspectives of their pathways through homelessness within the South African context, with particular emphasis on their pathways *out* of homelessness.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Objectives of the study

Three objectives were identified in the current study. Firstly, this study sought to supplement South African literature on children's pathways through homelessness. A second objective was to initiate an exploration of pathways out of homelessness within South Africa and to provide a comparison between the findings of the current study with that of international literature. Thirdly, based on the findings, this study sought to provide recommendations for interventions with homeless children.

1.2.2 Aims of the study

Thus, the specific aims of this study are:

1. To gain the perspectives of South African homeless children on:

- Pathways through homelessness.

- Re-integrating with their families or communities.

2. To establish:

- Factors that play a role in children's decisions in their journeys through homelessness.

- Factors that play a role in children's pathways out of homelessness and adversity.

1.3 Research questions

Given these aims and objectives, the study investigated the following four research questions:

1. What are South African homeless children's perspectives regarding pathways through homelessness.

2. What factors play a role in the children's decision making process in their homeless journeys?

3. What are South African homeless children's perspectives regarding reintegrating with their families?

4. What factors play a role in the children's pathways out of homelessness and adversity?

1.4 Methodological Approach

This was a qualitative study of both an exploratory and descriptive nature that adopted the interpretive paradigm. The sample consisted of nine children, both boys and girls, who had previously been homeless and were either currently living in a shelter or had returned to their home or community environments. Data collection took place in the children's naturalistic environments and involved a drawing activity and semi-structured interviews in which participants were invited to share their perceptions of their homeless journeys. Thematic analysis was employed in the interpretation of both the narratives and the drawings.

1.5 Terminology

Frequently used terms through this dissertation are defined in the following way:

1. Child/Children: For the purposes of this study, the definition of children will refer to the legal definition of minors in South Africa, according to South Africa's child care act: Under the age of 18 years (Chetty, 1997).

2. Youth: The term *youth* incorporates a broader population, including both children as well as young adults.

3. Homeless Children: The following factors are incorporated into the definition of homeless children in this study:
   - Children have spent some time sleeping on the streets.
   - While sleeping on the streets, children lacked responsible adult care.

4. Prosocial: Socialised behaviours and ways of relating such as attending school and maintaining positive family relationships (Milburn et al., 2009).

5. Ecological: This term refers to Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm of human development.

1.6 Outline of the study

The trajectories of homeless children, both internationally and within South Africa, are influenced by an amalgamation of many factors on many different levels of connection with the children. Thus, given the nature of child homelessness, throughout this dissertation homelessness is considered from an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

After this introductory chapter, the second chapter orientates child homelessness both globally and locally and presents a review of research on child homelessness within Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). Following this, Chapter three describes the methodological procedures of the current study and in Chapter four the results of the study are presented with themes organised according to the ecological paradigm. Excerpts from the children's narratives and some drawings are included. This is followed by a discussion and interpretation of the results in Chapter five in which an attempt is made to answer the research questions. Finally, Chapter six concludes this dissertation through

reiterating the main findings and discussing their implications for interventions. The limitations of the current study are discussed and suggestions for future research provided.

2. Local and global perspectives on child homelessness

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of child homelessness prior to a discussion of the lives of homeless children within Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework. The impact of including children's perspectives in research and interventions designed to alleviate their plight are examined. Finally the significance of research that focuses on pathways out of homelessness and reintegration with families is considered.

Whilst some studies of homelessness highlighted the commonalities that children in Africa and South Africa have with the rest of the world (DSD, 2010; Ward & Seager, 2010), other studies have sought to elucidate the differences and advocate a localised understanding of homelessness (Bourdillon, 1994; Mufune, 2000). Given the vast body of international literature on child homelessness, a general understanding of homelessness is provided as a backdrop to homelessness within the South African context. However, although some aspects of homelessness are translatable cross-culturally and across different societies, others are not. Hence the notion of homelessness is presented within both a global as well as an African context and an attempt has been made to foreground the differences within the African context.

2.1.1 Strength versus problem based approaches

The literature on homeless children usually favours one of two approaches: A strength based approach in understanding the lives of homeless children emphasises resilience and coping, while a pathology based approach focuses on problems and difficulties.

2.1.1.1 Problem focused approach

In the past, research tended to focus on the problems that homeless children faced and the challenges facing service providers in dealing with these children (Bender, Thompson,

McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007). Within a problem oriented framework, homeless children were seen as being psychologically disturbed, educationally challenged, criminally deviant or socially dysfunctional (Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, & Nackerud, 2000). They were seen as victims of poverty stricken, abusive or broken families. While this is frequently true, recognising only the deficits and the adversity the children face is restrictive. Neglecting their resilience can further hinder the development and psychosocial well-being of these individuals and limit their opportunities and choices (Bender et al., 2007).

2.1.1.2 Strength based approach

Along with an emerging focus on resilience, research with the homeless has begun to place greater emphasis on the internal and external strengths and resources available to homeless individuals. Interest in a strength based approach moved research away from the focus on its causes and consequences and instead emphasised solutions (Kurtz, Lindsey, Jarvis, & Nackerud, 2000). Knowing and emphasising the strengths of a homeless child can help them in their journey out of homelessness as well as enhance service provision and programmes designed to assist these children. While the needs of homeless children should be attended to, a focus on strengths can empower these children to mobilise their own resources and make positive choices that will enable them to achieve their goals (Bender et al., 2007). Although the transition to a strength based approach is challenging (Lindsey et al., 2000), it is nevertheless valuable as it can build the supportive capacities of families of these children as they attempt to exit homelessness (Mayock, Corr, & O'Sullivan, 2011).

2.1.1.3 Towards a balanced perspective

There is a disjuncture between literature that pointed to the problems of homeless people and to literature that described them as adaptive and resilient. A strength based approach may be perceived as idealistic, and a problem focused perspective may tend to over-pathologise. Bender et al. (2007) noted that a balance needs to be found between acknowledging the strengths and limitations of homeless children. Thus, while the dichotomy between the strength and problem based approaches may be somewhat disconcerting, a holistic view of the lives of homeless children is presented below in order to more fully understand their circumstances.

2.2 An overview of homelessness – African and global

2.2.1 Definitions

2.2.1.1 Homelessness

The definition of homelessness is by no means fixed as the literature on homeless children abounds with varying descriptions of what it means to be homeless. For some, homelessness in children refers to both a lack of adult care as well as the lack of a place to call home (Ennew, 2003). On the other hand, in a literature review on child and family homelessness, Grant, Gracy, Goldsmith, Shapiro, and Redlener (2013) make a distinction between homeless children who are homeless with their families and those who are separated from their families.

Distinguishing between children *of* the streets and children *on* the streets has become a more or less accepted means of defining street children. Children *of* the streets typically refers to those children who sleep on the streets while children *on* the streets refers to those children who have a home to spend the night but spend large parts of the day on the streets without adult supervision (Ennew, 2003). However, in his monograph of one Maxwell Rupondo's interactions with street children in Harare, Bourdillon (1994) indicated that this distinction is not useful in Africa where the lives of homeless children defy such categories. In a literature review of social science research on homelessness in southern Africa, Mufune (2000) concurred, arguing that the two groups are not that different and that the children's means and circumstances differ from first world countries where there are more resources and greater access to services (Richter, 1991).

In a qualitative study with six homeless high school children still in attendance at schools in Chicago, Aviles de Bradley (2011) noted that children's perspectives of homelessness do not necessarily agree with the definitions that adults provide. Their understanding of homelessness expresses their isolation and loneliness upon having to leave home. Thus the meaning they give to homelessness expresses the social and emotional impact of their circumstances. Homelessness is not just about lacking a roof. It is more about the breakdown of family relationships and missing the emotional stability of a secure home. Vissing and Diament (1997, p. 167) suggest the term *housing distress* as a suitable definition that includes children's sense of their circumstances: "the lack of a stable physical structure in which the

adolescent feels he or she emotionally belongs". Yet the term 'housing' is rather clinical and seems to lack the element of emotional warmth that Vissing and Diament (1997) wish to convey. As of yet, it seems there is no term that captures the essence of children's perceptions of their circumstances.

2.2.1.2 Reintegration

Helping children to exit homelessness is a key outcome for individuals and organisations working with homeless children (Milburn et al., 2009). According to Milburn et al. (2009), given the negative consequences of street life, it is desirable for children to return to their homes. Reintegration involves helping children return to living with an adult within their communities who is able to care for them. However, homeless children develop behaviours and mannerisms that, while adaptive to street life, are not suitable in mainstream society (Bourdillon, 1994; Ward & Seager, 2010). Thus, the process of reintegration involves not only finding a home for homeless children, but helping them adapt once more to living within mainstream society (cf. DSD, 2010).

2.2.2 The extent of youth homelessness

Given its nature, computing statistics of homelessness is no easy task. Homeless youth do not have addresses, they fear and avoid the authorities and their living circumstances are fluid and unpredictable (DSD, 2010; Mufune, 2000). Therefore counts of homeless youth are no more than estimates (Cross & Seager, 2010) and depend on the definition given of what constitutes homelessness. Thus, while many studies discuss the difficulties relating to obtaining national statistics of homeless youth, few have attempted to do so.

Globally, Arnold and Rotheram-Borus (2008) estimated there to be 100 million homeless youth, including those who are homeless with their families, with the majority occurring in the developing world (DSD, 2010). According to Casa Alianza (2000, as cited in DSD, 2010) 10 million homeless youth were estimated to be living in Africa. The number of homeless youth has been increasing in South Africa since the 1970s (Mufune, 2000). The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, an organisation founded to improve the lives of children, estimated there to be 10 000 homeless youth in South Africa (Treanor, 1994). If the number of street children is indeed increasing, as suggested by Chetty (1997) as well as by Mufune (2000, the estimate of 10 000 is likely to be out of date. According to

Strategy and Guidelines for Children Living and Working on the Streets, a governmental report compiled by the Department of Social Development, 13275 homeless youth were found on the streets during a census conducted in 2004 by the National Alliance for Street Children (DSD, 2010). More recent national statistics are not available, although in 2010 the Human Sciences Research Council (Cross & Seager, 2010) estimated that there were approximately 3000-3500 homeless youth in the cities of Gauteng alone. Though somewhat outdated, in a book about childhood adversity in South Africa, Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) quoted similar estimates of 10 000 homeless children. However, they provide an estimate of roughly one million children 'on' the streets of South Africa. Given the fluidity of the 'of' and 'on' definitions within the South African context and the vulnerability of homeless children, these are worrying statistics and thus the issue of child homelessness is one that continually needs to be addressed.

2.3 Homelessness within an ecological framework

2.3.1 The ecological model

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development, in order to fully understand an individual, their entire ecological system must be considered. The model is based on two propositions about human development. Firstly, an individual's development is influenced by complex interactions between their uniqueness and their immediate environment, particularly enduring interactions such as parent-child or child-child relationships that may buffer detrimental environmental factors. Secondly, these interactions are influenced by the individual's unique characteristics and their immediate environment, as well as the broader environment in which a family is embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

Bronfenbrenner described five interlocking subsystems in which an individual is embedded: the microsystem; mesosystem; exosystem; macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). These five systems guide and influence the growth of the individual. The *microsystem* refers to an individual's immediate environment in which direct contact occurs between the individual and others. For homeless children, this microsystem includes interactions between parent and child and between children and the shelter staff at homeless shelters.

Microsystems interact within the *mesosystem*. For example, interactions between a child's parents and their shelter staff occur within the mesosystem. Similar interactions also occur within the *exosystem*. However, only one of the two systems that interact within the *exosystem* is in direct contact with the individual concerned. For example, the interaction between a child's parent and their work environment impacts on the family system. The *macrosystem* refers to the cultural, and socio-political environment in which development occurs and includes the laws, policies, values, resources, knowledge and hazards of the wider social environment. Finally the *chronosystem* refers to the impact of time on development, such as the developmental period of the child during which events occur or the impact of cohort factors on an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

For a holistic picture of homelessness, factors influencing pathways through homelessness can be discussed within an ecological framework as has been done to some extent in the homeless literature. Although, in accordance with ecological theory, these factors do overlap and thus cannot be neatly separated from one another, they can nevertheless be roughly considered within two wide categories: 1) The broad ecological systems include chronosystem and macrosystem factors; 2) The inner ecological systems include exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem factors.

2.3.2 Chronosystem and macrosystem factors

From a chronosystemic perspective, i.e. this particular time period in the world's history, the factors that are currently prevalent in the *macrosystem*, particularly in South Africa, include poverty, the socioeconomic environment (including unemployment), governmental policies, HIV and urbanisation.

In an ongoing qualitative study in Dublin with 40 homeless youth, aged 14 – 22, Mayock et al. (2011) grouped the causes of homelessness into socio-political, familial and personal factors that overlap and interact in such a way as to result in children leaving home. International literature places homelessness against a backdrop of poverty that impacts on individuals' microsystems, thereby resulting in difficult family circumstances and relationships. Within this environment, many of these children experience personal difficulties, including mental health problems (Nebbitt, House, Thompson, & Pollio, 2007),

school difficulties (Grant et al., 2013; Nebbitt et al., 2007) and negative peer influence (Ward & Seager, 2010).

Although many of the microsystem factors influencing the phenomenon of homelessness appear to be similar globally, some socio-political influences that form part of the macrosystem are unique within the South African context. Ward and Seager (2010) conducted a mixed method study of 305 homeless, or previously homeless, adolescents and young adults and their service providers in South Africa. Their findings point to industrialisation, urbanisation and westernisation as underlying factors in the poverty that results in homelessness. Urbanisation occurred as a result of industrialisation and the extreme poverty experienced in rural environments following apartheid policies. However, as Treanor (1994) has noted, once families had moved to urban areas, employment continued to be difficult to find and as a result children would be found on the streets trying to supplement their families' incomes.

Urbanisation as well as the forced separation of families during apartheid has resulted in the breakdown of the African kinship network (Mufune, 2000). Extended family ties were further weakened by westernisation and its emphasis on the nuclear family unit (Ward & Seager, 2010). A consequence of weakened family ties was that children were not able to turn to extended families in times of crisis within their nuclear family (Ward & Seager, 2010). This was compounded by the experience of extreme poverty in which individuals, concerned with their own survival, had few resources to extend to other more distant family members (Treanor, 1994).

While the HIV/AIDS epidemic is a global phenomenon, South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV worldwide (Knight, 2006). HIV/AIDS has in many cases led to the loss of a child's primary caregiver/s. Given the weakened kinship ties, many of these children do not have a home to turn to (Ward & Seager, 2010). In their South African study, Ward and Seager (2010) found it is the vulnerability that orphaned children are open to that results in their homelessness, as they must leave home to escape poverty or neglect from remaining parents, or abuse from new partners or other community members.

In a review of six programmes for the prevention of HIV in homeless youth, Arnold and Rotheram-Borus (2008) noted that just as the HIV/AIDS epidemic is causally related to

homelessness in South Africa, homeless children are also at greater risk for contracting HIV. Bourdillon (1994, p. 523) described sex as 'everyday language' amongst homeless children as sexual relations and activities amongst the population of this monograph were frequent events. Mufune (2000) found that homeless children lack knowledge about HIV/AIDS, they are sexually active earlier in life and have more sexual partners and are thus more likely to contract HIV/AIDS. On the streets, homeless youth were found to be at risk for sexual abuse by older street peers (Treanor, 1994) which impacts on the HIV status of homeless children.

Many of the interventions to prevent or alleviate the problem of child homelessness are directed toward the inner ecological systems. However, in 2010, the Department of Social Development published a document in order to address the issue of child homelessness. Within this document, the Department of Social Development acknowledged the need for macrosystemic interventions and suggested multidisciplinary collaboration across various governmental ministries as well as amongst non-governmental organisations in order to alleviate the plight of homeless children in general (DSD, 2010).

2.3.3 Exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem factors

The more immediate systems of the individual are more explicit and extensive in the literature that describes the homeless experience. Factors influencing pathways through homelessness can be grouped into institutional, relational and intrapersonal characteristics and are discussed in terms of the role they play in children's pathways into, through and out of homelessness.

2.3.3.1 Institutional factors

Schools and shelter care play a major role in children's homeless trajectories and are extensively discussed in the literature on homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; DSD, 2010; Nebbitt et al., 2007; Stewart, Reutter, Letourneau, Makwarimba, & Hungler, 2010). The literature also highlights the influence of the police services, health services, social resources and spirituality.

Chetty (1997) conducted an exploratory study which involved interviews with 193 children at homeless shelters in Durban, South Africa, and 71 questionnaires completed by service providers. The results indicated that services and resources available to homeless children

were limited and funding inadequate. Furthermore, service provision for vulnerable populations in South Africa was found to be poorly managed and impeded by the logistical demands of the Department of Social Development (Shelter Director[1], personal communication, 28 January, 2015). In a qualitative study in Canada involving interviews and focus groups with 35 homeless youth between 15 and 25 years of age and 27 service providers, Stewart et al. (2010) noted 13 years later that services for homeless children were available but that they did not meet the needs of the homeless children and were often inaccessible. Thus services for homeless children seem to be inadequate globally. Belief in the service, and confidence in the advice and support provided, as well as the need for the service were found to be factors influencing children's use of services (Reid & Klee, 1999; Stewart et al., 2010).

Although familial and intrapersonal factors playing an aetiological role in children's homelessness are more extensively discussed in the literature, some institutional factors did seem to contribute towards homelessness. Independence, trust and discrimination were consistent themes in the literature on homelessness and relate to children feeling disappointed by the adult world. These children found it difficult to trust (Stewart et al., 2010), given that they have been failed on many occasions by adults from a variety of systems, as well as by social services that were meant to provide care for them yet were unable to do so, in part due to the heavy demands on social services (Bourdillon, 1994; Hyde, 2005; Ward & Seager, 2010). They distanced themselves from social networks and did not seek help (Stewart et al., 2010). Once children were cut off from their families and access to social support, they had to learn to survive and came to value their independence (Hyde, 2005).

Hyde (2005), for example, noted that for many, homelessness is a last resort. In her qualitative study involving life history interviews with a sample of 50 homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 23 from the streets of Los Angeles, the young adults reported seeking help from adults within the school system as well as from counselling services prior to taking to the streets. Yet, the homeless youth felt that their requests for help were not noted or attended to.

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[1] In order to protect the privacy of the shelter and its director, his/her name has been omitted and he/she will henceforward be referred to as "Director".

Once children's pathways turned to street life, they were found to experience greater difficulty in accessing the services offered by various institutions and were sometimes vulnerable to exploitation through various institutions. For example, literature on homelessness cites many examples of homeless children being under constant threat of victimisation through police harassment (Bourdillon, 1994; Chetty, 1997; Mufune, 2000). The lack of a fixed address meant that the children experienced difficulty in accessing health care services (Mayock et al., 2011). Since one of the consequences of homelessness involves loss of the basic essentials of life (Treanor, 1994), many children suffer from malnutrition and the lack of shelter and warmth often results in ill health (Treanor, 1994).

For youth, one of the most fundamental consequences of homelessness is interruption to schooling. Some children try to maintain enough consistency and stability in order to matriculate. Aviles de Bradley (2011) noted that school can provide stability in the lives of these youth, particularly when the children get support and assistance at the schools. However, in many instances, school attendance becomes sporadic and ultimately stops altogether (Aviles de Bradley, 2011). Dropping out of school has consequences on the cognitive development of homeless youth with poor attention, memory and concentration being characteristics of homeless children (DSD, 2010). Although these cognitive features may well play a causal role in poor school attendance, they are exacerbated by the lack of cognitive stimulation and the drug use characteristic of street life. Failing to become educated ultimately leads to a cycle of hopelessness and poverty. As these youth become adults, they find themselves unable to find employment and thus fail to improve their living circumstances (Treanor, 1994).

According to the Department of Social Development (DSD, 2010), education is influential in helping individuals to transcend the adverse circumstances of their childhood, thus a major intervention focus should be to encourage children's education or, when traditional education is not possible, vocational training. In a longitudinal quantitative study using interviews with a sample of 183 homeless adolescents in California, Milburn et al. (2009) found school attendance to be predictive of successful transitions out of homelessness. School is necessary for future success, and it places children in contact with adults who may act as mentors as well as prosocial peers. As a normalising experience, it encourages behaviours adaptive to mainstream living. However homeless children face difficulties in the South African context in accessing the school system. Homeless children are likely to be placed in grades

significantly below their age level and may thus find school experiences demoralising and there are limited opportunities for vocational training (Director, personal communication, 28 January, 2015). Similarly, homeless children in the United States have also been reported to experience difficulties with education both in terms of their academic progress as well as in accessing school services (Canfield, Teasley, Abell, & Randolph, 2012; Mohan & Shields, 2014).

A number of sources mentioned spirituality and faith in God as a source of hope, comfort and strength for homeless children, one that has helped them to make a success of their lives (Bender et al., 2007; Lindsey et al., 2000). Given this, Lindsey et al. (2000) recommended tapping into children's beliefs, traditional or non-traditional, as this may be valuable in bringing about changes in behaviour and attitudes.

Institutions that have been most frequently discussed in the literature with regards to interventions aimed at assisting homeless children include religious bodies, schools and shelter care. However, according to the Department of Social Development (DSD, 2010), providing for homeless children is a complex process requiring a multi-sectorial response and should involve the development of a trusting relationship in which children are respected and their autonomy and initiative encouraged (Levy, 1998).

2.3.3.1.1 Shelter Care

The role of shelter care has been extensively discussed in the literature as it plays an integral role in children's transitions out of homelessness, and shelters often take on a mediatory function between the children, their families and communities as well as other institutions. Children need both practical support in accessing basic necessities such as food, clothing and refuge, as well as educational and emotional support, and shelters can provide for all of these needs. The Department of Social Development (DSD, 2010) indicated that care must be taken that children do not become dependent on shelter care, thus both immediate relief for their most pressing concerns as well as longer term approaches are necessary in approaching the problem of homelessness. As part of a larger qualitative study on youth homelessness in North Carolina and Georgia, Kurtz et al. (2000) interviewed 12 homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 25 who had successfully transitioned out of their homelessness. Kurtz et al. (2000) reported on both formal and informal help that homeless youth received during their

homelessness. The youth in this study spoke of the wide array of services provided by shelters, apart from basic necessities. These services included assistance with education, life skills training, such as anger management and relational skills training, as well as counselling or therapeutic support.

Stages of shelter care

Literature regarding the experience of shelter care can be roughly categorised into three phases: pre-shelter contact, life at the shelter and after care support. During pre-shelter contact, outreach workers seek to establish communication with homeless children and, through after care support, children and their families receive ongoing support and care from shelter staff (Lindsey et al., 2000; Nebbitt et al., 2007).

Early intervention programmes involve the prevention of homelessness through intervening with children and families before children leave home (Lindsey et al., 2000). However, in some instances the prevention of homelessness fails. Research has found that with time children develop behavioural habits that are adaptive to street life but not suitable for living in mainstream society. The longer they spend on the streets, the harder children find the transition out of homelessness and the less likely this is to occur (Reid & Klee, 1999; Ward & Seager, 2010). Thus early intervention also involves establishing communication with children of the streets early on in their homeless careers (Lindsey et al., 2000).

In a monograph on communicating and interacting with homeless individuals, Levy (1998) described the process of establishing communication and building a working alliance between the homeless individual and the support staff at shelters as perhaps the most important part of the process. Support staff face a demanding challenge in this respect as research has shown that adolescents in general tend to withdraw from social support (Stewart et al., 2010) and street children particularly tend not to seek help from, and lack trust in, formal institutions such as shelters (Kurtz et al., 2000). The street children in Hyde's (2005) study, in Los Angeles, valued their independence and feared having this curtailed in accessing shelters. The youth interviewed in the study by Stewart et al. (2010) expressed concerns about the disclosure of their confidences and feared not being taken seriously. Street children may also lack knowledge about services available or not be able to access them for transport or other reasons (Stewart et al., 2010).

In Manchester, homeless youth aged 14-25 were interviewed about their views of services for homeless youth (Reid & Klee, 1999). The children expressed a lack of knowledge of services, poor confidence in services, and seemed reluctant to approach services. It is thus important that shelter staff involved in outreach programmes adopt a phased approach by allowing children to become used to their presence and build trust through gradual exposure to shelters (Chetty, 1997; Levy, 1998). For effective care, shelter staff should recognise that children also need to be ready to receive help.

The next stage of the shelter care involves actual life in the shelter during which time the role of shelter staff can be said to be one of assisting and supporting homeless individuals in establishing and reaching their goals (Levy, 1998). In their qualitative study involving interviews with a sample of 25 shelter staff and 21 homeless youth who had lived at shelters in Kansas and Missouri in the United States, Nebbitt et al. (2007) found that children benefitted from their experiences in shelter care through having learned greater maturity, responsibility and obedience as well as the development of listening skills and positive coping strategies. This learning assisted children in their successful transitions out of homelessness. Similarly, sports activities such as outreach soccer programmes were found to be rehabilitative and constructive in assisting children's pathways out of homelessness (Van Blerk, 2011). Shelter staff who focused on children's relational skills and improved family relations were more successful in assisting children's transitions than shelters that provided for children's subsistence needs alone (Milburn et al., 2009). The role of relationships at this stage is of prime importance and thus is discussed in greater detail, in Section 3.3.2 below.

Shelter care does not end when children leave the shelter, having either returned to their previous homes or having been placed in new homes. Shelter staff can continue to play a large role in assisting children in adapting to their new environments (Levy, 1998) and families in coping with crises such that the reintegration process is enhanced rather than entrapping children back into the difficult circumstances that they tried to escape in the first place (Chetty, 1997). Nebbitt et al. (2007) found that after care services that maintained positive changes, familial engagement in treatment, and positive relationships with shelter staff were the keys to successful outcomes of children using shelter care.

Strengths and limitations of shelter care

Research has outlined numerous strengths and limitations of various approaches to shelter care. Effective shelters tend to have the following characteristics: a balance between reliability, accessibility, a firm rule structure and clear boundaries on the one hand; and the flexibility to deal with the unique circumstances of the individual child on the other (Kurtz et al., 2000; Stewart et al., 2010). Bourdillon (1994) suggested that successful shelters respected the children's need for freedom, such as the half way houses in South Africa which allowed children access to the shelter and to education but on their own terms. Shelters that acknowledged that children needed more than practical support and that provided children with counselling and emotional support in which they could explore their identities and work on their self-esteem were able to provide a valuable service (Stewart et al., 2010).

Some limitations of shelter care have also been noted. The short to medium term nature of many homeless shelters in South Africa is limiting in that most homeless children need the reliability and stability of long and stable relationships with caring adults (Kurtz et al., 2000). Furthermore, the lack of resources and funding that homeless shelters are faced with makes service provision to homeless children challenging (Stewart et al., 2010), particularly in less developed countries such as South Africa where poverty is rampant. In Chetty's (1997) research in Durban, she noted that the lack of integration and working together between the different sectors providing for homeless children impeded access to the resources that are available.

Ambivalence towards shelter care

A dichotomy exists in the perceptions of shelter care. Some studies have found that children reported that the help they received was critical in their transitions out of homelessness and that shelter care was more humane than alternative housing methods such as places of safety (Chetty, 1997; Kurtz et al., 2000; Reid & Klee, 1999). Deforge, Zehnder, Minick, and Carmon (2001) found that the children they interviewed appreciated the security shelters provided and the provision of basic necessities such as food and clothing.

On the other hand, shelters that had rigid or unrealistic structures and difficult or intrusive procedures for accessing their resources were found to be limited in the help they were able to provide for children (Stewart et al., 2010). Reid and Klee (1999) reported that adverse

experiences in shelter care result in a distrust of similar institutions that are designed to help. The service providers involved in the study by Chetty (1997) indicated concerns over the services available to homeless children, such as the lack of shelter care, funds and responsibility for the problem.

Mufune (2000) discussed southern African approaches towards the phenomenon of child homelessness which include police containment, punishment of homeless children, and forced reintegration of children into schools. Shelter care was considered a more humane and more effective approach. However, Williams (1996, p. 242) noted that "many African institutions for children have records of abuse, are overcrowded, understaffed, and underpaid". Although research has revealed discrepancies in reports of abuse amongst homeless children (cf. Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Milburn et al., 2009), given the negative consequences of abuse, addressing the possibility of abusiveness in shelters should be a priority.

Promoting resilience in shelters

In the larger qualitative study conducted in Georgia and North Carolina, mentioned earlier, Lindsey et al. (2000) reported on the personal strengths and resources of the 12 participants in their pathways through homelessness. According to Lindsey et al. (2000), resilience plays a significant healing role. Thus, they recommended that shelter staff can develop and improve upon the resilience of the homeless children in their care and facilitate the enhancement of children's personal attributes. Encouraging discourse of the strength based approach, discussed in Section 2.1.1.2, may help service providers develop a greater awareness of the incredible internal resources and coping skills homeless children must have in order to survive on the streets (Lindsey et al., 2000). By identifying their strengths and recognising ways in which children may have gained from their experiences, service providers can begin to build on and enhance these strengths and from this, children can begin to learn new skills and ways of coping (Lindsey et al., 2000). By encouraging children to recognise and make choices, service providers can help children to develop a sense of control in their lives. This is motivating and encourages change and persistence (Bender et al., 2007).

This is particularly important for homeless children who display low self-confidence and esteem. By encouraging children to set and reach their goals (Louw & Louw, 2014), praising

them for appropriate behaviour, and by caring, listening and being respectful, shelter staff can be invaluable to children in encouraging the development of self-esteem (Deforge et al., 2001). Thus, according to Stewart et al. (2010), interventions should focus on individualised emotional support and affirmation.

2.3.3.2 Relational factors

Although the lives of homeless children have been found to be littered with volatile relationships that play an aetiological role in their homelessness (Nebbitt et al., 2007; Ward & Seager, 2010), relationships have also proved to be a major source of support in children's pathways out of homelessness (Kurtz et al., 2000; Mayock et al., 2011; Milburn et al., 2009). Perhaps the most significant finding in the study by Nebbitt et al. (2007) was the importance that children placed on relationships as they cope with the turbulence and instability of their lifestyles. Moreover, the substantial role of peer relations during children's lives on the streets has been well documented (Bourdillon, 1994; Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). While the homeless children interviewed in the study by Lindsey et al. (2000) expressed a need to be independent and self-reliant, they also expressed a need for connection and support from others who understood them and their experiences. Thus it appears that relationships with people are valued over the intervention programmes designed to assist the children (Kurtz et al., 2000).

2.3.3.2.1 Peers

Adolescence is a time in which peer relations become increasingly significant and influential in children's lives and development (Milburn et al., 2009). Children spend more time with friends and are more heavily influenced by their friends. It is thus unsurprising that peers play a substantial role in homeless children's homeless trajectories. Milburn et al. (2009) found that their participants frequently mentioned support from friends in their journeys through homelessness.

Many articles cite negative peer influence as an aetiological factor in children's pathways into homelessness (Mayock et al., 2011; Nebbitt et al., 2007; Ward & Seager, 2010). Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994), for example, wrote of children playing truant from school, and later home, due to teasing related to their poverty. Similarly, Milburn et al. (2009) found that the children's conflictual manner of relating with peers led to greater interaction with

similarly troubled peers, resulting in a downward spiral. The youth in the study by Nebbitt et al. (2007) spoke of being influenced by peers in their engagement in risk behaviours, such as substance use and violence, which in part led to them being placed in the children's shelter. The youth and service providers in Ward and Seager's (2010) study cited peer pressure as a factor in their pathways into homelessness. In some instances the children ran away with friends. Zide and Cherry (1992) discussed 'couch surfing' - a gradual pathway into homelessness in which homeless children, in their efforts to escape difficult home circumstances, moved from friend to friend and gradually came to live on the streets.

Once on the streets, children and adults alike experience loneliness (Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Richter, 1991). Yet at the same time there is a strong sense of social support with children forming surrogate families and peer communities to support and care for one another (Bender et al., 2007). Peer communities are one of the most frequently mentioned external factors that play a role in children coping with and navigating their way through their adverse street experiences (Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2000; Louw & Louw, 2014). Street peer networks provide emotional support and practical assistance in the form of security and information about resources and are formed to abet survival on the streets (Chetty, 1997).

Although peers may be a source of support on the street, they may also prolong children's life on the streets (Milburn et al., 2009). Within peer communities, children become involved in a street way of life that involves risk behaviours such as prostitution, theft and violent crime as well as substance use (Milburn et al., 2009). Greater interaction with such peer networks is associated with a decreased chance of successfully exiting homelessness (Milburn et al., 2009). Substance abuse is a way of alleviating the cold, hunger and misery of the conditions of life (Treanor, 1994), and is encouraged by a culture of substance use within peer communities on the streets (Bourdillon, 1994). Thus many homeless youth may fall into a cycle of substance abuse that often starts but does not end with sniffing glue (Treanor, 1994).

Just as peers are involved in the lives of homeless children as they enter their homeless states and navigate their way through street life, so are friends involved in children's transitions out of homelessness.

Milburn et al. (2009) found that although contact with antisocial peers was a risk factor in children's homeless trajectories, contact with prosocial peers was a protective factor. Contact

with peers who are not street oriented can encourage and motivate children as they reintegrate into mainstream society (Kidd & Davidson, 2007). While Milburn et al. (2009) recommended investigating what constitutes prosocialism amongst street peers, they nevertheless indicated that prosocial peers who live at home and have positive family relationships and who attend school or have jobs, provide protective influences as homeless children transition back home, and can increase the chances of exiting homelessness.

During this period, when contact with adults is often fraught with conflict, friends can be a source of unconditional support in which children can confide and place trust. In the study by Kurtz et al. (2000), the homeless youth reported that prosocial friends enabled the reintegration process by being positive role models or by providing a motivation for change. The youth in the studies by Mayock et al. (2011) and Milburn et al. (2009) spoke of the necessity of breaking ties with former street peers and learning to avoid negative peers and negative peer influence.

2.3.3.2.2 Shelter staff

Children's perspectives highlight how essential it is to provide children with emotional support from reliable and trustworthy adults who are able to listen and care and help them to develop self-esteem and explore their self-identities. The participants in the study by Stewart et al. (2010) mentioned the significance of helpful relationships with shelter staff as their journey turns toward shelter care. Similarly, the homeless youth of the Kurtz et al. (2000) study frequently mentioned such support from caring shelter staff and highlighted the importance of these stable and caring relationships in their transitions out of homelessness. According to Nebbitt et al. (2007) the key to successful shelters lies in a positive relationship between staff and homeless children.

Beneficial relationships

Characteristics of beneficial shelter staff included being attentive, honest, non-judgemental, humane and respectful towards the children yet at the same time able to hold youth accountable and set boundaries. Trustworthiness was an important characteristic highlighted by children, one that helped them to feel secure that their confidences would be respected (Kurtz et al., 2000; Stewart et al., 2010). Stewart et al. (2010) found that children benefitted from shelter staff with personal experience in homelessness or with greater experience in

working with similar children. Children benefitted most from relationships with carers who were able to transcend professional boundaries and to be emotionally invested, caring, warm and supportive (Kurtz et al., 2000). Chetty (1997) highlighted the need for children to be interacting with trained professionals.

Destructive relationships

On the other hand interaction with homeless children can be frustrating and disheartening, particularly when children's growth is not apparent (Lindsey et al., 2000) and sometimes problems can be compounded by shelter staff (Chetty, 1997). Characteristics of unhelpful shelter staff included being uncaring, uninvolved and the misuse of the power dynamic between the shelter staff and the children (Kurtz et al., 2000). Shelters with shelter staff who lacked understanding, and where conflict was high, were limited in their ability to help homeless children (cf. Stewart et al., 2010). Research stresses that negative experiences with shelter staff result in children being sceptical and mistrustful. Children mentioned concerns with shelter staff pathologising, breaking their promises and treating them like objects (Kurtz et al., 2000). Breaking confidentiality was an important factor in the breakdown of trust, such that many youth would prefer to call confidential helplines rather than speak to shelter staff (Kurtz et al., 2000), although in South Africa access to this kind of communication is unlikely to be an option for homeless children.

2.3.3.2.3 Family

More so than peers and shelter staff, family and home circumstances play a significant role in children's homeless trajectories. Against the backdrop of poverty noted above, families are beset with difficult circumstances. Conflictual family relationships have been found to contribute significantly toward the journey into homelessness (Chetty, 1997; Nebbitt et al., 2007). Housing instability, violence, abuse and neglect, conflict within the parental unit and parental substance abuse are all characteristic of the family backgrounds of homeless children (Chetty, 1997; Mayock et al., 2011). Parents of runaway children tend to have limited parenting skills such as inadequate disciplinarian and communication skills and are emotionally unavailable (Hyde, 2005; Nebbitt et al., 2007). It is not surprising that within this environment, many of these children experience personal difficulties.

Given their difficult environments, leaving home for some children is one of the few choices available to them and is a means of coping with their difficult circumstances (Kurtz et al., 2000). It is not a problem to be solved, but a solution to their problems (Hyde, 2005). Many take to the streets in the hope of survival and a better life where they hope to find employment, excitement and opportunities (Ward & Seager, 2010).

As noted above, the breakdown of the African kinship network and the destruction of the African family unit have played an aetiological role in child homelessness in the South African context (Mufune, 2000). Along with the breakdown in family ties, Bourdillon (1994) noted that westernisation within the African context has made it more difficult to assist children out of their homelessness, as the children lack connection with extended family who may, under other circumstances, have been more willing to take on the responsibility of an orphaned or neglected child.

Although conflictual family relationships play an aetiological role in children's pathways into homelessness, recent studies have also shown that supportive and improved family relationships are a crucial factor in children's pathways out of homelessness (Mayock et al., 2011; Milburn et al., 2009; Nebbitt et al., 2007). Supportive family relations need not be limited to the nuclear family. Kurtz et al. (2000) found that family members such as siblings or uncles may all play an important role in pathways out of homelessness, although positive or improved parental relationships are the most valuable forms of care (Milburn et al., 2009). Milburn et al. (2009) found positive mother-child engagement to be the singular most influential factor in children's successful transitions out of homelessness. Although Milburn et al. (2009) indicated that these findings seem to contradict the typical perception of poor family relationships as a causal factor in homelessness, it is not impossible that family relationships that are causal factors may also become supportive factors as children exit homelessness. However in some instances, family relationships were not always found to be constructive in children exiting homelessness and in these cases, it was better for children to maintain some distance from their families (Mayock et al., 2011).

Although family members can provide concrete help in the form of finances, housing, transport, school support and health care (Kurtz et al., 2000), improvements in relationships and emotional support are valuable. For successful transitions to occur, the entire family system needs to change and parental or family involvement with social services and shelter

staff during and after children's shelter stays are predictive of successful outcomes (Nebbitt et al., 2007). Social services can assist children most by concentrating on helping families and children to re-establish ties and improve their relationships (Mayock et al., 2011). Mayock et al. (2011) found that improving communication and trust and encouraging all members of the family to take greater responsibility for both their contribution to the problems, and for their resolution of the difficulties, are important factors in improving family relationships. Although this is an incremental process, it can be achieved through the mediatory role of social services and shelter staff.

2.3.3.3 Intrapersonal factors

Intrapersonal factors form aspects of the innermost ecological system that impact on and are influenced by children's homeless trajectories. Intrapersonal factors influence children's pathways into homelessness. Life on the streets affects children's social, cognitive and emotional development, while personal attributes influence the way they cope with street life. Certain personal attributes such as the ability to learn are discussed in the literature as intrapersonal factors that are influential in children's pathways out of homelessness (Reid & Klee, 1999; Bender et al., 2007; DSD, 2010;).

It is in the literature describing intrapersonal aspects of homelessness that the dichotomy of the strength versus problem-based approaches is most apparent. Research has outlined the troublesome nature of homeless children, as well as the devastating effects of homelessness on the lives of the youth, who suffer under these conditions of living. In a review of the homeless situation in South Africa, Cross and Seager (2010) identify homeless people as amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised people of South African society today. Yet Hyde (2005) highlighted their sense of agency and le Roux and Smith (1998) emphasised their resilience and adaptability. Perhaps many of these children were trying to navigate their way through the typical crises and turbulence of adolescents that were compounded by their adverse circumstances (Rosenthal & Rostheram-Borus, 2005).

Similarly, running away from home has been associated with psychiatric problems such as conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, or with rebellion against parental control and a sense of powerlessness (Chetty, 1997). Yet, Hyde (2005) noted that leaving home was a means of coping with intolerable home situations and thus may be empowering and

indicative of resilience with street life seen as a means of survival and of satisfying unmet needs. Children leave neglectful, abusive or stressful homes in which they experience a sense of anonymity and hopelessness in order to develop their own identities. For these children, street life is entered with the hope that it will provide excitement, adventure and a means of survival (Chetty, 1997). Homeless children also frequently experienced educational difficulties that lead to troublesome behaviours such as truancy from school, which precipitates their pathways into homelessness (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). Thus, children's pathways into homelessness are influenced by certain intrapersonal factors that interact with family and institutional factors.

Some intrapersonal factors that are causally linked to homelessness may be subsequently exacerbated by their circumstances. Homelessness impacts on children's emotional development (DSD, 2010). Mufune (2000) wrote of the negative and fearful perception that the public has of homeless children and, according to Reid and Klee (1999), homeless children describe public attitudes toward them as one of the worst aspects of their homelessness. Homeless children are subject to constant stress due to their homeless circumstances, as well as arising from prior trauma that may be causally linked to their homelessness. This, along with the absence of adult care and affection, makes them vulnerable to mental health problems (Thompson & Haskins, 2014) such as suicidal tendencies, depression, aggression, anxiety and paranoia (Reid & Klee, 1999). The presence of mental ill-health in homeless children has been debated in the South African literature. Ward and Seager (2010) and Mufune (2000) indicated that long term, chronic homelessness may result in psychiatric symptoms, particularly depression and anxiety, Mufune (2000) also found, however, that many homeless children were in fact psychologically healthy and their behaviours should be seen as adaptive to their difficult circumstances, rather than deviant or pathological.

The South African literature also presents a dichotomy regarding the sense of self-worth of homeless children. Most literature identifies low self-esteem as one of the problems faced by homeless youth (DSD, 2010; Mufune, 2000; Stewart et al., 2010). Bourdillon (1994), however, spoke of the self-confidence of street children and described their ability to survive on the streets as a source of self-esteem. While low self-esteem may be characteristic of homeless children in general, sample and methodological differences may account for the discrepant views on this topic. Bourdillon's monograph was ethnographically based and

involved children who were generally committed to a street way of life. Ethnographic research with homeless children is rare thus it is unsurprising that Bourdillon's research yielded a new perspective contrary to those studies which highlighted the low self-esteem of homeless children.

Street life has a negative impact on children's development, yet certain skills and personal attributes may abet children's survival on the streets and may be enhanced by their experiences. Survival on the streets depends in part on a quick and accurate assessment of character. Through their experiences, children learn to discriminate between whom to trust and whom not to trust in order to avoid danger, yet at the same time learn to be able to access resources (Bender et al., 2007). Homeless children also need to be able to, and often quickly do, adapt to the social structures of the streets. It takes interpersonal skills for children to be able to gather information about sources of food and shelter from other street children. Bender et al. (2007) reported that children demonstrated the ability to learn interpersonal behaviours through observation and experience on the streets. Kidd and Davidson (2007) noted that caring and giving behaviours were an important part of street communities and instilled a sense of self-respect and pride in homeless children.

Personal attributes such as determination and responsibility are influential factors in children coping with their adversity (Lindsey et al., 2000). Le Roux and Smith (1998) noted that the independence and autonomy that children develop on leaving home, and their ability to survive, are a tremendous source of self-respect and pride. Living on the streets demands proactiveness the children do not have someone to take care of them (Kidd & Davidson, 2007). These children display 'extraordinary resourcefulness' in problem solving skills and in accessing resources. Bender et al. (2007) noted that it must take cognitive skills and flexibility for these children to be able to meet their needs. Children themselves mentioned the necessity of maintaining a positive and hopeful attitude in order to cope with the day-to-day demands of street life (Bender et al., 2007). According to Kidd and Davidson (2007), homeless children displayed a degree of maturity in that they appeared to have developed a deeper level of self and social awareness as a result of their broad and alternative experiences. They were able to approach philosophical issues with greater flexibility and different perspectives.

Lindsey et al. (2000) found that the personal strengths and resources of homeless children were one of two major determinants of successful pathways out of homelessness, the second being help received from others. The importance that the homeless youth in this study placed on their own resources and personal strengths in their individual journeys out of homelessness was noticeable. Lindsey et al. (2000) found that the ability of their participants to learn new attitudes and behaviours, and their own personal attributes, were significant factors in their pathways out of homelessness. Learning occurred throughout the homeless journey, both from their experiences on the streets and in shelter care. Learning resulted from the homeless children's own experiences and mistakes. For some, these experiences were described as necessary for learning to occur. In some instances, learning arose from dramatic events such as incarceration; however, children also learned through observing role models or from comparing themselves with others. The participants reported that the development of self-confidence and self-love, learning to take responsibility and learning to care for themselves, helped them in turning their lives around. Learning new social skills and better ways of relating was another important learning factor that helped in their pathways out of homelessness. Acknowledging their own value was a significant step in turning their lives around (Lindsey et al., 2000).

Children's ability to cope with life on the streets is influenced by their sense of identity. Street life gives children the chance to explore their identity in ways they were not able to before. Kidd and Davidson (2007) found that identity development played a role in children's transitions out of homelessness. However, identity changes as a result of life on the streets could also have negative consequences. As children connect with and grow accustomed to their way of life they develop a street identity that may hinder their pathways out of homelessness (Kidd & Davidson, 2007).

2.4. Incorporating children's perspectives

The literature in this field repeatedly stressed the importance of gaining the perspectives of homeless children in attempts to address their needs and assist them in transitioning out of homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Kurtz et al., 2000; Panter-Brick, 2002). According to Deforge et al. (2001, p. 377), "understanding the perspectives of children who live in shelters can be an important aspect in providing care to them and their families". Children's

perceptions on how and why they are homeless influence their perceptions of their homeless state and this impacts on their motivation and ability to transition out of homelessness (Hyde, 2005). Furthermore, children's stories challenge adults to reconsider their understanding of homelessness in children (Aviles de Bradley, 2011).

Resilience, which is associated with an internal locus of control, can be developed by encouraging children to make their own decisions regarding their interventions and treatment (Louw & Louw, 2014). Kurtz et al. (2000) acknowledged that although children do need others for support, care and assistance, they do want and need to make their own decisions, and being able to do so helps to boost self-esteem and personal agency as well as relational and other skills such as managerial skills (Reid & Klee, 1999). Furthermore, when children are involved in making decisions about their own interventions, they are more likely to see them as relevant and be more committed to them (Reid & Klee, 1999).

Ignoring the perspectives of homeless children can have adverse consequences or at the very least render attempts to help them ineffective. Kurtz et al. (2000, p. 394) described the reaction of one participant when she felt no one was listening to her: "So I showed them my butt. I gave them an attitude because they took me to a place that I didn't know I was going." Mufune (2000) reiterated this point, finding that not taking children's perceptions into account can result in setbacks when children see their needs differently from adults. Programmes designed by adults who assume they know what children want are likely to be eschewed by children (Mufune, 2000).

2.4.1 Contradictions and problems regarding children's perspectives

Although research has highlighted the importance of uncovering the viewpoints of homeless children, there are some problems and contradictions in this regard. Many studies indicated the lack of research on the perspectives of homeless youth (Ennew, 2003; Mohan & Shields, 2014; Stewart et al., 2010). As late as 2011, Aviles de Bradley (2011) claimed that research and interventions lack the insights of homeless youth. In spite of this, this deficit does appear to have been addressed to a certain extent. A fair number of international studies were found that did incorporate the voices of homeless youth. Furthermore this does not appear to be an accurate reflection within the South African context. According to Mufune (2000), South

African studies on child homelessness focus on the perspectives of homeless youth and tend to neglect the perspectives of the families of these children.

In a portrait of the lives of five homeless children across America, based on interviews with the children and their families, Mohan and Shields (2014) indicated that the accuracy of research that does not take children's perspectives into account should be questioned. Contrarily, Mufune (2000) highlighted the importance of questioning the reliability of the reports of homeless children. He noted that homeless living requires a certain amount of deceit and evasion that is likely to be reflected in children's reports to researchers. Bourdillon (1994, p. 516) concurred, indicating that "children no longer take kindly to a person who wishes to study them, presumably for the benefit of the researcher, and with no apparent benefit accruing to themselves" and may lie to researchers for fun. Thus, a balance needs to be found between allowing the voices of the children to be heard and treating their narratives with circumspection.

Thus although the perspectives of homeless children should be acknowledged, their narratives should nevertheless be considered with circumspection. Furthermore, international literature on child homelessness should be applied to the South African context judiciously and an attempt should be made to develop a greater awareness of the differences in African and global contexts of homelessness and homeless research. A shift in research focus is perhaps necessary within the South African context. Research that is more systemically focused, incorporating the voices of homeless children as well as those with whom the children interact would be valuable.

2.5 Pathways out of homelessness

Due to the growing number of street children, Mufune (2000, pp. 241-242) accentuated the "need for organised responses … to rehabilitate and re-integrate street youth into wider society". Since 2000, exiting homelessness has become a new focus in research on homeless youth. Fitzpatrick (2000, as cited in Mayock et al., 2011) argued that pathways out of homelessness are possible for children, and the journey onto the streets need not be a downward spiral. A few longitudinal studies have confirmed Fitzpatrick's findings. For example, Milburn et al. (2009) showed that after a two year period 48% of their adolescent

sample had made stable and successful transitions out of homelessness for a period of 18 months and thus claimed that a "focus on homeless adolescents' pathways out of homelessness is long overdue" (Milburn et al., 2009, p. 377). In a parallel study involving interviews with homeless youth in Dublin, Mayock et al. (2011) showed that most participants in the study had transitioned out of homelessness over a two year period. It is thus necessary to explore the process through which these transitions occur (Nebbitt et al., 2007). Mayock et al. (2011) indicated that research has made this critical shift by focusing on factors that facilitate pathways out of homeless which is essential to inform interventions addressing the needs of these children.

Many of the factors influencing successful transitions out of homelessness and reintegration into home environments or into mainstream society have been discussed more generally in section 2.3. However, four key factors in children's successful transitions out of homelessness are here outlined. Firstly, support and guidance within caring relationships with peers, professionals and family members have been found to be valuable, particularly a relationship with an adult and most particularly with a maternal figure (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Kurtz et al., 2000; Milburn et al., 2009). Secondly, the importance of support for and change within the family system as well as aftercare support for the child and the family has been acknowledged (Mayock et al., 2011; Nebbitt et al., 2007). Thirdly, a need to focus on the internal and external strengths and resources of homeless children was highlighted (Bender et al., 2007; Lindsey et al., 2000). Finally, a supportive school environment was discussed as an important factor in children's pathways out of homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Milburn et al., 2009).

2.5.1 Reintegration in the South African Context

In first world, industrialised countries, options available to staff at temporary shelters to help homeless individuals to transition out of homelessness include long term residential care and group homes (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Levy, 1998). However, in South Africa the opportunity to place children in long term shelters is restricted. Thus, facilitating reintegration has become a major focus of interventions designed to aid children in their pathways out of homelessness. South Africa's Department of Social Development's primary recommendation in managing child homelessness involves reintegration with families in all instances where this is possible (DSD, 2010), and temporary shelters are mandated to house children for a

limited period of time, such as six months (Director, personal communication, January 28, 2015), in order to avert dependency on shelter care (DSD, 2010).

However, with the breakdown of family units, reintegration is difficult in South Africa (Bourdillon, 1994) and neither is it desirable to return children to homes or communities where they have suffered from abuse, violence and other deprivations. Furthermore, without the participation of the children, reintegration is likely to be ineffective (Chetty, 1997). Given the lack of alternatives, shelter staff who care for homeless children frequently make the effort to find some means for homeless children to return to living within the communities they originate from and to find some family or community member, however distant, to take care of the children (Director, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

2.6 Conclusion

There have been a number of significant shifts in the literature and research on child homelessness. Initially, the focus was on investigating the aetiology of child homelessness and describing their homeless lifestyles. This was done from a problem focused perspective in which homeless children were viewed as deviant or mentally unwell. Previously research focused on the perspectives of the parents and service providers of homeless children. However, over the past few decades, the perspectives of homeless children have begun to take precedence and greater emphasis is now being placed on a strength based perspective in which the external and internal resources of homeless children, such as personal strengths, families and shelter care, are being investigated. Alongside this shift, interest in investigating children's pathways out of homelessness and reintegrating with their families increased.

2.7 Rationale and aim

In 2009, Milburn et al. (2009, p. 765) claimed that exiting homelessness and returning to familial housing is a "key outcome on which there is surprisingly little research". While researchers are beginning to address this deficit, in South Africa there are no published studies concerned with reintegration or pathways out of homelessness. Considering Swart-Kruger and Donald's (1994) startling estimate of one million children 'on' South African streets, and the unique circumstances that homeless children face in the South African

context, this is a necessary void to be filled. This study attempted to explore pathways through homelessness within a South African context, with a focus on pathways out of homelessness. Specifically, given the importance of incorporating youth perspectives previously noted, this study explores pathways through homelessness from the perspectives of homeless youth.

The specific aims of this study are:

3. To gain the perspectives of South African homeless children on:

    - Pathways through homelessness.

    - Re-integrating with their families or communities.

4. To establish:

    - Factors that play a role in children's decisions in their journeys through homelessness.

    - Factors that play a role in children's pathways out of homelessness and adversity.

Given these aims, four research questions, initially posed in section 1.3, guided this study:

1. What are South African homeless children's perspectives regarding pathways through homelessness.

2. What factors play a role in the children's decision making process in their homeless journeys?

3. What are South African homeless children's perspectives regarding reintegrating with their families?

4. What factors play a role in the children's pathways out of homelessness and adversity?

3. Method

Chapter 3 describes the methodological framework used in this study. A discussion of the research design, using the interpretive approach, is followed by a description of the sampling procedures and data collection techniques used. The rigour and trustworthiness of the study are then justified and are proceeded by a description of the data analysis procedures and techniques employed. Finally ethical considerations and dilemmas are discussed.

3.1 Research design

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive approach. Qualitative research makes use of verbal and textual data rather than numerical data and is concerned with experience and meaning in data rather than the measurement of variables (Rowlands, 2005) while analysis involves identifying themes and categories (Durrheim, 2006). Qualitative researchers account for the holistic nature of reality and acknowledge that reality cannot always be broken down into discrete variables (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). It further allows the study of phenomena in detail (Durrheim, 2006). Apart from its holistic character, qualitative research is naturalistic in its concern for understanding phenomena in their real world settings and is inductive rather than deductive (Durrheim, 2006). Due to the absence of previous research on transitions out of homelessness in South Africa, a qualitative research design was used. Data collection took place in the children's natural environment and sought to understand the children's experiences within the context of the pathways into and out of homelessness.

This study was an applied study with both exploratory and descriptive characteristics. Applied research aims to have practical application by answering important practical questions (Durrheim, 2006). During study design, the research question was developed in conjunction with the shelter. As one of the shelter's primary goals is to assist children in pathways out of homelessness, findings will be of practical value to the shelter. Exploratory research is concerned with bringing to light new insights (Durrheim, 2006). This study was exploratory in nature as it sought to explore factors unique to South Africa in children's pathways out of homelessness and adversity. In line with descriptive research, which aims to

accurately describe phenomena (Durrheim, 2006), children's perspectives of their decisions in their homelessness as well as their journeys as they enter and exit homelessness are described.

3.1.1 Interpretive research

The interpretive paradigm is concerned with describing and understanding research participant's subjective and employs the use of interpretation to understand the meaning behind participant's thoughts, behaviour and communication. Interpretive research makes use of methods of data collection such as interviews and participant observation in which the researcher and participants interact with one another and it acknowledges the subjective nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants as well as the subjectivity of the researcher (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Thus, interpretive research works with language and expression of experience to understand phenomenon (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006).

Terre Blanche, Kelly, and Durrheim (2006) outline two key principles that are imperative in conducting good interpretive research: understanding in context and the self as instrument. Understanding in context is about understanding the researcher's context and understanding a participant's experience from their own point of view. This involves the use of empathy in which the researcher enters into the participant's frame of reference and represents his/her experience in his/her own terms. The self as instrument acknowledges that the researcher's skills and ability are the primary method of data collection and analysis. Thus the researcher needs to develop skills of empathy, listening, observation and interpretation and needs to be reflexive. In accordance with this, the researcher underwent intensive training in the development of empathic and listening skills and engaged in training workshops in interpretive analysis.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Introduction

Non-probability, purposive sampling was used in this study to select information rich cases. Nine homeless and formerly homeless children, ranging between 13 and 17 years of age,

were drawn from the shelter. The sample consisted of two girls and seven boys. All participants were from the *isiZulu* culture and were from township areas around Pietermaritzburg. The key criterion for the selection of participants was that all children who participated in the study had spent some time living or sleeping on the streets without adult care/supervision. All of the participants met this criterion having spent from two nights to several months living on the streets.

Interpretive research typically does not draw on large sample sizes. Research questions that are specific and focused rather than broad with inadequate sample sizes are likely to be more effective (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Deciding on the sample size depends on the type of study conducted. Research questions that are grounded in a strong theoretical base can be specific and thus only a few information rich cases are needed (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), six to eight participants are a suitable number when conducting semi-structured interviews with a relatively homogenous group. There is already an extensive body of research on homeless children and in the last decade research regarding pathways out of homelessness has become a current topic. Thus research on child homelessness is based on an extensive background of information. While all children in the sample are unique, they do form a fairly homogenous group in that all children are from similar environments, have experienced the disruptiveness of homelessness and have lived at the shelter. Thus, a sample of nine participants falls broadly within the sample size suggested by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006).

3.2.2 The Children's Home

The children's home where the study took place is a project for children at risk. It runs two temporary children's shelters in Pietermaritzburg, for homeless children or other children who are in need of temporary residence. The shelter also holds a street based outreach programme to establish communication with children living on the streets or at risk of homelessness, an after care programme for children who have reunited with their families as well as a community family preservation programme that is designed to assist and preserve families in distress. Information about the shelter was drawn from the organisation's brochure, which is not referenced for purposes of anonymity. Although some of the children at the shelter had been placed there directly from their homes, many had spent some time

living on the streets of Pietermaritzburg and thus formed a suitable sampling frame from which to draw participants for the current study.

3.2.3 Sampling procedure

During the development of project design, the shelter was approached and the research developed in conjunction with the director and social worker of the shelter and gatekeeping issues were addressed. A letter of permission to conduct the study through the shelter (included in appendix 1) was obtained. All identifying details have been censored.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 10 June 2015 (see appendix 8). Following this, children were selected by shelter staff to participate in the study. Purposive sampling strategies involve selecting participants for theoretical purposes and are standard sampling methods for qualitative, exploratory studies (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006). Critical case sampling involves purposively selecting participants who are good examples and are likely to provide a substantial account of the issue in question (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Suitable children were selected by shelter staff based on the likelihood that they would be able to provide a rich account of their experiences regarding pathways through homelessness and would be unlikely to be emotionally distressed by the interview procedure. Decisions regarding the selection of the sample were based in part on the staffs' intimate knowledge of the children. Furthermore, discussing the criteria of participant selection with shelter staff as well as the pre-counselling process enabled the selection of critical cases that would have necessary participant characteristics such as personal experience, good communication skills, openness and interest, outlined by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006).

Two groups of children were recruited. The first group consisted of five children living at the shelter and the second group consisted of four children who had lived at the shelter but had returned to their communities. Shelter staff assisted in recruiting children both at the shelter as well as reintegrated children. The use of these two groups of children provided varying perspectives and richer data. The children who had returned home were able to provide a full account of factors that helped them in their pathways out of homelessness while interviews with the children from the shelter brought to light different factors that both impede and enhance their journeys through and out of homelessness and provided an illustration of a

different phase in the children's journeys.

Following the signing of an informed consent form (see appendix 2) with the social worker of the shelter, shelter staff requested the participation of the children in the home. Shelter staff were requested to provide a pre-counselling session with the participants during recruitment. The details of pre-counselling are included under ethical considerations below. Briefly, shelter staff were requested to engage in a pre-counselling process with the children in order to provide an explanation of the research interview and to assess for the children's emotional suitability and stability in engaging in the research process.

For the second group of participants, appropriate participants and their parents/guardians were approached by shelter staff during the context of a scheduled home visit. Permission was sought from parents/guardians for their children/wards to participate in the study and informed consent forms (see appendix 3) were signed. Shelter staff were briefed on the importance of ensuring that guardians and participants had the freedom to agree or decline to participate and should not be pressurised. A pre-counselling session was included at this point as well.

Immediately prior to the interviews a child assent form (see appendix 4) was discussed with each child. The nature and purpose of the research was explained and ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, limits to confidentiality and autonomy were discussed. The procedure was outlined - each participant would be requested to complete one to three drawings relating to their experiences of homelessness and then to discuss their homeless journeys. Children's resilience and ability to cope with the interview were discussed and children were then gently provided with the opportunity to withdraw from the study should they wish to do so. Children were assured there would be no reprisal should they choose to do so. No participants expressed a desire to withdraw and all participants signed the assent forms.

3.3 Data collection

Interpretive research is concerned with people's feelings and experiences within context and gives precedence to first-hand accounts of such experiences. Thus data collection in

interpretive research involves engaging with participants in their natural settings as well as understanding their stories within their contextual circumstances (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). In accordance with this philosophy, data collection involved children who had first-hand experience of homelessness; it took place in the children's natural residential environments and took into account the background of the children's homelessness. Furthermore, the researcher attempted to engage with the children in a respectful, empathic manner in order to encourage the children to tell their stories as they saw fit (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006).

3.3.1 Procedure

Data collection took place in two different environments according to the group in which the children fitted. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) recommend that interviews should be conducted in private, quiet environments with sufficient time set aside. In accordance with this, interviews with children living at the shelter were held in a closed, private office at the shelter. Interviews with children who had returned home were held in their homes within townships while other members of the households were respectfully requested to allow the researcher and participant privacy. Each participant was interviewed individually with interviews lasting approximately one hour.

An isiZulu translator, who was a bilingual post-graduate student in Dramatic Arts at UKZN, was present at all interviews and was mostly required to translate when children preferred to speak in their home language. Four of the nine children spoke mostly in English, three children spoke mostly in *isiZulu* and the remaining two switched between languages. Acknowledging the difficulties of direct/literal translations from *isiZulu* to English, the research was discussed with the translator in detail and the interview schedules explored prior to the inception of data collection in order to enable a theoretically informed, rather than technically correct, translation process, as suggested by Temple and Edwards (2002). Some common challenges and difficulties were experienced in the translation process and are discussed in more detail in section 3.7.

Prior to the start of the interview process, the researcher and translator introduced themselves to the participant, the title and purpose of the research was explained to the children and the procedure outlined. The researcher discussed issues of voluntary participation, confidentiality and autonomy to ensure that participants understood these issues, had not been pressurised into participating and knew they could withdraw from the study at any time. Recording of the interviews was negotiated with the children. Although recording of interviews may inhibit

authenticity and frankness, it allows a researcher to give the research participant full attention (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Children then signed the assent form prior to interviews commencing.

Children were asked to draw one to three pictures representing their experience of homelessness, their experience of the shelter and their perception or experience of returning home. Initially it was planned that the children would draw all three pictures. However, some children took a long time to draw pictures, thus in some cases only one or two pictures were drawn and in one instance, upon being given the choice, the child preferred to dispense with this part of the data collection process.

Following the drawing activity, the drawings and an interview schedule (included in appendices five and six) were used to guide questions and discussion of children's pathways into homelessness, their experiences of homelessness and pathways out of homelessness. The interviews were semi-structured and questions were adjusted as was necessary according to the children's unique experiences. At the end of the interviews, children were given the opportunity to contribute any further information they thought would be useful.

3.3.2 Techniques

According to Laws and Mann (2004), combining different techniques is a more effective means of data collection as the benefits of each method can complement one another and compensate for weaknesses such as limits in analysing drawings (Merriman & Guerin, 2006). Thus the current study included both interviews with children as well as a drawing activity.

3.3.2.1 Interviews

Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008, p. 187) consider interviews to be "one of the most powerful and widely used tools of the qualitative researcher" that enable a researcher to explore the participants' experiences of the topic in question. As a naturalistic method of data collection, the interviews provided an opportunity to get to know the children and allowed them to feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences. In attempting to create an atmosphere of openness and trust, the researcher encouraged children to express themselves freely (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006) thereby allowing the discovery of factors influencing pathways out of homelessness. Aviles de Bradley (2011)

used interviews as a means to allow the narration of children's stories while at the same time giving children the opportunity for reflection and to make sense of their experience. This provided some direct benefit to the children in the research experience. Interviews allow children to express their perceptions, experiences and feelings and have been used in numerous studies of child homelessness, such as those by Mayock et al. (2011) and Ward and Seager (2010).

Semi-structured interviews involve the development of an interview schedule that can be used to guide the interview. The development of a clear schedule provides a basis upon which to order the interview (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). However, an interview schedule should be used to guide but not dictate the interview. A balance between following the constructed schedule on the one hand and allowing participants to tell their stories and spontaneous inquiry on the other is likely to result in uncovering novel and more valuable data (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Thus, an interview schedule was constructed during project development and used as a guide, but the researcher also allowed children's unique narratives to guide the interview process and did not rigidly maintain the given schedule.

The interview schedule covered children's experiences of leaving home, of living on the streets, of living at the shelter and their experiences or perceptions of returning to their communities. The schedule was partly based on international research regarding factors influencing pathways out of homelessness. Questions concerned children's pre-shelter and shelter experiences, experiences of shelter staff and critical factors associated with children's desire to return to their families (Nebbitt et al., 2007). Relationships, experiences of homelessness as well as the needs, resources and intervention preferences of the children were explored (Stewart et al., 2010). Finally, participant's current situations, future hopes and plans as well as the advice they would give to adults who helped them were investigated (Kurtz et al., 2000). Although previous studies were used as a guide in the development of the interview schedule, it was also developed in conjunction with the shelter's director and social worker to ensure that questions were appropriate and culturally relevant.

3.3.2.2 Drawing activity

While Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) endorse interviews as a powerful method of qualitative research, other methods of data collection are also encouraged (Smith as cited in

Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Combining interviews with fun activities such as drawing has been shown to improve the quality of child research (Laws & Mann, 2004). Drawing is a child-centred, information-rich method of data collection (Merriman & Guerin, 2006) that has been found to successfully establish a safe and comfortable research environment, enable children to express themselves more fully as well as make the research experience more fun (Laws & Mann, 2004). Drawing activities are suitable methods for children with limited literacy (Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2009) and assist in cross-cultural research as it reduces translation difficulties (Merriman & Guerin, 2006). Furthermore, Merriman and Guerin (2006) found that it is necessary to use alternative methods of data collection in conjunction with interviews when working with street children. Drawings have been previously used in research on child homelessness with some effect. For example, through the analysis of drawings, Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) showed that homeless children have clear morals with comparable concepts of right and wrong. Thus, a drawing component was included in the data collection for this study. This enabled the establishment of an open atmosphere and served as an icebreaker when needed as well as providing concreteness upon which communication flow could be founded.

3.3.3 Research with children

During the data collection process in research with children, and particularly in the current population whose vulnerability and marginalisation is even more notable, researchers need to be aware of unequal power dynamics. Additionally, literature has outlined concerns with the trustworthiness of child oriented research due to issues such as accuracy, suggestibility and consistency. However, this position has been challenged with some researchers arguing that children are able to provide suitable accounts of their experiences and that the interview process needs to be adapted to be more suitable for children (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999). A number of techniques for enhancing the data collection process when working with children, as suggested by Docherty and Sandelowski (1999), were employed in the current study. The purpose of the interview process and matters of confidentiality were discussed with the children prior to the interview process in order to create clarity and enhance trust. A flexible interview approach allowing for both a free undirected discussion as well as more question-oriented, directed discussion, depending on the child, was adopted. Care was taken by both the researcher and translator not to overreact to the children's emotionally laden narratives and the drawings were used in order to enhance the interview process.

3.4 Rigour and trustworthiness

Good quality research involves ensuring its rigour and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe trustworthiness as findings that are worth paying attention to. Trustworthiness is a dual responsibility in which skilful researchers present plausible connections between their data and their findings and readers critically evaluate the applicability of the researcher to their own circumstances (Hoepfl, 1997). The four aspects of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.4.1 Credibility

Credibility is concerned with presenting findings that are convincing and consistent with reality and can be considered the fundamental aspect in ensuring the trustworthiness of a study (Shenton, 2004). Qualitative research acknowledges the multiplicity of realities and attempts to understand and describe these realities. The credibility of the research is concerned with the adequacy of these descriptions (Hoepfl, 1997). A number of techniques are available to researchers to ensure the credibility of their research.

The use of interviews, as a central method of qualitative data collection, and previous peer-reviewed studies to guide the development of the interview schedule, increase the use of well-established data collection methods (Shenton, 2004). Engagement and collaboration between the researcher and the shelter during project development enabled the development of a good relationship with the director of the shelter as well as a thorough understanding of the organisation. Triangulation (Shenton, 2004) was employed in the use of two different means of data collection, interviews and drawing activities. Iterative questioning (Shenton, 2004) was employed in one interview in which it was deemed necessary to highlight contradictory information and a variety of tactics to ensure honesty were employed. Shelter staff encouraged the children to speak openly and honestly in the interviews, children were assured of their right to withdraw and confidentiality and the independent nature of the researcher was stressed. An extensive literature review enabled the comparison of current findings with previous literature. During report writing, detailed descriptions of the procedure followed were provided and, lastly, reflective commentary and segments of raw data were included. All these procedures serve to enhance the credibility of the research (Shenton, 2004).

3.4.2 Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the applicability of the research to other contexts (Lindsey et al., 2000). While a certain degree of transferability is necessary for good quality research, the qualitative paradigm acknowledges the contextual nature of knowledge and Shenton (2004) warns that care must be taken not to become too concerned with transferability. Each project will be unique and some findings may be specific to a particular context and in these instances, researchers need to try to understand these factors. Thus, unique findings have been presented and discussed as valuable contributions to the literature on pathways out of homelessness. However, projects are also examples of the broader context (Shenton, 2004). Thus to allow comparison between the current, previous and future studies, descriptions of the research and report writing process have been included in order to allow readers to judge the applicability of the findings to their environment (Hoepfl, 1997). Information included incorporates details about the organisation, criteria for participant involvement and sample size, data collection methods and number and length of sessions and the time period of data collection (Shenton, 2004). Transferability is also enhanced through comparison with findings of similar projects thereby furthering an existing body of knowledge regarding pathways out of homelessness. Lastly, the use of purposive sampling with the aid of shelter staff who knew the participants helped to ensure the choice of valuable participants who were typical of the topic being studied (Lindsey et al., 2000). 3.4.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether or not the findings accurately reflect the data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). In ensuring dependability, researchers also try to present their study in such a way as to allow the study to be repeated although, given the dynamic and contextual nature of knowledge, researchers do not expect to uncover the same findings (Shenton, 2004). Credible research goes a long way in addressing the dependability of the study. However, a comprehensive audit trail is the primary means of enhancing dependability (Shenton, 2004). A reflexive report and a detailed description of the current study design and implementation provides a prototype upon which to repeat the study as well as allowing readers to evaluate the data, data analysis procedure and findings (Golafshani, 2003).

3.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is closely linked to dependability in that it is concerned with showing that findings arise from the data and not from the researcher's epistemology (Shenton, 2004). Thus, confirmability is about the objectivity of findings. Objectivity depends on the research

instrument which, in qualitative research, is the researcher. Thus, it is the skill of the researcher in presenting findings that arise from the participant narratives that comes into play when considering the confirmability of a study (Golafshani, 2003).

As with dependability, transferability and credibility, confirmability has been enhanced with the presentation of a comprehensive audit trail consisting of the project design and implementation, raw data and a description of the analytical procedure (Hoepfl, 1997). Confirmability has also been enhanced through triangulation in data collection in order to reduce investigator bias and reflective commentary that openly acknowledges the researcher's predispositions and biases (Shenton, 2004).

3.5 Validity and reliability

In challenge to many researchers such as Hoepfl (1997) and Golafshani (2003), Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) argue that reliability and validity need not be substituted by credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and remain appropriate concepts for ensuring rigorous and valuable qualitative research. Adopting an analytical framework throughout the process and employing an iterative design allows the researcher to identify and correct errors, thereby ensuring the rigour of the final product. In accordance with this, throughout project development and data collection the researcher continuously updated the interview schedule and reflected on the data collection processes in order to continuously improve upon interviewing skills. For example, considering the extensive time that participants took to complete drawings, the researcher put upfront time limits on the drawings in later interviews. In agreement with Golafshani (2003), Morse et al. (2002) endorse the skills and attitudes of the researcher as key components in the rigour of the research. Thus, during data collection, the researcher adopted an open and empathic manner and used the interview schedule with flexibility. Other means of guaranteeing reliability and validity suggested by Morse et al. (2002) that have been incorporated into the current study include coherence between the research question and paradigm, selecting an appropriate sample that would contribute valuable data and, finally, grounding data within a strong theoretical base.

3.6 Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a means of deriving meaning and themes or patterns out of qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998). Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as a way of seeing, making sense of and analysing qualitative material, a way of observing phenomena and even a means to convert qualitative information into quantitative information. Thematic analysis helps researchers to think about and use information in such a way as to increase their understanding and enhance their interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998). Its communicative efficacy allows researchers to communicate their findings and to make research results available to others in an accessible manner (Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It involves organising the raw data in such a way as to provide a concise yet rich account of themes that arise from the data and incorporates a certain degree of interpretation. Thematic analysis is a flexible method of analysis that is theory independent and can give rise to a rich and detailed account of the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analysis typically begins during data collection when researchers already begin noting and searching for particular patterns and ends with the reporting of themes. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) describe six iterative steps to guide thematic analysis in a flexible manner – immersion in the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and report writing.

Researchers need to familiarise themselves through immersion in their data. This process occurred during the transcription of the interviews during which themes and meanings were actively sought and interpretations noted.

Codes are basic aspects of the data that seem relevant to the analyst and the researcher. Coding involves delineating the data in order to group together rudimentary ideas (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). Because the research was theory driven, the research questions were born in mind during coding and specific features of the data that were relevant to the questions were isolated.

The interpretive process begins during the search for themes and involves grouping coded data into broader patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes describe and organise data and sometimes may involve analysts' interpretation of their data (Boyatzis, 1998). They arise from patterns of responses within data and refer to key aspects of the data that relate to the research question at hand. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the frequency of themes occurring does not impact on the importance of the theme, but rather the relevance of the theme to the question. Although this process largely takes place after coding, due to the iterative nature of thematic analysis, the commencement of theme development related back to data collection and transcription.

Once initial themes were developed, a process of refining themes began. This involved reviewing the initial themes for coherence within themes and distinction between different themes. Defining and naming themes involves further immersion into the data and generated themes such that the essence of the theme can initially be captured in a concise manner followed by a detailed account of the theme that relates to the broader narrative of the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Report writing took place throughout the analytic process. Reflective notes were made from the inception of data collection, themes were written up during stages three to six. Finally report writing involved integrating themes into the broader narrative and relating them to pertinent extracts from the raw data.

3.6.1 Drawing analysis

Thematic analysis was also employed in the analysis of drawings. Although Merriman and Guerin's (2006) method of content analysis for drawings was not followed in its entirety, the drawing analysis in this study focused on the thematic interpretation of the qualitative content of drawings as described in their study. Drawings and the drawing narratives were analysed conjointly and comparisons between the drawings and drawing analysis on the one hand and the children's narratives on the other hand were explored. Themes apparent in the narratives were triangulated with the drawings and drawing narrative. Drawings not included in Chapter four can be found in appendix 9.

3.7 Limitations of the research design

Methodological limitations include sample and data collection limitations. Firstly, including children who were actively living on the streets, i.e. not attached to the shelter, in the sample would have provided valuable data for the current study but were excluded for logistical reasons. Ethical requirements with regards to obtaining informed consent for this population of children would be a lengthy procedure that would be beyond the scope of the current project. As a single-researcher project, interviews with children on the streets lacked the back up support that would have been necessary under the circumstances.

Secondly, providing homeless children with a gradual opportunity to establish rapport with researchers would be beneficial with this population group. Given the distrusting nature of the homeless population, a single interview design may thus not be the most effective means of data collection with homeless children. Furthermore, the tendency to lie, noted amongst homeless children (Bourdillon, 1994), casts doubt on the veracity of children's narratives. Thus, while it is important to consider children's own perspectives of their homelessness, researchers need to be aware of this during data collection and analysis.

Although its flexibility is an advantage, the lack of specific guidelines can make interpretive research more difficult and the limited interpretive power of thematic analysis curtails its efficacy. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlighted a number of difficulties and disadvantages of thematic analysis that could result in poor research if not taken into account. Care was taken that the data were in fact analysed by presenting interpretive commentary as well as raw data and avoiding grouping the themes according to the questions that guided the interview process. According to Patton (1990) the quality of thematic analysis can be judged by the internal coherence of themes as well as the distinctiveness between themes. Weak and unconvincing themes were avoided by checking for overlap between themes as well as ensuring that they related to the research questions. Bracketing was employed to ensure that themes were well supported by the data.

Other limitations included the use of too many close-ended questions as a result of interviewer inexperience. While these questions were followed up with more open ended question, they nevertheless did in part inhibit the flow of the interviews. There were other

inhibitions to the flow of the interviews. Some of the children preferred to speak directly to the interviewer in English and the meaning of their narrative was not always clear and in some instances, the children spoke somewhat inaudibly. Thus for the sake of clarity and audio capturing, it was frequently necessary to repeat what the children were saying. Other ttranslation and language barriers were also experienced. The use of a translator inevitably inhibits the flow of the interview process and certain meanings and nuances are undoubtedly lost during the process. Although an interpreter was used, language barriers were nevertheless limiting as there were instances in which translations seemed incomplete and in some instances the translator answered questions instead of translating. In one instance, one particularly voluble child was so eager to tell her story that it was difficult for the translation process to occur. Furthermore, it was challenging to separate knowledge gained through interactions with shelter staff and management from the data collection process. For instance, some of the children claimed not to have lived on the streets but through interaction with the shelter staff it was apparent that they had. Additionally, in discussing the children with shelter staff who assisted in the research process, certain information, such as scholastic achievements, was imparted to the researcher which had not been imparted by the children. Finally interviews with the children were emotionally demanding and while every attempt was made to remain neutral, the stories of the children may have engendered an overly positive attitude towards child participants during analysis.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Research ethics are primarily concerned with ensuring the well-being of research participants. Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) adapted eight broad principles that enhance ethical practice in social science research, originally developed by Emanuel, Wendler and Grady (2008, as cited in Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). If carefully considered and applied, these principles will enhance ethical practice and the scientific value of research: collaborative partnership; social value; scientific validity; fair selection of participants; favourable risk/benefit ratio; independent ethics review; informed consent; ongoing respect for participants and study communities.

To ensure that the research is of value to the community and of *social value* (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012) the aims and objectives of the study were developed in *collaboration* (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012) with shelter management. This maximised the benefit the research participants and community could gain from the study and ensured that participants and communities were not exploited. As one of the main goals of the shelter, and other similar shelters, is to assist children in exiting homelessness and reintegrating into their communities, exploring factors that influence pathways out of homelessness was considered to be valuable. The interview schedule was developed in collaboration with the shelter to ensure that the questions asked were appropriate for the children as well as for the purposes of the study. Apart from collaboration, to enhance the social value of the research, feedback was provided to the shelter and to the children and recommendations were developed in conjunction with shelter management, in such a manner as to be practical and useful.

The *participants*, homeless children, were appropriate to the research question (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012), although the vulnerability of this population was noted and procedures were put in place to ensure respect for their vulnerability, discussed in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.7. Children were selected by shelter staff and selection was based on the ability of children to provide a rich account of their experiences regarding pathways out of homelessness as well as the likelihood of children not being distressed by the procedure. The *scientific validity* and informed consent procedures (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012), also necessary for ethical practice, have been described in detail in Sections 3.1 – 3.5.

Although shelter staff selected participants who were likely to cope with the interview process, the possibility of the distressing nature of discussing homeless experiences was acknowledged as a *risk* factor (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). Arrangements were thus made for a pre-counselling procedure as well as debriefing with the social worker and access to post-interview counselling at the Child and Family Centre, Pietermaritzburg should this have been necessary (see appendix 7). The social worker and shelter staff were briefed on the pre-counselling procedure. The social worker was requested to explain in detail the purpose of the interview and to explain and discuss potential risks, distress and coping mechanisms as well as to explain the procedure for seeking counselling following the interview. The social worker was requested to exclude any child from the procedure should she sense that the child would be unduly settled by the interview as well as to explain the limits to confidentiality during the interview process. Although the children did not *benefit* (Wassenaar & Mamotte,

2012) directly, the research aimed to contribute towards knowledge that will assist organisations such as this shelter in helping homeless children in future and practical recommendations will be provided to the shelter. This was made clear in the children's assent form (see appendix 4).

During data collection, an unforeseen risk arose. Conflict arose between female children who had been included in the interviews and those children who had not. In order to diffuse this situation, the researcher hosted a tea party for all the children at the shelter, during which the research was discussed and explained. The children reportedly enjoyed the tea party.

Ethical clearance was obtained from an *ethical review* panel prior to the commencement of data collection (see appendix 8) and ethical considerations concerning scientific validity are discussed below. Rigorous informed consent procedures were implemented and have been discussed above under data collection.

All participants were treated with *respect* throughout the process. On occasions when children were obviously distressed, the process was paused and children were given the opportunity to end the process should they have wished to do so. At the end of the interview, means of obtaining counselling support was discussed with the children, should they wish it, and the children were provided with a document that reiterated this information and provided them with the necessary contact details. It was emphasised that should counselling support be required, that the children could approach shelter staff in order to access the procedures put in place. Furthermore, to ensure anonymity, all names here are pseudonyms. Upon completion of the data collection, a tea-party with juice and cake was held at the shelter as a token of appreciation for participation in the project and small tokens of gratitude were disseminated to children who had returned to their home communities. Upon conclusion of the project, the shelter will be provided with a report of the findings and a diagrammatic/pictorial report will be made available to the children.

4. Results

Chapter four presents the results of the data analysis process. The chapter begins with a description of the sample with the background and circumstances of each interviewee briefly discussed. This is followed by a presentation of the themes derived from the interviews which are discussed within an ecological framework. The analyses of the drawings are included within the themes of the interview analyses.

4.1 Description of the sample

Nine children, seven boys and two girls, between the ages of 13 and 17 were interviewed. Five of the children were resident at the shelter, four of the children had returned to their families in townships around Pietermaritzburg. The ninth child had been placed in a foster family. All names used are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the children.

4.1.1 Mphumelelo

Mphumelelo is a 15 year old *isiZulu* adolescent currently in Grade 9. Mphumelelo's mother died when he was about eight years old and his father has been absent his entire life. From the age of 8, Mphumelelo moved between various homes, eventually ending up living with his grandmother. When Mphumelelo's grandmother died, he felt that he was not being treated well by his family and lacked a sense of belonging. He reported that his brother was in jail. Around the age of 13, Mphumelelo gradually started staying with friends and became involved with drugs and street life. Mphumelelo reported that he had spent approximately six months on the streets. During this time he started to interact with shelter staff and requested assistance to return to school. The shelter staff assisted Mphumelelo in getting placed in a drug rehabilitation centre from January – March 2015, thereafter he was placed at the shelter. At the time of writing the report, Mphumelelo was still waiting to be placed in a school and occasionally visited his family, with whom the shelter has been in contact.

4.1.2 Nqobile

Nqobile reports that she is a 16 year old *isiZulu* girl, currently doing Grade 7. Nqobile did not mention a mother or a father. Nqobile's story had a number of inconsistencies and her volubility impeded the interpretation process thus an accurate understanding of her circumstances was not entirely possible. However, she reported that she ran away from home because her aunts that she lived with wanted to kill her, that she was being abused and that she had been threatened with rape. Nqobile reported running away to another aunt and staying with friends. Nqobile reported that this was her second visit to the shelter and that she had spent two nights on the streets before being brought to the shelter by one staff member in May 2015.

4.1.3 Thembelihle

Thembelihle is a 13 year old *isiZulu* girl, currently in grade 6. Thembelihle's mother is dead and she described her father as abusive. Thembelihle left her father's home to stay with an aunt, but she reported that her father continued to abuse her in her aunt's home before she ran away. Thembelihle was brought from the streets by a staff member and spent some time at the shelter before she was returned to her father's home. However, Thembelihle reported that her father continued to abuse her and her grandmother attempted to strangle her, thus she once more left home. Once again, Thembelihle was taken from the streets and placed at the shelter in January 2015. Thembelihle reported that she had lived on the streets for three months. Thembelihle reported being unhappy at the shelter due to rivalry with other girls and unfair treatment from the shelter staff.

4.1.4 Dingane

Dingane is a 14 year old *isiZulu* adolescent from Township A, Pietermaritzburg, currently in grade 7. Both his parents are dead, and following the death of his grandmother when he was five years old, he and his sister were placed in a foster home. Dingane reported that he left his foster mother to stay with his brother as she 'used to do something wrong'. However, Dingane's brother was himself an under aged child and unable to provide for Dingane, thus Dingane believed he would have to take care of himself and from around the age of 10 gradually became entrenched in a street way of life, begging for money and taking glue. Dingane has been in and out of the shelter for the past few years, occasionally visiting home

and occasionally leaving the shelter to return to living on the streets. At the time of writing the report, Dingane was once more living on the street.

4.1.5 Charlie

Charlie is a 15 year old *isiZulu* adolescent from Township B, currently in grade 6. Prior to leaving home, Charlie lived with his mother and six siblings. His father died when he was young. He reported that his mother was unemployed, thus he had to find his own means of obtaining food. Charlie reported sniffing glue with his friend and then leaving home following conflict with his mother over his drug use. Although Charlie's mother initially found him on the streets, and on a second occasion she elicited police services in coaxing him off the streets, he reported that he returned to the streets 'because he wanted it more'. While on the streets, Charlie met with international volunteers who work at the shelter who assisted in placing him at the shelter. However, Charlie once more returned to the streets. On the 8th of January 2015, the shelter assisted Charlie by placing him at a drug rehabilitation centre and on the 30th March 2015, Charlie was placed at the shelter. At the time of the interview, Charlie felt he would be unable to return home but did not want to discuss the reasons.

4.1.6 Londisizwe

Londisizwe is a 15 year old *isiZulu* adolescent from Township B, Pietermaritzburg. He is currently a prefect in grade seven and lives with his grandmother and siblings. Londisizwe reported that he left home around the age of 10 along with friends with whom he started taking drugs. After approximately a year living on the streets, Londisizwe approached the shelter with a friend who had stayed at the shelter after they made the decision to 'change their way of living'. The shelter took them in and Londisizwe reported that he lived at the shelter for two years before returning home to live with his grandmother in 2013. Londisizwe has remained at home since 2013.

4.1.7 Siboniso

Siboniso is a 14 year old *isiZulu* adolescent in Grade seven and is the deputy head boy at his school. He lives in his grandmother's home in Township C, either alone or with his mother and grandmother when they are at home. He has an aunt nearby who takes care of him when he is alone. No mention was made of Siboniso's father. After Siboniso's mother was arrested, he initially stayed with his brother, but began spending time on the streets with friends as

they tried to get food. Siboniso was discovered on the streets by one staff member who gradually persuaded him to live at the shelter. After approximately two years at the shelter, Siboniso's mother was released and he returned to Township C to his grandmother's home. Siboniso has remained in his grandmother's home since.

4.1.8 Zithulele

Zithulele is a 14 year old adolescent, currently in Grade 5. He lives in Township B with his father. There was no mention of his mother. Zithulele reported leaving home around the age of 11. He reported that his father was frequently drunk, would not return home and thus Zithulele could not get into their home. Zithulele began staying with his friend, Charlie, who ran away from home and Zithulele went with Charlie. After 11 months on the streets, Zithulele reported following his friends, including Charlie, to the shelter. Zithulele reported residing at the shelter for a year and a month before returning to live with his father who no longer drinks alcohol. Zithulele returned home in December 2014.

4.1.9 Hluphizwe

Hluphizwe is a 17 year old *isiZulu* adolescent. He is currently doing grade 10 and lives in Township D with a foster family. Prior to leaving home, Hluphizwe stayed with his mother, uncle and older siblings. He reported that he had not lived on the street[2] but that he was placed at the shelter in 2011. He lived at the shelter for two years before returning to live with his mother. In 2014, Hluphizwe's mother moved away from Pietermaritzburg and Hluphizwe chose to remain in Township C in order to complete matric. For this reason, Hluphizwe was placed at the shelter for three weeks while the social worker sourced a foster family with whom he was placed in October 2014.

4.2 Themes

Each child's story was unique and their pathways in and out of homelessness varied depending on individual characteristics and circumstances. However, the children's narratives highlighted the systemic nature of their pathways in and out of homelessness. The factors influencing pathways through homelessness are presented in Table One within an

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[2] Hluphizwe's care worker reported that he had in fact lived on the streets along with his mother and siblings who were also homeless.

ecological framework. Although mostly not spoken of explicitly, chronosystemic and macrosystemic factors pervade the children's narratives. The children's narratives of factors relating to their exosystems, mesosystems and microsystems were more explicit.

Table 1: Ecological model of pathways through homelessness

Ecological model of pathways through homelessness

Broad Ecological Systems	Inner Ecological Systems
Parental Absence	Institutions
Poverty	Relationships
Systemic Change	Intrapersonal Factors

4.2.1 Broad ecological systems

Chronosystem and macrosystem factors influencing children's pathways through homelessness, that were pervasive in their narratives, include parental absence and poverty and a need for systemic change was recognised by some of the children.

Not one of the children came from two parent households. Both parents were absent in the lives of Mphumelelo, Nqobile, Dingane and Londisizwe. Mothers were absent in Thembelihle's and Zithulele's lives and Charlie's father was absent in his life. Siboniso's father was absent while his mother was sporadically present and was an unstable source of support. Hluphizwe's mother was also present but an unstable source of support. The role of family and parents in children's pathways through homelessness will be discussed in more detail within the inner ecological systems.

For many children, *poverty* was pervasive in their pathways through homelessness and related to poverty is the high rate of unemployment in South Africa. Charlie directly expressed the integrative role that poverty and unemployment played in his route into homelessness when he described leaving home in order to look for work to get food:

> *Interviewer: …Tell me how you came to leave home.*
>
> *Interpreter: Ok, so um his mother was not working so he would look for jobs around in order for them to get food.*

Mphumelelo spoke of the poverty permeating life on the streets in the violence over money amongst homeless people. His narrative implies the desperation for money on the streets:

> *Mphumelelo: And sometimes if, if they, they [older homeless people] found you already got something on you, maybe money or something then they, they will force you to give it to them.*

While the broader systemic nature of their problems was implicit in most of the children's narratives, some children spoke more explicitly of chronosystemic and macrosystemic factors. Hluphizwe, for example, expressed the need for systemic change in the fight against homelessness. When asked what advice he would give to communities to help homeless children, Hluphizwe spoke of unification within communities:

> *Interviewer: And then if you had to be able to give people advice ... other people in the community, like elders in the community or um, or pastors in the community .... what kind of advice do you think they could be given?*
>
> *Hlhupizwe: I would say that there must there must unite and support each other ... by working together.*

Thus it seems that although children spoke more of the inner ecological systems in relation to their pathways through homelessness, they are aware of the difficulties that stem from broader societal issues.

4.2.2 Inner ecological systems

Within the inner ecological systems, three broad themes were derived from the analytic process and are presented in Table 2. The children's narratives of their journeys reveal the importance of interactions and support from various institutions, including drug rehabilitation centres, police, school, religion and shelters, and relationships with friends, shelter staff and family. Some children also spoke of their own role in their homeless trajectories, mentioning the learning they gained through their experiences and through their time at the shelter, their own attitudes and the importance of their active engagement in the decision making process in their journeys.

Table 2: Inner ecological systems

Inner ecological systems

Institutions	Relationships	Intrapersonal Factors
Drug rehabilitation, police, social services	Friends	Learning
School	Shelter staff	Changing attitudes
Religion	Family	Making decisions
Shelters		

4.2.2.1 Institutions

There were a number of institutions that played a role in children's pathways in and out of homelessness. Some of these institutions involved interactions within children's exo- and mesosystems such as the mediatory interactions that occurred between shelter staff on the one hand and parents and drug rehabilitations centres on the other hand. Interactions between the police and children's parents also fell within the mesosystem. Direct contact occurred prominently between the children and their schools, religious institutions and the shelter while interactions with police services and drug rehabilitation centres also arose within the microsystem.

4.2.2.1.1 Drug rehabilitation, police and social services

Drug rehabilitation

Three of the children, Mphumelelo, Nqobile and Charlie, mentioned drug rehabilitation and it seemed to play an important role in their journeys out of homelessness. From their interviews, it appears that some children attended state managed drug rehabilitation prior to their being placed at the shelter, while others were placed in the rehabilitation centre during the course of their interaction with the shelter. Mphumelelo, for example, was only able to access the services of the shelter if he agreed to his placement in the rehabilitation centre.

> *Mphumelelo: I asked him if he can make a plan for me to go back to school he said no cos I think you also using substances as you are staying in the street so yes I say I do and he make me a plan for me to attend rehab… and he took me same month to do an interview in Durban rehab… We went there and they said I must come to start attending in January.*

On the other hand, Charlie, whose homeless journey became a repetitive pattern of vacillation between the streets, home and the shelter, was placed in the rehabilitation programme in the latest attempt to assist him out of his life on the streets. For Charlie, attendance at the rehabilitation centre played a significant role in his exiting homelessness.

> *Interpreter: And um this year January, Uncle J_. asked him if he'd like to go to rehab and he said yes he'd like to. ... So he went there on the 8th of January and came back on the 30th of March....He never left again.*

Thus, for some children, placement in a drug rehabilitation programme seems to be a necessary part of their journeys out of street life. However, in speaking of his placement at the rehabilitation centre, Mphumelelo noted that he was unable to remain at the centre for long.

Mphumelelo: January, three months ... wasn't much.

This suggests that drug rehabilitation is considered a valuable but scarce resource by the children.

Police

Similar to drug rehabilitation centres, police services emerged infrequently but were mentioned by three children – Thembelihle, Charlie and Siboniso. Thembelihle and Charlie referred to the establishment as a service that could be used. For example, Thembelihle believed that the police would be able to assist her in her journey out of homelessness if they would induce her father to reveal information about her mother's family.

> *Interviewer: What would help you to get the kind of home that you would like to live in?*
>
> *Interpreter: Ok. So for her mother's home, what could help her is uh, if someone would go and talk to her father and ask for the details. ... Ok. She thinks police can um actually talk to him. Cos he doesn't want to talk to anyone about it. He won't tell it to anyone.*

Families also made use of police services in obtaining help when children left home. However, the service was not always perceived as useful. Charlie's mother, for instance, contacted the police to assist her in finding him and he found their intervention to be ineffective in the early stages of his homeless journey.

> *Interpreter: Ok, so um his mother went to the police station and gave the policeman photos of him so that the police the police can go and look for him on the streets. And so the police got him but he went again to the streets. He went back.*

Thus, while the police are seen as a possible source of assistance in children's journeys out of homelessness, it is not apparent whether or not their services would be effective.

Siboniso, on the other hand, referred to correctional services, somewhat implicitly as playing a causal role in his homelessness. His mother's incarceration was the first step in his trajectory into homelessness.

> *Interviewer: Can you tell me how you came to leave home? ...*
> *Siboniso: ...My mother went in gaol... and I decided to go.*

Social services

Two of the children, Dingane and Siboniso, mentioned the role of social services in their lives and they conveyed conflicting viewpoints on the helpfulness of social services. Children indicated a wish to rely on social services as one of their points of contact in obtaining relief from their circumstances, yet they seem find their service to be ineffective.

Dingane expressed both hope that he would receive assistance from social services and at the same time disappointment in the delay in receiving assistance to find a home.

> *Interviewer: So I want to know what would help [him] to get the home he would like to have.*
> *Dingane: My social worker told me that he'll find me a good place then maybe I'll feel comfortable. But she, she didn't answer me back. She just told me that only and she didn't respond. But I'm still waiting.*

Siboniso seems to suggest that children perceive social services to be a useful service, but one that does need to be more informed about the circumstances of homeless children.

> *Interviewer: If you were an elder, what would you do to help homeless children?*
> *Siboniso: I-I would try to communicate with s - social workers and tell them about it.*

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As with police services, social services are relied on as a source of assistance for homeless children, yet there is no clear suggestion that children have found social services to be helpful in their pathways out of homelessness.

4.2.2.1.2 School

School and education featured prominently in children's narratives with school perceived to be serving different purposes for different children. Some children connected education with their pathways off the streets. Other children spoke of their aspirations for the future and the key role that education would play in this, and for some children school was a means of psychological support. While all children spoke of school in a positive manner, some children did note challenges within the school system.

Hluphizwe and Charlie's narratives embodied the significantly positive role of education within the children's' lives. Hluphizwe expressed the belief that school was a means of growth both personally and systemically while Charlie indicated the prime significance of school in his and his peers' well-being.

> *Interviewer: And um, what would you do about poverty. How would you, if you if you were in the government?*
>
> *Hluphizwe: Mmm. I would, like, support schools. ... Because the childrens are the ones who can change. ... Because education you know is like the key to success. And if many people are educated the country's economy will grow.*

When asked about his friends at the shelter, Charlie replied:

> *Interpreter: They all ok because they they go to school. They all go to school.*

In speaking about the role of education in their transitions off the streets, some children noted its direct role in their journeys off the streets. For Mphumelelo, his desire to get back to school seemed to have a direct impact in his pathway out of street life. While still living on the streets, he approached shelter staff with a request for help to get back to school, a request which led to his being admitted to the drug rehabilitation centre and subsequently being placed at the shelter.

> *Mphumelelo: So, after six months … and I planning to, to go back to school and found me one of the child shelter staff … who called him S_. … and I … asked him if he can make a plan for me to go back to school.*

For Hluphizwe, who was on the streets with his mother, the decision to live at the shelter meant that he would be able to attend school as he would be able to access the necessary resources, such as school uniforms, that would enable school attendance.

> *Interviewer: Ok. And then um, how did you come to live at the shelter.*
> *Hluphizwe: They told me I had to go there, and I agreed.*
> *Interviewer: Ok. Um, what was the reason that you agreed?*
> *Hluphizwe: Where I was living there we couldn't go to school because … they didn't have money for me to go to school. Like school uniform.*

Subsequently, school was of primary importance to Hluphizwe in his placement within a foster family.

> *Interviewer: Um. What do you enjoy most about being here? Being with this family?*
> *Hluphizwe: I enjoy [pause] going to school.*

Dingane believed that boarding school would provide him with a stable living environment in which he could avoid the detrimental influence of living within his community. Through this, Dingane expressed a desire to be able to visit his family, but did not believe that living with his family was a suitable means of stability in his life.

> *Interviewer: If you could choose somewhere other to live than the shelter, where would that be?*
> *Dingane: To the s… Tooo have a place that you can board and always go to school because maybe when I meet one, I will have bad influence by the community. … Maybe when I get a place that I will go to school and maybe on holidays maybe I visit home and come back when there's schooling, maybe I will finish … matric.*

Dingane's communication suggests that for some children returning to their families is not a suitable consideration and that contact with families need not necessarily involve living with them but rather being able to visit. The need to assist children in finding pathways out of

homelessness apart from reintegration with families is apparent in a number of children's narratives and is discussed further below.

Eight of the nine children mentioned education in conjunction with having a successful future and a stable home environment. Zithulele, for example, noted the importance of education in terms of future wealth and family and home stability.

> *Zithulele: Yes, I was at school because it will make me be a man and I will be have my house and my money and my car and my wife and my children.*

Thus is seems that for many of these children, completing school is an important factor in their future home stability and therefore plays an important role in successful pathways out of homelessness.

In speaking about school as a source of psychological support, Zithulele spoke about support and the development of self-worth.

> *Zithulele: What is helpful at school is that you get support from childrens, teachers and [pause] and you get more information about [yourself].*
> *Interviewer: Ok. What kind of information about yourself?*
> *Zithulele: That, information that y-you must believe in yourself, encourage yourself and you must respect and you, things like that.*

Zithulele, Mphumelelo and Hluphizwe were the children who noted challenges faced within the school system. Zithulele expressed frustration with the delay in being admitted to a school once he was placed at the shelter.

> *Zithulele: ... I was thinking they [shelter staff] will never take us to the school.*

Hluphizwe's frustration with the school system was concerned with the quality of the education he was receiving in his life orientation class which many in his class failed.

> *Hluphizwe: Ya. And I fail it. I don't know. Everyone in my class is failing because it is hard and the teacher who is teaching who is teaching us it is not good at it.*

This suggests that while children see the valuable role that school can play in their journeys through homelessness, they find the logistical process of getting to school, and the challenges within the education system in South Africa, impede their educational progress and their future success and thus their journeys through homelessness.

4.2.2.1.3 The shelter

The shelter was the institution that the children spoke most frequently about. All of the children in the sample resided at the shelter for a period of time and spoke extensively about their experiences there. Children spoke of the shelter as a service provider. The shelter played a significant role in assisting children to access basic necessities, such as food and shelter and assisted children in accessing services such as school and drug rehabilitation centres, even hospitals, which would aid them on their pathways out of homelessness. As a service provider, the shelter also played an intercessory role between the children and their families, thereby negotiating their reintegration with their families and easing the relational difficulties that precipitated the children's homelessness.

Children's narratives regarding their progress off the streets and through the shelter are organised into three phases of interaction: pre-shelter contact, life at the shelter and after care support. Finally, although all children spoke positively about their experiences at the shelter, some children mentioned challenges they experienced in interaction with the shelter. Children also spoke extensively about the relationships they had with people at the shelter. This will be discussed under the theme of *relationships*.

Services Provided

In speaking of basic necessities for survival, the children noted their appreciation of the shelter as an institution where the children could access food and shelter. For example, when asked what he would do as an elder to help homeless children, Siboniso mentioned providing food and shelter.

> *Siboniso: I will tell them that they may make maybe a centre where there will be where they will give children food and give them a place to stay.*

Other children noted the various different services that they were able to access through the shelter. Dingane mentioned being able to gain medical assistance:

> *Interviewer: What's good about the shelter?*
> *Dingane: ... If I am sick they'll take me to hospital and feel better and go to school.*

For Thembelihle, being able to get to school was a primary aspect in her placement at the shelter. When asked what the best thing about the shelter was, she responded:

Interpreter: So they take you to schools.

As noted previously, it was through the shelter that Mphumelelo was able to access drug rehabilitation services. Thus it seems that children found the shelter necessary to be able to access primary services that would support them in their journeys through homelessness as well as their journeys through life in general.

Those children who spoke about the shelter as a mediatory service between them and their families valued this function. Mphumelelo, for example, acknowledged the role that the shelter played in negotiating his reintegration with his family.

Mphumelelo: Uh, when I was still in Durban attending my programme in rehab, uh they tried in the shelter to meet so-some of my family members. ... Yes, uh found them, uh, communicate with them then they accept me back. ... I can if I'm leaving here at the shelter, I can leave straight to home.

This suggests that children acknowledged and valued the intercessory role that the shelter plays in their reintegration with their families.

Phases of interaction

Pre-shelter contact
The children described a gradual process of interaction with the shelter that began while they lived on the streets. Dingane spoke of his initial contact with the shelter when he accessed an outreach meal programme shelter staff provided for children on the streets.

Dingane: The other day they had a team here that go to to feed children from the street and they asked me where I where I'm coming from and I explained the background that I had been and they take me…

The gradual interaction seems to be necessary for some children in order for them to trust that living at the shelter will be suitable for them and not constrain their freedom. Siboniso for example took a long time and slow exposure to the shelter before he came to trust in the service and agree to reside in the shelter.

> *Siboniso: My brother who came here. He was in the shelter. I don't know how he came. So Uncle D_. usually came and visit him. And he saw me and say do I want to come in the shelter. And I didn't want to go there. But he came and came and came. And last I agree to go there. So that is how I stayed in the shelter.*
>
> *Interviewer: Ok. And why didn't you want to go to the shelter?*
>
> *Siboniso: Uh, when they told me about the shelter they said it is a place where you don't have to go somewhere. You only stay in [the shelter].*
>
> *Interviewer: ...What   made   you   change   your   mind?*
> *Siboniso: Uh. When we were staying at street, we sometimes went to the shelter to bath. ... Uh, on Wednesdays. ... Ya, so I realised that I, I'd have to go. There's no problem.*

The apparent open door policy at the shelter, the flexibility and the freedom which the children are granted thus seems to have a positive impact in the children's initial contact with the shelter and their decisions to transition from street life to shelter life.

Life at the shelter

The second phase in children's homeless journeys involved their lives at the shelter. Children's descriptions of their lives at the shelter were colourful and varied. Children discussed the value they placed on the experience, the fun activities they engaged in at the shelter and their chores that prepared them to reintegrate back into society. Children also discussed the supportive and empowering nature of their experience.

Many children valued their experience at the shelter, finding it to be a worthwhile learning curve that was filled with camaraderie and enjoyment. Hluphizwe for example, would remain at the shelter, given the choice.

> *Interviewer: So if you could go back, to anytime, before you left home, when you lived at the shelter, anytime, and if you could change just one thing. What would you change?*
>
> *Hluphizwe: I'd go back to the shelter and then I can change nothing. ... Just, it was nice living in the -shelter.*

Figure one (see next page) is also indicative of the camaraderie expressed by Hluphizwe. All the boys mentioned soccer and most described it as their favourite activity. Dingane also drew a picture of the boys playing soccer at the shelter. This is suggestive of the importance that the children place on team sports and perhaps reflects that their desire for belonging, discussed below, may in part be met through interactions at the shelter. The smiling faces and full picture suggest that Charlie's experiences at the shelter were positive. This was supported in his narrative in which he expressed a sense of emotional warmth at the shelter.

> *Interviewer: What have you learnt here at [the shelter] that will help you to be able to go back home?*
>
> *Interpreter: Th-that um, they support them, they give them love to go to school and to love other people as well.*
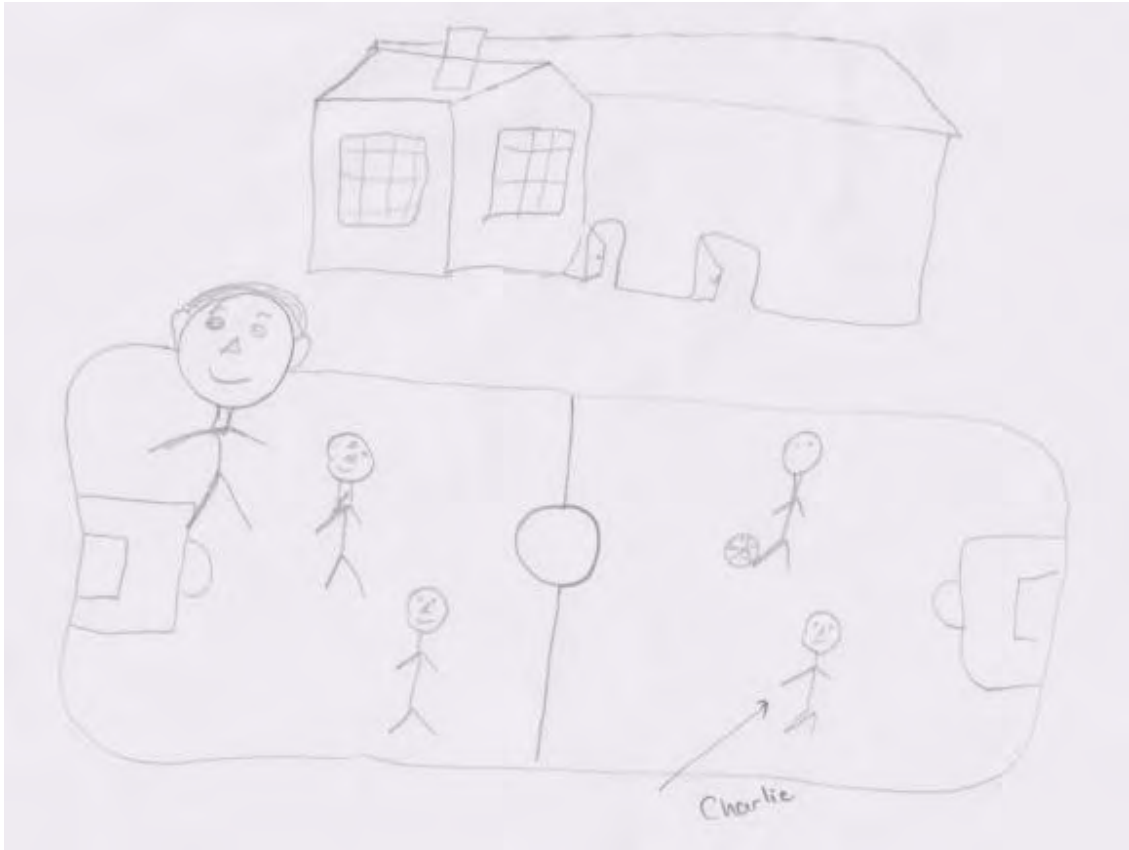
Figure 1: Charlie - At the shelter

Londisizwe spoke of the shelter as an opportunity and described his time there as fun.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the shelter?

Interpreter: It was fun. It was really fun….So after that time you have to leave and give other people space … to to also get the same opportunity as y- as you did.

Thus some children seem to indicate that life at the shelter would be a preferable choice in their pathways out of homelessness. However, children did not only engage in fun activities at the shelter. They also had chores and homework to complete. Siboniso described a routine of chores upon returning from school and before being allowed to play outdoors.

Siboniso: When we come back to school every day, we come and wash our school uniforms, do our school work then we went to play.

For Hluphizwe, the chores demanded of him at the shelter appeared to have been preparing them for leaving and living in a home once more. When asked what he thought about the chores that he had to do at the shelter he said:

Hluphizwe: That they are, they are good. Because I am doing them here.

By observing and learning from others at the shelter, Mphumelelo seemed to find life at the shelter to be empowering.

Interviewer: … one of their [the shelter] aims to is to help you … to be able to go back home. What do you think about that?

Mphumelelo: I think it is, the thing that is good cos are a lot of people who are helped here in the shelter in front of me and some of them making them s… supporting their parents and some of them they are also working here in the shelter and now that the thing making me to feel like I have more power to work for myself, someone can share for you that S_. has must take care of you cos I will also stay in here in the shelter so now they can see that I am working cos I know what I want to achieve in life and earn so a lot of the time it is giving me the power to do what I want.

So for Mphumelelo, the shelter was playing a vital role in his belief in his ability to succeed in life and to have his own home.

After care support

The third and final phase in children's pathways through the shelter involved continued support from shelter staff once they had reintegrated with their families or communities, or were placed in foster care. All those children who had been reintegrated back into mainstream society, Londisizwe, Siboniso, Zithulele, Hluphizwe, spoke of the continued interaction with shelter staff. Siboniso, for example, described the continued support he received from the shelter.

> *Siboniso: And [he ... shelter staff] sometimes when it's school holidays comes*
> *fetch me and visit to the shelter.*
> *Siboniso: Even when I home he [shelter staff] is now still supporting me....*
> *helping me, buying school uniform for me. Giving me food. Supporting me.*

Thus it seems that children find great value in the continued interaction that they have with the shelter once they have journeyed out of homelessness.

Challenges

While for many children, the shelter was a good experience, some children faced some challenges in their life at the shelter. Challenges faced by the children at the shelter were concerned with a sense of ill-treatment and peer rivalry at the shelter, as well as inadequate staff attention to the children's circumstances. Dingane mentioned peer rivalry as a risk factor in his homeless trajectory:

> *Dingane: ... some of the boys here they used to bully me because I was young*
> *and I ran here and I ran go back to the streets sometimes.*

Thus rivalry between children at the shelter may impede children's pathways out of homelessness and it seems to reduce their internal resilience.

Following her initial stay at the shelter, shelter staff aided Thembelihle's reintegration back into what she perceived to be the abusive environment that she had tried to escape in the first place. She thus felt betrayed by the shelter:

> *Interpreter: So what happened is that the first time while she was here ... they*
> *took her back to her father. ... So what happened there is that uh her father kept*
> *doing the same thing. He kept abusing her and then there was this one day*
> *where her grandmother from her father's side called her and she sort of uh*

strangled her but then she was able to run away from that ... So she went back

to the street. Cos she was scared to come back here [the shelter].

This suggests that in their efforts to reintegrate children with their families, in some instances the shelter may be paying insufficient attention to the children's narratives and are too quick to return them to their families. This suggests that the temporary nature of the shelters is not ideal. Rather, children may benefit from shelters that are able to house them for longer periods of time.

Despite his unhappiness there, Dingane was conflicted about life at the shelter.

Interviewer: So you feel that you don't want to stay at the shelter because you

don't learn about the bigger world out there.

Dingane: I like to, but I want to learn more things about life.

Interviewer: Ok. So one day you would like to leave the shelter.

Dingane: Yes, cos one day I wi--- they will be telling me that I have to leave ...

the shelter.

It seems possible that the temporary nature of the shelter is unsettling for Dingane and destructive to his sense of security in his state of homelessness.

4.2.2.1.4 Religion

Religious institutions also played a small, but noticeable, role in children's homeless experiences and formed part of their experiences at the shelter. Five children spoke of religion, with three children mentioning it freely and two speaking of religion upon elicitation. Contrary perceptions were presented with regards to the role of religion in children's pathways out of homelessness. Some children were exposed to religion through the shelter, some spoke of religion in a positive light while others noted the hypocrisy of religious institutions.

Hluphizwe, Mphumelelo and Charlie all spoke of religion in a positive light. Hluphizwe, for example, spoke of God as a means of support through the difficult circumstances he had faced in life.

Interviewer: In what way do you think knowing God and praying God has

helped you in your life?

> *Hluphizwe: I think I found a family because of him. ...Because when I look back now, no one could have escaped what I have been through.*

Charlie also expressed belief and trust in God as a protective being in his journey through homelessness, one that had and would keep him safe from potential dangers in his life.

> *Interviewer: Tell me how God has helped you.*
>
> *Interpreter: Ok. He's saying that um some of the people that he was with on the street have died. But he is still alive. So God has kept him and he's grateful to God for that.*
>
> *Interviewer: How can God help you to become the doctor that you want to be and to have the dream home that you want to have?*
>
> *Interpreter: That he keeps him until he reaches his goals.*

While Hluphizwe spoke positively of religion, he also recognised and was confused by the hypocrisy and contradictions that he perceived in religion that resulted in his decision to forego church attendance.

> *Interviewer: Ok. Tell me about that. Tell me more about th-the praying and God and...*
>
> *Hluphizwe: Actually, I don't go to church, but the father of here [foster father] i-is a pastor. But, I've been to many churches so the pastors of those churches tell people many things that I don't understand. ... Like when we go to, to Shembe they tell you another thing but when you go to Zion they tell you another thing, Posto another thing. So I just gets confused and then I chose to not go to church.*

Dingane also recognised hypocrisy in the intermingling of right and wrong within religious settings. For him, religion was not a choice; rather it seemed to be an unwanted necessity of his life at the shelter

> *Interviewer: And where did you learn about God?*
>
> *Dingane: By then I was. [Pause] 2008. Because the auntie that I used to stay at that foster house, he used to go the church. Although when she makes bad things, but she used to go to the church.*
>
> *Interviewer: And what about God here at the shelter?*

S: Here? Even when you're not, when you're not going by the ch – by your house but here because its, it's under the God, it's the slogan of [the shelter]. ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ *God commandment that's why although when you don't want to, I must go to church because it's the place of God here.*

This suggests that although religion can be a supportive factor in children's pathways out of homelessness, it depends on the individual and each child should be treated in a unique manner.

4.2.2.2 Relationships

The children's narratives were interspersed with talk about the relationships they had with people, both the support they receive as well as the detrimental nature of some relationships. All children expressed an intense desire and need for care and support within relationships with peers, shelter staff and family. Peer relationships played a role throughout the children's homeless trajectories, from their influence in the children's lives as the both entered and exited homelessness as well as their positive or negative impact during their homelessness. For many children, relationships with shelter staff became substitutes for parental relationships. These relationships were regarded as key factors in their decisions to reside at the shelter as well as in their stability and self-belief in their lives after the shelter. Finally, children spoke extensively about the role of families in their journeys through homelessness.

The narratives of Hluphizwe, Dingane, Zithulele and Mphumelelo embodied the importance that the children placed on positive relationships. When asked what advice they would give to the adults with whom they interact in order to help friends in similar circumstances, the children spoke of support and affirmation. Dingane, for example, expressed an ardent desire for caring support from adults when he spoke of children's needs for positive encouragement and a loving environment.

> *Dingane: I will tell them that by my home I heard a boy that had no parents and he's not schooling and hi-his parent they do not take that much care of him. He needs a place that he can feel warmer … And tell him he's the good person although maybe he's not but I will tell him because I need him to have the best that he can get warm.*

Zithulele expressed his appreciation of the affirmation he received within relationships with teachers and shelter staff who seemed to care for the children.

> *Interviewer: What did you like about your teacher?*
> *Zithulele: He was like me and then he puts me to be a Prefect for the school.*
> *Interviewer: What was the best thing about the shelter?*
> *Zithulele: Because the uncles was like us ...*

On the other hand, difficulties with relationships can also have a negative impact on children's emotional resilience. Although he strove not to allow hurtful, racist interactions with peers to affect him, Dingane nevertheless felt defeated by these relationships. Overall, these negative interactions with others had a detrimental impact on his mental well-being.

> *Dingane: Sometimes I get sad. Maybe. Sometimes maybe people will ignore me.*
> *People they say bad things they say you black, you seem like baboon. And they*
> *will say everything that they will that they you like, they they like to say to you.*
> *But sometimes I respond. But eh, get def... defeats me and I get sad.*

Thus it becomes apparent that one of the primary needs expressed by children in their journeys through homelessness is for support and affirmation through loving, caring relationships. Negative relations seem to be a risk factor.

4.2.2.2.1 Peers

All of the children spoke of peer relationships and the impact these relationships had on their pathways through homelessness. In six of the children's narratives, the detrimental influence of peers was apparent. For all six children, peer relationships were noted as a risk factor in their lives on the streets or at the shelter, while for four of the children (Mphumelelo, Londisizwe, Nqobile and Zithulele) peer relationships played a contributory role in their routes into homelessness. In contrast, seven of the children spoke of the positive impact of supportive friendships as they navigated their way through their difficult circumstances. For three of the children (Zithulele, Londisizwe and Siboniso), peer relationships contributed to their transitions off the streets.

In speaking of the role of peer relations in their pathways into homelessness, children associated substance use with friends in their downward spiral into homelessness. Zithulele

had been staying with his friend, Charlie, and described how he and Charlie became involved in substance use and left Charlie's home together.

> *Interpreter: So um, his friend [Charlie] left uh school and he was smoking glue. So this one day he wanted him to also try glue and he tried it. He took it back home and he made his mother smell it and his mother shout at him and so um he left and he smoked again and then he never came back home.*

And:

> *Zithulele: I was staying with him [Charlie] at his home then then he just run away from his home then his mother doesn't know where don't know he's where he's in. Then go to the school and tell the principal and the principal say he he will uh search him more east. Then then his auntie gets us whe… where we are then Charlie was running away. … And I wa … then we were… we was running away.*

Londisizwe also reported that his friends and taking drugs with his friends was the only reason for him leaving home.

> *Interpreter: He just left home. Th-There was nothing that was um sort of, putting pressure on him to leave. He just decided to leave.*
> *Interviewer: If nothing was putting pressure on you, what made, how came you to make that decision?*
> *Interpreter: Friends made him leave home. … They were bad friends, they were taking drugs as well.*

Those children who spoke of the detrimental impact of peer relationships during their lives on the streets and at the shelter spoke of negative peer influence, and hurtful peer relations. Mphumelelo, for example, spoke of the praise received from street peers for criminal activities and spoke of his fear that through peer influence he would be incarcerated.

> *Mphumelelo: Cos sometimes if you did the robbery, if you did the robbery your friend gets some … get money. Your friends will be, they will be, they'll treat you like you did a good thing.*

And:

> *Mphumelelo: Maybe I was going to, I was going to. Maybe if I was still staying on the streets I was going to gaol for a long time. Cos of friends.*

With regards to hurtful peer relationships, Thembelihle felt that peers at the shelter had a negative impact on her relationships with shelter staff.

> *Interpreter: So um, she tries to get along with all the mums, but um, the other girls always make up lies against her and they go tell the mums bad things about her.*

For this reason, Thembelihle reported that she preferred to be alone in order to avoid trouble with the shelter staff.

> *Interviewer: What's good about being alone?*
> *Interpreter: Ok. So what's good about that is that you don't get into trouble of, you know how people would lie saying that you said something about someone. So you don't get into that trouble because you are always alone.*

Dingane's narrative also indicated hurtful peer relations. He expressed a desire to avoid friendships because of hurtful peer relations and distrust in having his confidences disregarded.

> *Dingane: I've no friend. ... You have a friend maybe something that small happened maybe you tell them secret that he doesn't want to maybe maybe h- maybe one day maybe I will make him angry he will tell everyone that I will kill myself or think about the bad things or maybe run away by the shelter. Because you say my secret, that's why doesn't want friend.*

Figure two (see next page) corroborates these experiences. The prominence of the sad face in this picture suggests that Dingane's shelter experience was not all pleasurable. The sad face in conjunction with the soccer activities suggests that these difficulties may be related to peer relations at the shelter and this was confirmed by his drawing narrative.

> *Dingane: Sometimes I get happy. Sometimes I get sad because there some people that they will say positive thing about you say negative things about you. Not always every people they say positive things about you. And sometimes I don't feel as a part of the team when go to play soccer because if I do maybe a small thing they will talk always people they will talk.*
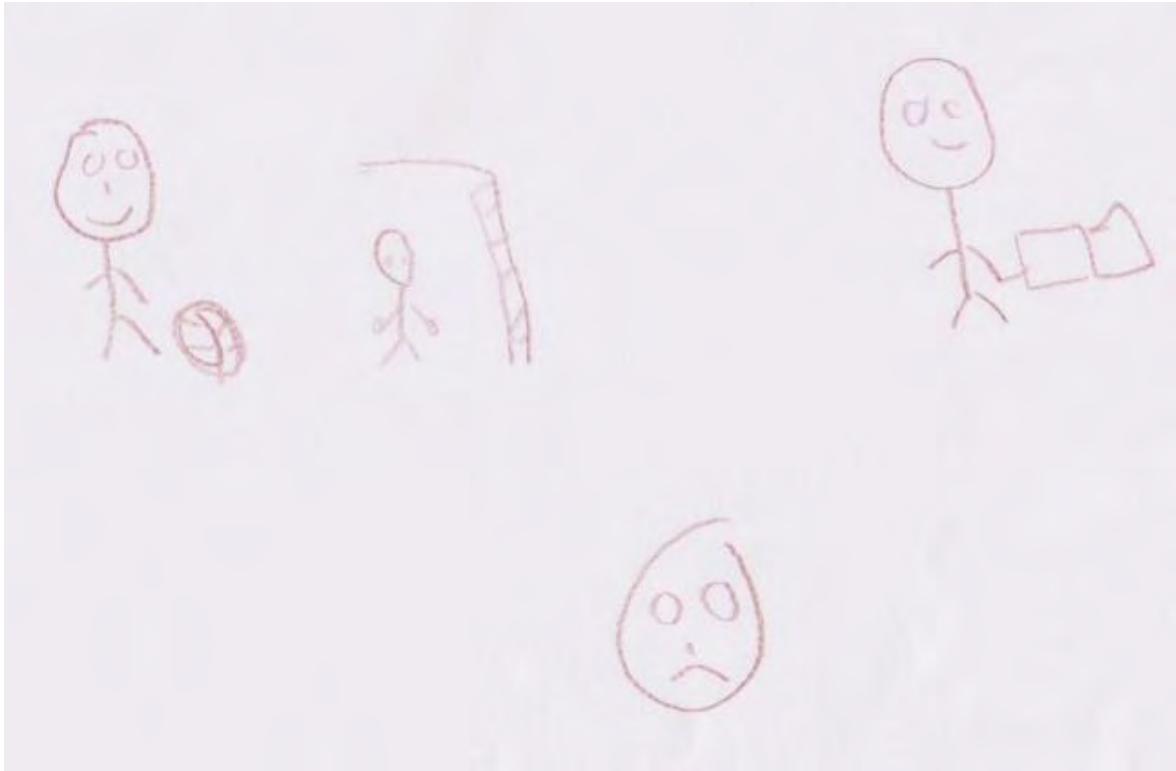
Figure 2: Dingane - At the shelter

Given that children express the need for supportive relationships with others, it seems that negative interactions with peers can have a detrimental impact on children's pathways off the streets. Although friendships on the streets are likely to lead children into substance use and crime, they also play a supportive role. Londisizwe, for example, spoke of companionship and sharing of resources on the streets in order to access substances.

> *Interpreter: So they were just friends and the money that they were making together they knew that at the end of the they needed to to take it together and get some glue.*

Thembelihle related the support and positive influence she received from a friend with whom she interacted on the street in encouraging her to avoid prostitution.

> *Interpreter: Ok, so some of those girls once asked her to go like, to go with them and sell …*
> *her body and one of her friends told her to not go there and she promised to go home and get food for her so that they could both eat.*

Although Dingane and Thembelihle related the negative impact of peers at the shelter, others developed friendships at the shelter and spoke of good peer relations. Londisizwe spoke of encouragement and support within his peer relations.

> *Interpreter: It was fun, really fun. … Being with the guys, the boys, and he misses most of them. That was great for him. … They're good people, very helpful. … They were very encouraging. … They were not even jealous of like if you're doing something good, they will not be jealous of that thing but they'd support you instead.*

Those children who spoke of the friendships that played a more direct role in their pathways off the streets spoke of being introduced to the shelter through friends on the streets. Londisizwe and his friend, for example, made the decision to seek help at the shelter in order to change their lives. Through his friend, Londisizwe was able to gain access to shelter staff.

> *Interpreter:[My friend] told them about the shelter and they all decided to change their way of living and go back there. … So when they got there, [my friend] um got inside … and um he spoke with the the people from there and uh explained the situations with them and so they took them in and they started connecting with their families.*

Interestingly, Londisizwe's journey through homelessness involved his friends throughout. Those friends with whom he left home were the same that decided to seek help at the shelter.

> *Interviewer: What was different that made it possible for you to be home again?*
>
> *Interpreter: Things. Um, like they were they were ch, they were not the same because the same friends that he was with before he left were also at the shelter.*
>
> *... So they were all there together. ...*
>
> *They just decided to leave drugs.*

Finally, friendships also appear to be an important aspect of children's reintegration back into their communities. When asked about his friends back home, Zithulele became animated about seeing them.

> *Interviewer: Can you tell me about your friends back here now?*
>
> *Interviewer: It was great and they were all so happy to see him back home.*

Zithulele also believed that support and positive role modelling from friends would be a protective factor in preventing pathways into homelessness. When asked what advice he would give a friend in a similar circumstance to him, he replied that he would provide his friend with a positive role model in himself.

> *Zithulele: I will come back at home. ... I will go at home because he will follow me, where-where i will go.*

Thus it seems that peers can be both a risk and a protective factor in children's journeys through homelessness. Peers seem to play a causal or preventative role in children's pathways into homelessness. They may have a positive or negative influence on their daily actions and decisions while on the streets and in their transitions off their streets. Peers may have a positive or negative impact on children's' emotional wellbeing as they negotiate their way back into mainstream living. Peer relations are thus an influence in these children's lives that do need to be accounted for and can be utilised in assisting children's pathways out of homelessness.

4.2.2.2.2 Shelter staff

The children were fervent about the supportive and caring nature of the relationships they had with shelter staff. Five of the nine children identified a particular staff member, different for each child, when they were asked who had helped them most, and most of the children spoke of the support and care they received from shelter staff. While most of the children spoke of the South African shelter staff in connection with their life at the shelter, two also mentioned the support they received from the shelter's temporary international volunteers. Although almost all children spoke of the constructive nature of their relationships with shelter staff, two children in the sample discussed difficulties they experienced in their relationship with shelter staff.

In discussing the nature of their relationships with shelter staff at the shelter, children spoke of support and affirmation, discipline and encouragement. Charlie was asked if he had to make a movie about someone who had helped him most, who and what the movie would be about. He spoke about one particular staff member who had believed in him.

> *Interpreter: It would be about how he [shelter staff] helped him. ... He played a*
> *very important role in his life. Like, he he took him when he was nothing and he*
> *made him something. ... He was very supportive and he would share stories that*
> *would give him life time lessons.*

When asked what he had learnt at the shelter that would help him to go back home, Charlie once more spoke of persistent care and emotional affirmation.

> *Interpreter: Th-that um, they support them, they give them love to go to school*
> *and to love other people as well. ... They showed them love even though when*
> *they do wrong things they keep on loving them and they help them where they*
> *need help.*

For Hluphizwe, it was the discipline he received through his relationship with one staff member that made an impression on him during his life at the shelter and seemed to prepare him for reintegrating back into a family.

> *Interviewer: Can you think of an uncle who helped you most?*
> *Hluphizwe: All of them, but Uncle B_. ... Then he seemed to be strict. But now I*
> *understand why he was doing it.*

> *Interviewer: How was he strict?*
>
> *H: Like when its homework time, and we were playing soccer ...and then we asked for five more minutes, he didn't care, he just took the ball and told us to get inside ... So that we can start our homework ... It felt like he hated us. But he was doing good thing.*

Hluphizwe also identified another staff member whose belief in him he found to be encouraging once he had been reintegrated with his family.

> *Interviewer: What did he do to help you?*
>
> *Hluphizwe: He always came to me when I was in schooling. Always encouraged me.*
>
> *Interviewer: And how did he do that?*
>
> *Hluphizwe: By coming and then I knew that there's someone who has faith in me that I can change my life.*

Siboniso mentioned the perseverance of the shelter staff which was a necessary aspect of his journey off the streets.

> *Interviewer: And in what way has he [shelter staff] helped you most?*
>
> *Siboniso: He's the one who tried and tried to get me into the shelter. Even I-I disagreed. He came back and came and came and came, telling me that I shouldn't be a staying at street. I must go at the shelter and I went to the shelter and he supported me.*

As both Hluphizwe and Siboniso have successfully transitioned back into home environments, their narratives suggest that term relationships with shelter staff after they have transitioned home are valued by the children and found to be positively influential in their pathways through homelessness. Overall, the children's narratives suggest that emotional connection with a particular member of the shelter staff seems to be a critical factor in the development of the resilience and emotional well-being that will stand the children in good stead in their pathways out of homelessness.

When speaking of the difficulties they experienced with shelter staff, Thembelihle and Nqobile both noted that they felt discriminated against. Nqobile mentioned being treated badly by shelter staff.

Interpreter: Ok she's just um, it's that problem with those aunties [shelter staff] who are just against her. Like, if she wants to do something, they always go against her and say bad things like she mustn't do this she mustn't do that.

Thembelihle felt she was being disregarded when it seemed to her that other children at the shelter were being treated differently from her.

Interpreter: Other people, they [the mums] buy things for other people [other children], but they never ever buy things for her. Whenever she asks for things, they tell her that they don't know where they're gonna get them.

Thus it seems that the children are jealous of one another and the attention that each receives from the staff. Dingane expressed this more directly when he explained that he would forego his interaction with shelter staff in order to prevent rivalry with his peers.

Dingane: I like, I like them [the uncles] but not that much, I don't wish to talk to them. Because the other children they say, I want them to love me that's why doesn't want to talk with them.

This rivalry suggests that the children have a great need for adult support and attention. Given that it impedes the positive relationship that these children may have with shelter staff, peer rivalry once more presents as a risk factor in children's pathways out of homelessness.

4.2.2.2.3 Family and home

Connection with a reliable and responsible adult seems to be a significant factor in children's pathways out of homelessness. To a certain extent, shelter staff seemed to fill this role in the absence of family. However, the children equated having a home to having a family or some kind of parental care. Although the importance of family relationships was noted, eight of the nine children in the sample spoke of difficult family circumstances or relations that played a causal role in their pathways into homelessness. For four of these children, returning to their families was not perceived to be a constructive solution to their difficult circumstances. Thus for these children, alternative pathways out of homelessness were suggested. At the time of the interviews, four children had been reintegrated with their families, while one child believed in the possibility of doing so. All children unanimously spoke of the significance of familial connections and their pathways out of homelessness, whether real or imagined, meant having a family.

It was Hluphizwe's narrative that most clearly embodied the equation between a home and family connection when he noted that having a home meant having family that cared.

> *Interviewer: You say the best part about being ... here is that you feel you know you have a home. So what's different from before that now you feel secure that you have a home?*
>
> *Hluphizwe: Like here they [foster family] care about me. ... Like, asking me about my report ... and how I'm doing at school. Helping helping me with my homework ... Where I was living with my mum, my, sh-she didn't care.*

In speaking of the causal role of family in children's homeless trajectories, six of the nine children reported unstable home circumstances prior to their lives on the streets and eight of the nine children reported difficult home circumstances, or problematic relationships with family, upon leaving home. Dingane's fluctuation between homes reflects this instability.

> *Dingane: ... first my father passed away when I was young and my mother. And we used to stay with our grandmother and and she always passed away in 2005 when I was young and we, I had my sister, and we came here to DSD and we find the social worker and he go leave us by the other auntie that foster us and he used to do something wrong but eh. I was the only boy who was staying there and I see not good to stay in there. Go back by my brother because my brother is the one who who must look after us because he was alone, he had no other family members. Uh. I see there is nothing going on my brother still working in ... school at that time.*

This suggests that the absence of parental figures in the children's lives leads to housing instability which both precedes and encompasses their homelessness.

Figure three (see next page) represents Nqobile's stated reasons for leaving home. The road is her route to school from home and she depicted herself being offered poisoned food which was her reason for running away. While Nqobile's contradictory narrative casts doubt on her story, her perception of her circumstances does indicate conflictual family relationships that influenced her decision to leave home.

Figure 3: Nqobile - Leaving home

Thembelihle attributed her homelessness to escaping an abusive father and an unstable home environment following being raped in her aunt's household.

> *Interpreter: So um her father used to abuse her. She would uh torn her school clothes. ... Her mother died so her father didn't want her. Whenever she ask for things from her father, her father would tell her to go to her mother's grave. ... She moved to stay with her aunt. And this one day when her aunt was not there someone came and that person raped her.*

Children also expressed a sense of lack of belonging within the environments which they left behind. Mphumelelo, for example, felt that he was not being treated as if he was a member of the family.

> *Mphumelelo: I ended up not staying good hey cos I was l...it was like I am not a member of the family, they were really, they were treating me like, they were not treating me quite like the other childrens.*

In spite of the expressed difficulty of the children's home circumstances, in Figure four (see next page) Charlie clearly expressed a sense of unhappiness in leaving home through his depressive affect in the drawing. This was corroborated by the drawing narrative in which Charlie expressed his sense of loss at leaving his siblings behind.

> *Interviewer: ... I see he's not very happy.*
>
> *Interpreter: When he left home he wasn't ok ... He wasn't ok, because he was leaving his siblings behind.*

Figure 4: Charlie - Leaving home

Thus for some children, leaving home may not be a simple choice nor a bad choice, but rather a means of escaping the desperation of their home circumstances. Given that instability in home environments and family relationships are factors influencing pathways into homelessness, it seems reasonable that attending to these factors would assist children in their pathways out of homelessness.

Those children for whom reintegration with their families was not perceived to be a possibility spoke of extended family members, foster care, and even boarding school as possible alternative pathways into more stable living circumstances. For Thembelihle, Dingane and Charlie returning to their families was not a possibility and Hluphizwe's route out of homelessness involved a new foster family.

Figure 5 (see next page), for example, indicates Thembelihle's unhappiness at the idea of returning home through the sparseness of the depiction of the home and her sad, tearful affect. For Thembelihle, reintegration would restore her to the environment which she tried to escape.

> *Interpreter: Ok, so this is a picture of her going back home. She doesn't really like going home because she thinks that um if she gets there she's still going to be abused.*

Figure 5: Thembelihle - Perceptions of returning home

This is supportive of the need to find alternative pathways out of homelessness.

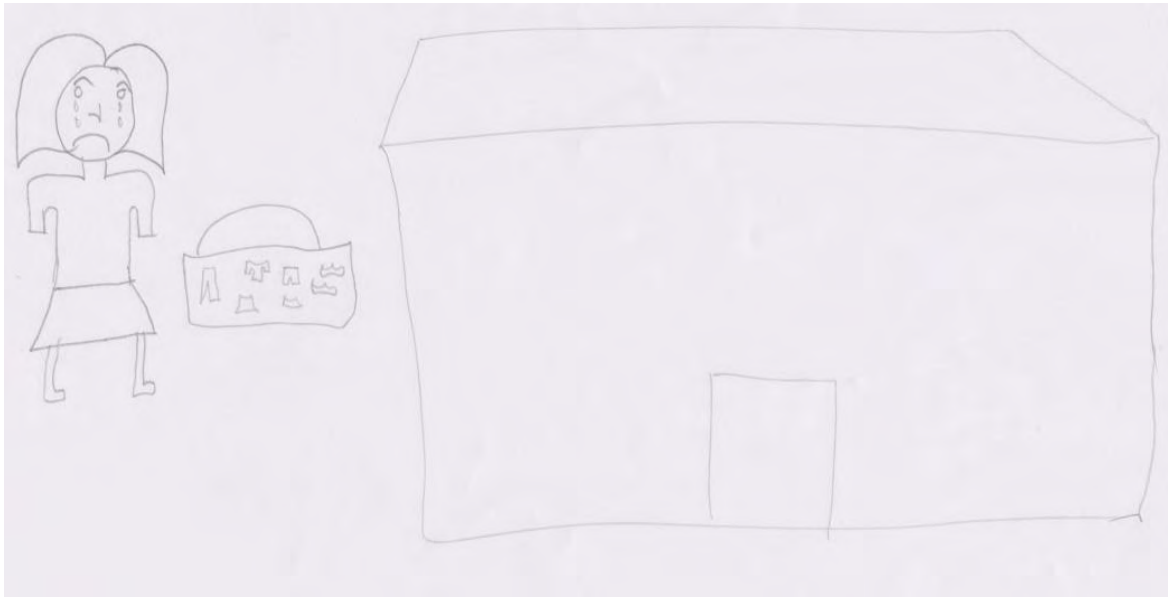Similarly, Dingane could not envision a more stable home environment as he believed that he had no family members that would take care of him.

> *Interviewer: Who would live with you in your dream home?*
>
> *Dingane: My auntie, my-my aunties old now. Maybe she will die. Maybe. Cos ... my brother's not my s-my brother my brother. We, he's my brother with my mother, we different from our fathers. Maybe he'll think, I'm not. Maybe he will find ano... her wife and go with her and maybe I will be left alone because my other brother had the other father.*

This suggests that for Dingane, the lack of connection with his paternal family is significant.

Although Charlie would like to return home, he felt that this was not possible and thus relied on extended family in his pathway out of homelessness.

> *Interpreter: So he feels sad that being at home is a problem and uh, he's got cousins that live in M_. but he would choose to stay at home.*

All of the children placed a good deal of emphasis on family connection, on having a stable home and family environment and an overall desire to belong, to be loved and cared for was apparent through the children's narratives. This was evident in their future aspirations for stable families as well as the emphasis placed on the supportive role that families could play in the success of their lives. Even more than family, children expressed a deep desire for parental care and support.

Many children expressed the importance of having a home and family. Dingane, for example, would choose to live with his older brother who has to some extent stood in the place of a parent to him.

> *Interviewer: If you could choose to have somebody there [in his dream home]?*
>
> *Dingane: I will choose my brother.*

This suggests that for Dingane, his older brother is the principle person in his life. He also expressed a deep desire to belong and be cared for by his family.

> *Dingane: Sometimes when I think about them [his siblings], maybe, maybe I they also think about me. How important I am. Maybe they will they will they*

will. Because sometimes when I went home, they gets happy and gives me some
money when I come back to get pocket money for the school.

In discussing family in connection with future aspirations, Hluphizwe believed that school would enable him to have a family which he equated with a 'great' future.

Hluphizwe: School is good because um I can definitely have a great future.
Interviewer: What kind of future?
Hluphizwe: Like I can have my own family.

Charlie believed that a supportive family would help succeed in his studies.

Interviewer: What will help you to get your studies, to succeed in life?
Interpreter: To have good family they will motivate him to study.

Londisizwe, who returned home three years prior to the interview, remembers reuniting with his family with pleasure. He described being with his family as the best part of returning home.

Interviewer: What has been the best thing about coming back home?
Interpreter: Being with his family and those little ch-children even though they
sometimes give him trouble but they are funny.

Although initially Hluphizwe was somewhat dubious about his foster family, he believed that the fostering process would be helpful for many children in their pathways out of homelessness. When asked what advice he would give to people in his community, Hluphizwe reported that he would encourage community members to foster or adopt children.

Hluphizwe: … Like, there are many children that lives in homes … That maybe
they can adopt them so that they can also have families.

This means that family connection plays a crucial role in children's visions of pathways out of homelessness as well as their successful reintegration into their families or into mainstream society.

Thembelihle, Dingane, Charlie, Londisizwe, Siboniso, Zithulele and Hluphizwe all spoke of their desire or appreciation for parental care and support. When discussing his dream home, Dingane's narrative exemplified the desire children have for parental care.

> *Dingane: ... find someone that wo-would be like my mother or father that would take care of me not bully me, not doing bad things with me. Tell me the good things and the right things.*

In expressing their desire for parental care, children particularly spoke of maternal care. Some children felt that maternal figures in their lives had been the most supportive and influential. Hluphizwe described his foster mother as his greatest source of support in his home environment.

> *Interviewer: And here back at home, who's helping you most to be comfortable and to to cope with life?*
> *Hluphizwe: My mum, and my sisters. Everyone!*
> *Interviewer: Everyone!*
> *Hluphizwe: Ya. But my mum.*

Figure six (see next page) is also highly demonstrative of the need that children express for maternal care and support. The closeness and outstretched arms suggests Siboniso's identification with his mother as well as his need for maternal attention, support and acceptance. While Siboniso seemed conflicted over leaving the shelter, his desire to be with his mother fuelled his move back home.

> *Interviewer: When you were at [the shelter], did you want to come back home?*
> *Siboniso: It was nice staying in [the shelter].*
> *Interviewer: Ok*
> *Siboniso: I wanted to come back home because I wanted to see my mother.*

Figure 6: Siboniso - Returning home

Thus having a caring parental figure, particularly maternal care, seems to be a significant factor influencing children's pathways out of homelessness.

4.2.2.3 Intrapersonal factors

The inner most system, the child himself, also plays a significant role in children's journeys. When discussing intrapersonal factors influencing their pathways out of homelessness, children spoke of the impact of learning through their experiences upon leaving home, and gaining appreciation for home life through these experiences. Children also spoke of the shelter as an opportunity in which they were able to learn new life skills and behaviours and come to appreciate the importance of education. Children's attitudes towards their homelessness and changing attitudes became apparent as factors influencing their homeless pathways. Finally the role of self-worth in children's homeless journeys and their own agency in their decision making process in their homeless journeys are discussed.

When Charlie was asked what advice he would give to shelter staff, he expressed the need for shelter staff to know the children who they are trying to help.

> *Interviewer: If Uncle J_. asked you, if he came to you and said he needs some advice about a friend of yours ... what would you say to him?*
> *Interpreter: So he would uh tell Uncle J_. about the kind of people his friends are and what they like.*

Charlie's narrative is indicative of the importance that children place on intrapersonal factors and verifies the need the children have to have their perspectives taken into account and to be valued in interventions that are designed to assist homeless children.

4.2.2.3.1 Learning through experience

In discussing their experiences and what they had learnt from them, children noted the difficult and traumatic experiences on the streets as factors in their pathways out of homelessness. Negative experiences with drugs were also discussed as an incentive for some children to try to manage their addictions and thereby played a role in their transitioning of the streets. Finally, for some children, their time away from family gave them a greater appreciation for their families.

Almost all of the children were verbose regarding their experiences on the street. Children provided colourful descriptions of their lives on the streets and narratives centred around drugs, survival, danger, and denigration.

Figure seven (see next page) is an epitome of these issues. Mphumelelo depicted the major concerns that he was faced with during his life on the streets. For him, life was about survival and substance use. Mphumelelo's narrative regarding his drawing was concerned with obtaining money in order to buy food and drugs and resorting to criminal activities in order to get money. Seeking shelter was another prominent concern for him.

Figure 7: Mphumelelo - Life on the streets

For many children, their experience on the street was a powerful motivation for them to transition out of homelessness. Siboniso, for example, would advise homeless children against street life due to the lack of basic necessities and the discomforts of street life.

> *Siboniso: I will tell them that it's n, it's not right staying home, in the streets, because, there is no life in the streets. They-they will die. ... Sometimes they, they they don't have bed to sleep, it's cold out there.*

Dingane found his experiences on the street to be distressing and disrespectful, as indicated by his words in Figure eight (see next page) *"People swering me say bad things about me"* and the accompanying unhappy affect. This was corroborated in Dingane's drawing narrative in which he described how hurt he felt upon being ill-treated by passers-by.

> *Dingane: And sometimes when I aks them, when I aks people for the money they say fuck you go home. You mu- you must try to work for yourself. There is no child that need to stay in the street. ... Me, I will tell them back and swear them when I want to because it hurts me inside when they swear them.*
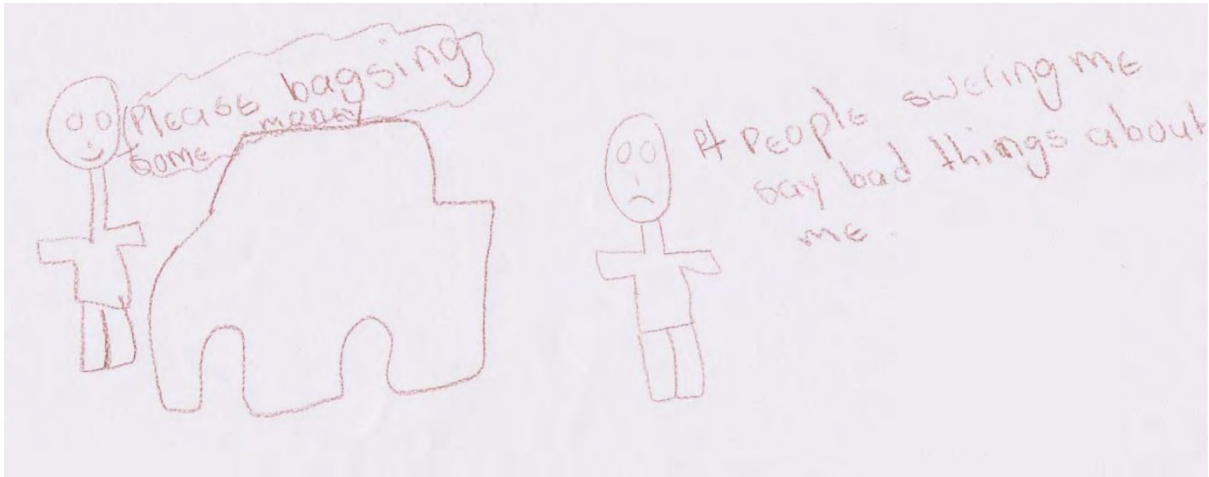
Text in drawing (left): Please bagsing some money

Text in drawing (right): A people swering me say bad things about me.

Figure 8: Dingane - Life on the streets

Five of the children discussed traumatic experiences that played a role in their drive to transition off the streets. When asked what he would most like written in the research report, Zithulele desired to create awareness of these traumatic experiences in order that children would return to their homes.

> *Interpreter: That you tell them about the most frightening things that happen on*
> *the streets so that they can quickly come back... home.*

And if he was a life skills teacher, his chosen profession, Zithulele would actively seek to enlighten children about such experiences.

> *Interpreter: He would teach about um humans like how things are with humans*
> *and if you do wrong things with your bodies like other things may go wrong.*

Charlie expressed children's need for warmth and support following traumatic street experiences.

> *Interviewer: And what would you think they [children on the street] would like?*
> *Interpreter: So he uh would tell him [shelter staff] that um, he must keep them*
> *in a warm place like filled with warmth because what happens is that is there on*
> *the street sometimes they they can get stabbed like ... watching some of the men*
> *uh stabbing their wives in front of them.*

Mphumelelo spoke about the trauma of witnessing crime amongst people on the streets as a motivation for him to leave the streets. He related the murder of a street child for a two rand coin.

> *Interviewer: So what did you learn on the streets and here at the shelter that*
> *will help you to go back home?*
> *Mphumelelo: Er. Hmm. What I learn in the streets. It's something ... I ... er um.*
> *It's bad. Cos ... sometimes there those guys, those who big get in ... sometimes*
> *in the streets there's not only childrens ... and those others, others guys and*
> *they used to come and force the, the smaller ones to go and beg for them ... so*
> *like for example there was a guy who had been stabbed and they take his heart,*
> *take heart out ... cos of two rand ... only two rand and it was it was his own two*
> *rand ... they stabbed him and take his uh heart, for his own money on the streets*

Six of the nine children admitted using substances and a seventh child discussed substances but denied use. In speaking of their learning curve with substances, children discussed the

damaging effect of drugs on their bodies. Londisizwe, for example, decided to quit his drug habit as a result of his loss of motor control following his drug use.

> *Interpreter: Because they do nothing good for you, they just harm you.*
>
> *Interviewer: How did you come to realise that?*
>
> *Interpreter: It's sort of paralyse their bodies, like the drugs. There-there'd be times when they can't they couldn't even walk properly because of the drugs. So that made them see ... that they're not good for them.*

As substance use is such an entrenched part of street life, learning about the detrimental effects of drug use may become a protective factor in children's pathways out of homelessness.

The children also spoke of learning appreciation for home and family through their separation. Mphumelelo, for example, discussed the comforts of home life such as shelter, food and being able to bath as a positive aspect of returning home.

> *Interviewer: So what would be the good things about going home?*
>
> *Mphumelelo: Lots. Ya. Cos, at home I know that .. If ... bef...in the morning before I eat I have to bath first and then have breakfast. ... So and it's from, from ... From the streets, in ...when you waking up in the morning, you have to go and beg to get the money to buy food ... but at home you can have a shelter and have food ... Can bath ... anytime you want to bath to. See a lot of things you can do at home that you can't do in the streets.*

For Londisizwe, being separated from his family was hurtful for him.

> *Interviewer: What was the worst thing about leaving home?*
>
> *Interpreter: It was just leaving, like um, his parents without them knowing where he was. That even if he dies they wouldn't know where he'd be.*

Thus for some of the children, life on the streets and away from family is a learning curve that enables them to appreciate a home environment.

4.2.2.3.2 Learning at the shelter

The majority of the children reported their experience at the shelter to be a valuable one from which they gained knowledge and experience. Children spoke about learning life skills, learning new behaviours and learning the importance of education. With regards to life skills, children spoke of learning to be independent and learning better coping skills. They learnt about the detrimental effects of drugs at the shelter and they were encouraged to believe in themselves. Children also spoke about more appropriate ways of behaving and better discipline. From the children's narratives, it seems that the shelter placed significant emphasis on the importance of school and many children came to recognise the positive impact that an education could have in their futures.

In discussing the value of their learning, the children expressed their appreciation for the shelter and what they had gained there. Hluphizwe noted that he had learnt a good deal at the shelter.

> *Interviewer: What was good about it [the shelter]?*
> *Hluphizwe: It's things that I had to learn from the uncles and the other boys ... I learn many things about life.*

Those children who spoke of learning life skills seemed to indicate that this was a vital aspect in the journeys through the shelter. Zithulele captured the essence of this.

> *Interviewer: How did the shelter help you to be able to come back home?*
> *Interpreter: They taught him a lot, like um. Gave him some life skills. Telling him that uh he needs to, to like grow up, like be educated so that when he grows up he can be able to be independent.*

Learning independent, responsible behaviour was one of the life skills that children spoke of learning at the shelter. Mphumelelo discussed how the shelter was helping him to be able to reintegrate back home through teaching him everyday chores.

> *Mphumelelo: Yes, cos here while, while I am here in the shelter it's like I still preparing myself to get back home ... It's ... do everything cos we also doing chores, doing washing, see l ...everything that I help y... that you have to do home you also have to do...*

Teaching children better coping skills and emotional regulation is another life skill that the shelter seems to emphasise. Dingane mentioned encouragement to engage in healthy activities such as exercise in order to deal with his stress, rather than resorting to drug use.

> *Dingane: The uncles sometimes, even at school, they tell you if you, they tell us things that you can do when you w, when you have stressful. Can go and gym. ... Yes. And do other stuff and maybe draw or read. Maybe the stress will go. ...Not, not smoke drugs ... Yes. Or go to sleep. Maybe wh when you wake up maybe you forget everything.*

Four of the children mentioned learning about drugs at the shelter. Siboniso reported that the shelter had told the children about the detrimental effects of drugs on their bodies.

> *Siboniso: Uh! They they told us that uh we must learn, we mustn't do d-drugs because drugs can damage your body and there's no future if you are, if you smoking drugs.*

In discussing learning to believe in themselves, it became apparent that one of the shelter's efforts to assist homeless children involved building up their ego strength. Siboniso discussed being encouraged at the shelter and learning to encourage himself.

> *Interviewer: What did you learn at the shelter that's helped you to um, helped you in life?*
>
> *Siboniso: ... and you must, you must encourage yourself about doing things. Ya. And know that you are going to do things, you are going to success. And go to school.*

Mphumelelo spoke of developing ego strength against bad influences.

> *Mphumelelo: Best thing to be here in the shelter. I said its. Its good cos ... cos we, we like, we here in the shelter we have to ... to have weapons. ... To fight against, ah peer pressure and bad influences - those are coming against us.*

Thus through their interactions at the shelter, it seems that some children learned to believe in and value themselves and they gained in strength of character. However, not all children were able to gain from this learning.

Figure 9 (see next page), for example, is indicative of Dingane's wish to have a stable home, yet his drawing narrative indicates a lack of belief in himself and his ability to gain the happiness and sense of belonging that he hopes for in his future.

Dingane: Yes. This picture, the things that I dream. Not that they will happen.

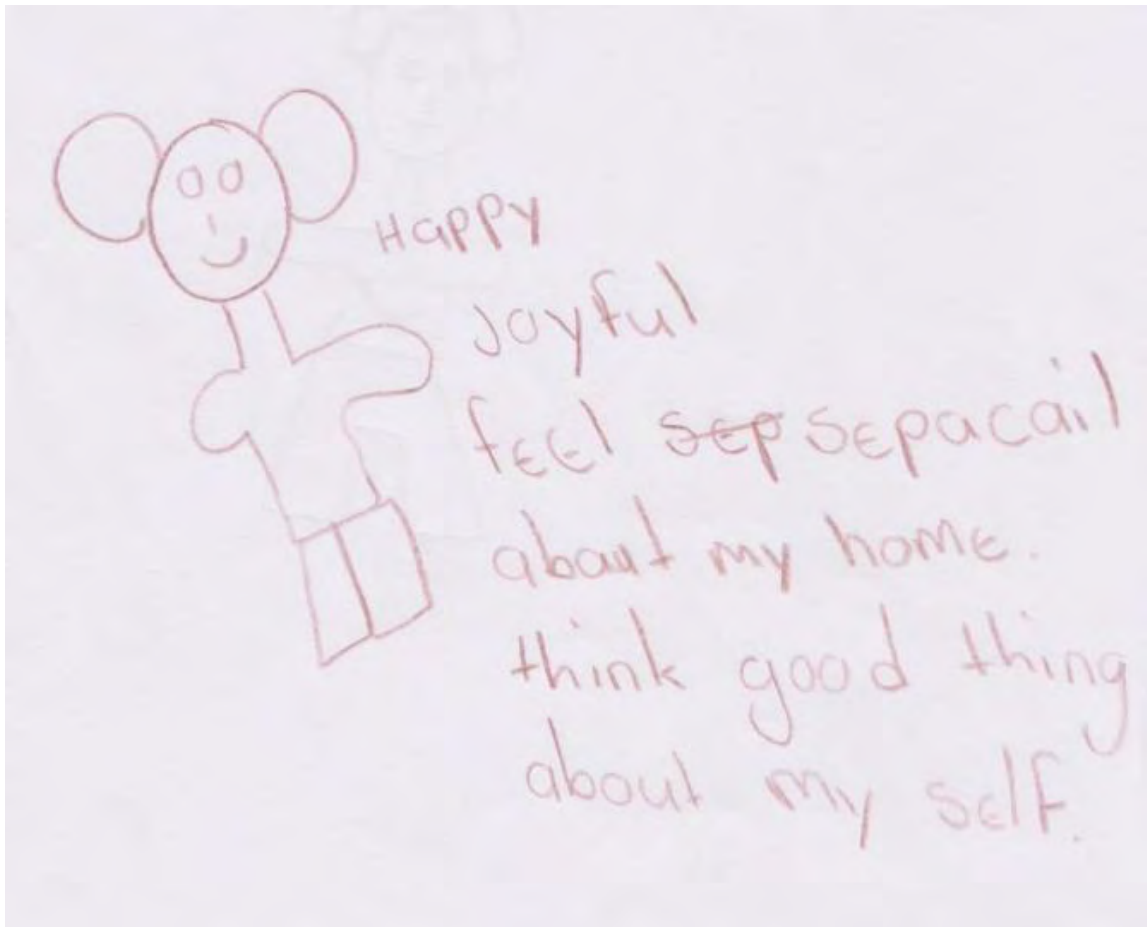*Because sometimes they told me I'll get happy, have joy.*

Figure 9: Dingane - Perceptions of going home

That Dingane occasionally relapses to street life suggests that building their ego strength may play a positive role in children's pathways out of homelessness.

In speaking of learning new behaviours, the children seem to learn about behavioural regulation at the shelter. For example, Thembelihle was taught not to fight with the other children at the shelter, but to rather seek mediation in settling disputes. Thembelihle also felt that she was learning how to behave in a more feminine manner.

> *Interviewer: Um, what have you learnt here at the shelter that has helped you to cope?*
>
> *Interpreter: So she has learnt that mm you do not fight. If someone is saying bad things to you, you just need to tell the mums ...they teach you um, that you need to be clean if you are a a girl and teach you to be responsible ... So they tell you that this is wrong, you must do things like this if you are a girl.*

Through stricter discipline at the shelter, Hluphizwe also learnt to regulate externalising behaviour. He came to appreciate the discipline.

> *Hluphizwe: But he [shelter staff] was doing good thing.*
>
> And:
>
> *Hluphizwe: Like punishing me ... when I , when I swear to to someone ... Ya. Like hitted someone.*

In their discussions about school in conjunction with the shelter, it became apparent that inspiring children in their school careers formed one of the shelter's foci and one that many children seemed to have bought into. Dingane and Hluphizwe both used the phrase 'key to success' in relation to their education and a number of others used similar descriptions.

> *Dingane: They [shelter staff] told us that there's nothing that. School is the key to success in life.*

Londisizwe also spoke of learning the importance of home through his interactions with international volunteers at the shelter

> *Interviewer: What did you learn at the shelter that helped you come, to come back home?*
>
> *Londisizwe: There's no place like home.*
>
> *Interviewer: Ok. How did you learn that?*

Interpreter: So he learned that um by ok there were times where they would have people [international volunteers] coming at the shelter to sort of motivate them and tell them about the importance of being at home.

Figure 10 (see next page) is representative of these major foci: school, career and the importance of family. Thembelihle drew herself going to school, becoming a doctor and getting married and having a family when asked to draw herself at the shelter. This suggests that for Thembelihle, the shelter's emphasis on these three themes was most prominent and attended to.

Thus it seems that the children felt that learning at the shelter was a valuable part of their journeys through homelessness, suggesting their desire for and need for suitable adult role models as well as the opportunity to be taught morals and ethical conduct in life. Children seemed to be profoundly impacted by their opportunity to engage with adults who could impart responsibility and standards.

Figure 10: Thembelihle - At the shelter

4.2.2.3.3 Attitudes

Children's narratives revealed the impact of their own attitudes towards themselves and to others as factors influencing their homelessness. Children spoke of gaining maturity and changing attitudes along their pathways through homelessness. Some children spoke of maturity as a necessary learning curve and through their experience on the streets, at the shelter and with the passing of time, a number of children underwent some changes in attitudes. One particular attitude that became noticeable was an idealistic worldview accompanied by a lack of willingness to adopt a critical approach.

For some children time, and the maturity that accompanied it, seemed to play a role in their pathways through homelessness. At the time of the interview, Mphumelelo felt that he has sufficiently matured that returning home would be ok.

> *Interviewer: So what are the bad things about going home?*
> *Mphumelelo: Ah... I don't know - eys. What I don't think can beeee to go home.*
> *Ah no, I don't think this. Cos. I think that I have changed.*

For Dingane, while maturity brought with it an understanding and compassion for his brother's inability to care for him, there was no accompanying confidence in his exiting homelessness.

> *Dingane: I leave home and I think maybe whe-where I'm going I have better*
> *life. Maybe think. Maybe something that will change. But no. Because no one*
> *will by my house, because my brother was not that old enough to look after us*
> *because she [he] was still schooling.*

This suggests that although Dingane hoped that his actions in leaving home would prompt some change within his home environment, he came to recognise that these adverse circumstances were beyond him.

With regards to attitude changes, children spoke about learning the value of effort and five children spoke about respect. Mphumelelo came to the realisation that attitude shifts would be necessary in order for him to be able to go home. He expressed his need to make an effort within himself in order to do so.

> *Interviewer: So if you could um, if there's anything you would want in your life,*
> *what would you say you would like to have right now?*

Mphumelelo: Right now, uh ... what I can say is I have to sweat before I have it. ...Yeah. Cos. What I wishing wishing to get in life... is to pick up my home again.

Some children spoke about learning to be more respectful. For example, Siboniso felt learning about respect at the shelter was a valuable experience.

Interviewer: What did you learn at the shelter that's helped you. To um. Helped you in life?

Siboniso: I learned that you must respect everyone. Either's he's older or younger.

Charlie also spoke about respect and of the need to be more appreciative and thoughtful of his family as necessary attitude changes in his reintegration with his family.

Interviewer: What about getting to high school means that you can go home?

Interpreter: Cos he'd be able to think about a lot of things. To think them very carefully ... like talking with his parents in a more respective um manner and thank them for all things that they've done for him.

A number of children displayed idealistic attitudes and seemed to avoid critical thinking. Dingane for example was unwilling to openly acknowledge difficulties at the shelter, despite the challenges he experienced there.

Dingane: I'm... I see nothing that's bad about the shelter.

Idealistic attitudes were to some extent also reflected by children being eager to please and to provide answers they believed were desired, as suggested by this interaction between Hluphizwe and the interpreter in which Hluphizwe appeared to answer according to what he felt was expected of him.

Interpreter: Um. What do you enjoy most about being here? Being with this family?

Hluphizwe: I enjoy... going to school.

Interpreter: Just going to school?

Hluphizwe: Ya and know that they love me.

Perhaps for these children, an idealistic and uncritical worldview is necessary in order for them to maintain their hope in a successful and happier life and being eager to please is necessary for them in their vulnerable circumstances.

4.2.2.3.4 Self-worth

Positive self-worth seemed to be important in helping the children transition off the street. Although this was not measured in this study, the following statements indicated that future investigation may be valuable even though the children's tendency to idealise may make this difficult.

In expressing a positive self-image and his desire to remain as he is, Siboniso, who has been reintegrated back into his home environment, portrays himself as an individual who is comfortable in his own skin.

> *Interviewer: What do you like about yourself?*
>
> *Siboniso: I like everything about myself, what I do.*

Dingane, who vacillates between life on the streets, life at the shelter and returning home, displayed lower levels of self-worth that were apparent in his sensitivity to negative evaluation and ridicule by others.

> *Dingane: Sometimes when I go back by my house, they say bad things*
> *ab…about me. They say they saw me in [Township F] doing bad things and they*
> *laugh at me. And I feel sadly …*
> *Interviewer: And what kind of things did they say?*
> *Dingane: Eh! So many. Even the community.*

Similarly, Thembelihle, who sees little hope in finding a happy home environment, displayed lower levels of emotional resilience.

> *Interpreter: She doesn't have any friends, she always walks alone … She*
> *doesn't even um play with the other kids that live here whom they go to the*
> *same school, same grade with her.*

Although Charlie had also vacillated between life at the shelter and life on the streets, he seemed to be hopeful about exiting homelessness and seemed to display a positive sense of self.

> *Interpreter: We are blessings from God. We are blessings from God.*

The children's belief in themselves seemed to fall on a continuum with children displaying levels of self-worth from negative to positive. It seemed that those children who displayed greater levels of self-worth seemed to be more secure in their sense of housing stability than those children with lower levels of self-worth. Thus the role of self-worth in transitioning out of homelessness is not clear cut, but rather depends on the unique individual and their circumstances.

4.2.2.3.5 Decisions and accountability

Children's pathways through homelessness involved numerous decisions at critical moments along their journeys. Children recognised their own agency in this decision making process and spoke of their decisions in leaving home, in transitioning off the streets and in the reintegration process. The children also came to recognise the value of making careful and active decisions in order to successfully navigate their way into better circumstances and to achieve in life. A number of children spoke of the importance of their decisions in their pathways through homelessness and the necessity of children taking accountability for these decisions.

Hluphizwe, for example, was faced with a difficult decision: to choose between education and family. In discussing this, Hluphizwe noted the importance of making wise decisions and spoke of encouraging peers in similar circumstances to make the right choice.

> *Interviewer: Now, if you had a friend in a similar circumstance like you, what, what advice could you give them? ...*
> *Hluphizwe: Mmm. I will tell them to hang in there and make the right choices.*
> *Interviewer: What are the right choices?*
> *Hluphizwe: Like me, I had to choose between my family and education. Because I knew that if if I leave school here and go with them, I will not find school and it was half, it was in the middle of the year. And so I had to choose what was good for me. And I did. And now I know that I made a right decision.*

Mphumelelo considered the importance of children's own motivation in transitioning off the streets, indicating that without their decision to do so, the transition would be unsuccessful.

> *Mphumelelo: Sometimes you get out of, to get out of the streets it's not easy if you didn't decide that or if its, if, if or if that is not in your heart. That must be in your heart first. Cos, some of those that have been in the streets. They want to ... to have something bad before they can see that you must go back home or get somewhere or get at a, at a place to be ... Ya. It's hard to get out from the streets if that's not in your hearts.*

This signifies that children's agency in the decision making process needs to be accounted for when helping homeless children and that children can't be forced out of their homelessness.

Children's decisions play a role throughout their homeless journey. Some children acknowledged that leaving home was their own decision. Dingane, for example, chose to leave home believing that he would have to look after himself.

> *Dingane: There's nothing that I'll get feed more. Just say I must do things for myself because now I have knowledge. I can say bad thing and right things. And I went to the street.*

In discussing the decision to transition off the streets, it became apparent that this was a significant point of decision making for many children. For Mphumelelo, his decision to change was a relief to him as he realised that if he had not made the decision, he could have landed up in gaol.

> *Mphumelelo: Happy, happy. Cos what I think, what I think, what makes me, what making me to feel happy about it. Eish. I decided to change. Maybe if I didn't decide to do it maybe now I would still be staying on the streets. Maybe I was going to, I was going to. Maybe if I was still staying on the streets I was going to gaol for a long time…*

Finally, in discussing returning to mainstream living, the children acknowledged their own accountability in the decision making processing. Londisizwe recognised his role and responsibility in his reintegration process by noting his determination to return home and his ability to make it work.

> *Interviewer: And then, what did you do to help you to get back home?*

Interpreter: He just told himself that um without his family he is nothing ... so he just told himself that he can fix this, like, he can come back he wants to come back even though his peers would just look down on himself but he had that thing that he wants to come back home.

For many of these decisions a degree of responsibility is needed in order for the children to recognise the choices to be made, the magnitude of the choice, and to play an active role in the decision making process. Yet, in spite of their youth, the children recognise the decisions and the role their decisions play in their lives and in their pathways through homelessness.

4.3 Conclusion

The children's narratives outlined the role of both broad and inner ecological systems in their pathways through homelessness. However, the children spoke more prominently of inner ecological systems. Children spoke of both services received and not received from a variety of institutions with schools and shelter services seeming to play the most constructive and influential role in children's pathways out of homelessness. More so than other themes discussed, relationships with friends, family and shelter staff and intrapersonal strengths and resources were the most notably discussed factors in children's pathways through homelessness. Thus it seems that relational and intrapersonal factors are the most prominent factors influencing children's pathways through and out of homelessness.

5. Discussion

Chapter five provides an interpretation of the findings of the current study and a comparison is made with previous studies discussed in the literature review. The interpretation will endeavour to answer the four research questions presented in the introduction.

1. What are South African homeless children's perspectives regarding pathways through homelessness.
2. What factors play a role in the children's decision making process in their homeless journeys?
3. What are South African homeless children's perspectives regarding reintegrating with their families?
4. What factors play a role in the children's pathways out of homelessness and adversity?

Finally, the implications of the findings are considered and recommendations are made in addressing child homelessness in South Africa and the limitations of the current study are reflected upon.

5.1 Pathways through homelessness

In discussing their pathways through homelessness, the children's narratives paint a grey picture of the broader environment in which they live. Poverty is currently rife within their communities. Discriminatory habits are noticeable. Major institutions seem to be dysfunctional. Both within nuclear families and extended family networks, family connections were weak or seem lost or children were orphaned. The children's communities, homes and journeys through homelessness are all influenced by these circumstances and the children's narratives indicate the necessity for systemic change in their pathways through homelessness.

It seems evident that the poverty that is widespread within South African is the fundamental factor in child homelessness. Poverty stricken environments may lead to discriminatory attitudes as people compete for scarce resources. Despite it being now over 20 years since apartheid was abolished, the after effect of these policies is still apparent in poverty, discrimination and the breakdown of family structure (Mufune, 2000; Ward & Seager, 2010). Although South Africa still lives with the consequences of these policies, it is important to attempt to understand these circumstances within the present as well as from an historical perspective.

South Africa's Department of Social Development advocates addressing child homelessness systemically (DSD, 2010), yet the children's narratives indicated an implicit awareness of broader institutional failure in their lives. Of some note was the direct role that the police services played in one child's pathway into homelessness via the incarceration of his mother. In such instances, police and social services should be collaborating with one another to ensure that the needs of affected children are provided for, thereby playing a preventative role in child homelessness. The failure to do so suggests a breakdown of multidisciplinary collaboration, which the Department of Social Development advocates as a means of counteracting homelessness within South Africa (DSD, 2010). Similarly, social services in South Africa seem to provide a somewhat ineffective service. This is not surprising given the portrait of overburdened social services in Africa (Bourdillon, 1994) and a dysfunctional Department of Social Development (Director, personal communication, 28 January, 2015).

With regards to pathways *into* homelessness, the factor that stands out most prominently is the absence of parental figures or responsible parental figures in the children's lives. For many of the children this results in a sense of a lack of belonging within their home environments. As indicated in previous studies (Chetty, 1997; Nebbitt et al., 2007), family relations are conflictual and home environments are difficult. Within this environment, children become more greatly involved with peers whose way of life may lead them into substance use and later a street way of life. Just as in other studies (Mayock et al., 2011; Milburn et al., 2009; Nebbitt et al., 2007), peers were found to be an important factor throughout children's homeless pathways, having both a positive and negative impact on children's lives. Peers were discussed as an etiological factor and risk factor in children's homeless trajectories. The children's description of staying with friends before their lives on the streets paralleled Kurtz et al.'s (2000) description of 'couch' surfing. Couch surfing

seemed to have been an alternative means of escaping the difficulties of their home environments, indicating that these children turn to friends for support and assistance when families fail them, and that street life may be a last resort.

Pathways into homelessness are thus gradual processes that occur within dysfunctional macrosystemic environments. Although institutions, such as police and social services, fall within children's inner ecological systems, the failure of these systems to provide for and support homeless children should be viewed from a broader systemic level. This broader environment impacts negatively on home environments. From their difficult home circumstances, children progress toward 'couch surfing' (Kurtz et al., 2000) and substance use, and gradually spend more time on the streets.

The children were loquacious in describing their lives on the streets and their street experiences were significant in their decision making processes and thus are mostly discussed in Section 5.2. However, children's descriptions of the role of peers during their lives on the streets paralleled that of other studies such as Bender et al. (2007), Chetty (1997) and Kidd and Davidson (2007) with peers being a source of support and companionship, as well as a means of enhancing survival. Substance use with street peers also featured prominently and was described as a way of life. The use of substances on the street seemed more or less unavoidable and accepted, even expected, just as described by Bourdillon (1994).

In transitioning off the streets, gradual exposure to the shelter through interactions with shelter staff and the ability to access basic necessities such as bathing while living on the streets, allowed the children to become accustomed to their services and support and gradually become more trusting of the shelter. This phased approach, also recommended by Levy (1998) and Chetty (1997) seems to have been an effective means of intervention for these children.

Shelter life was one of the more thoroughly discussed aspects of participants' pathways through homelessness. This seemed natural, given that many of the children were living at the shelter at the time and the other children were contacted via shelter staff and they would thus have been prominent in their minds during the interview. Nevertheless, life at the shelter seemed to be a significant aspect of children's homeless trajectories. Children's narratives concerning shelter life were considerably consistent with previous studies.

For many, though not all children, the shelter was a successful experience and along with the role of the family, relationships with shelter staff featured most prominently in children's homeless narratives as conducive to their pathways through and out of homelessness. The individuality of the child, the staff member and the particular relationship between them may account for the difference between those whose experiences were positive, and those who felt they were less positive. Nebbitt et al. (2007) claimed that the relationships at shelters were paramount. However, the successful nature of these relationships seemed to be moderated by the characteristics of the individuals involved.

To a certain degree, shelter staff seem to provide substitute parental care for the homeless children. For example, the children expressed appreciation for the discipline received at the shelter. This suggests that these children, just like international homeless children, also experience poor disciplinary practices in their home environments (Hyde, 2005; Nebbitt et al., 2007). Furthermore, the children's conflict over and appreciation for the attention of shelter staff, indicate that the children desire substitute parenting from shelter staff. In a number of instances the children's narratives indicated an emotional connection with a particular staff member that was indicative of a child-parent relationship and these relationships seem to have been beneficial to children in navigating the adversity of their circumstances. Different shelter staff were identified in each case, suggesting that the individuality of each child and staff member in part accounts for the emotional connection and success of each child's experience at the shelter. Thus the opportunity to connect with a variety of different caring adults is likely to be more effective in expanding the efficacy of shelters.

This desire for parenting is somewhat contrary to the value that the children expressed for freedom and autonomy that was noted both in the current study and in previous studies (Hyde, 2005; le Roux & Smith, 1998; Lindsey et al., 2000). Thus it seems that the children desire a balance between independence and having support and affirmation. This is in keeping with the developmental phase of adolescence, indicating that homeless children are trying to manage various developmental challenges in the context of adverse circumstances as suggested by Rosenthal & Rostheram-Borus (2005).

While the importance of a maternal figure seems paramount internationally (Milburn et al., 2009), historically, some African cultures are patriarchal and connection with the paternal family is valued over maternal relationships (Lesejane, 2006). The children yearn for belonging, but in the South African context a sense of belonging may only, in some instances, be derived from connecting with the paternal family. While this was not directly inquired about, one child's narrative expressed a sense of being adrift in his lack of contact with his paternal family. Furthermore, fathers were absent in seven of the nine children's lives and in the other two children's lives, fathers were either abusive or irresponsible. Thus research to assist children in exiting homelessness within the African context may benefit from considering this cultural phenomenon. Additionally, the patriarchal nature of some African families may need to be accounted for in interventions for homeless children as the greater significance of the paternal family may influence the reintegration processes.

5.2 Decision making process

Children's decisions seem to be paramount in their homeless journeys with children acknowledging the importance of their own agency and motivations in the decision making process. Children's decisions are influenced by their future aspirations and desire to transcend their circumstances and peer influence, both positive and negative, are prominent in children's decisions. Finally, negative experiences on the streets seem to have a significant impact on children's decisions to exit homelessness.

The children's narratives indicated a need to have their own decisions in their homeless pathways respected. Indeed, not doing so may render interventions ineffective and even increase the children's resistance and rebellion towards adults. Thus, shelter staff and other adults may benefit from encouraging children to acknowledge the consequences of their decision making process, and guiding children in making their own decisions instead of imposing their own ideas on them as suggested by Reid and Klee (1999).

This, however, may not be so easy. Firstly, the decisions the children are faced with are weighty and in some instances go beyond what should be expected of them. In spite of this, it seems that some of the children do have sufficient maturity to make suitable decisions. They

are after all, adolescents and requiring accountability from them is a necessary part of adolescent development.

A second difficulty in taking children's perspectives and decisions into account was their idealistic worldview and reluctance to engage in critical thinking. While this attitude may be necessary in order for them to remain hopeful and positive, as suggested by Bender et al. (2007), it may also reflect a sense of oppression arising from the vulnerability of their position in society as well as the power dynamic in the interview process. A number of children seemed to displayed depressed cognitive energy: it was demanding to engage them in creative and critical thinking during data collection. This was reflected by the reluctance of some to be critical of the home environments or of the shelter, as well as their lack of belief in their own ability to advise. For example, despite his unhappiness at the shelter Dingane could not acknowledge anything bad about the shelter. Skilful and persistent questioning was required to elicit such information from the children. Furthermore, some children failed to acknowledge the systemic nature of their journey's into homelessness as was the case of Londisizwe when he declared that there was no reason to leave home apart from friends and drugs. While it is necessary that children acknowledge their own accountability in their homelessness, it is difficult to imagine that the children are wholly responsible for their situations.

The sense of oppression may be due to their youth or a function of their circumstances including the patriarchal society present in some parts of South Africa, but it does make it difficult to acquire the children's perspectives if the children are unwilling to present what they really desire, feel and think. If children's perspectives and decisions are to be taken into account, it is necessary to approach them with openness, respect and a willingness to listen, to engage with them and take the time necessary to gain their confidence in the relationship in order that they can freely discuss their thoughts and engage in the decision making process.
This inability to have their voices heard seems to be reflected in the desperation of the children's actions in becoming homeless. For some, the act seemed to be an attempt to be heard and to bring about change in their intolerable home system, as suggested by Dingane who seemed disappointed that circumstances back home did not change after he left. Thus, children's decisions to leave home may be influenced by a desire to bring about change, either in their own lives or in their home environments and the efforts that social services and

institutions such as shelters make in order to promote this change are likely to be conducive to children's pathways out of homelessness.

That three of the four reintegrated children held, or were offered, leadership roles within their school environments, one while living at the shelter and the others after their reintegration, may be supportive of the hypothesis that children may be leaving home in an effort to change their circumstances. This raises the question of whether some homeless children are spirited individuals who are not prepared to accept their oppressive circumstances. Perhaps homelessness amongst children is an expression of their reluctance to accept their adverse circumstances and an attempt to transcend them.

Education is also acknowledged as a major source through which children can transcend their circumstances (DSD, 2010). Moreover, as obtaining an education is a motivation for some children to exit homelessness, the failure to access or gain an education is likely to decrease their motivation. As children's own decisions and motivation to exit homelessness seems of paramount importance, the failure of South Africa's education system to provide them, and children in general, with an adequate education or even with access to education all together is likely to impede their pathways out of homelessness, as well as to impede their successful navigation through their adolescent years. Furthermore, where relapses occur, and they were not infrequent in the sample, disappointment of their education hopes may well result in greater resistance to later intervention. Difficulties with education for homeless children have been previously noted in the homeless literature (Canfield et al., 2012; Mohan & Shields, 2014).

The influence of peers on children's decision making process occurs throughout the children's homeless trajectories. The aetiological role of peer influence and substance use with peers in the participants' homeless trajectories paralleled other studies such as Milburn et al. (2009); Nebbitt et al. (2007) and Ward and Seager (2010). As in the current study, Ward and Seager (2010) described children running away together with friends. Similar to what Milburn et al. (2009) found, Mphumelelo's narrative insinuated that street peers could lead children into a more chronic form of homelessness, and thus detract from their pathways out of homelessness. However, no other mention was made of street peers maintaining their homelessness, perhaps suggesting that the role of peers in children's homelessness is facilitated by the child's individuality and motivations.

While peers may be a risk factor in children's homeless journeys, they were also noted as a factor in children's transitions off the streets, with peers introducing one another to the shelter and playing a positive role in their decision making process to leave the streets. What was of note in the current study was the positive influence of street peers on children's behaviours during the lives on the streets and in their decisions to transition from the streets. Milburn et al. (2009) noted that prosocial peers can be a protective factor in children's homeless trajectories and discussed the need to explore prosocialism amongst street peers and to some extent, the participants in the current study inadvertently highlighted prosocialism amongst street peers. For example, the children in the current study experienced care and guidance in life changing decisions from other street peers, as suggested by Thembelihle's friend when she encouraged Thembelihle not to revert to prostitution as a means of survival. What was also of interest was the direct role that street peers played in children's decisions to exit homelessness, as indicated in the narratives of Siboniso and Charlie who discussed leaving the streets along with friends, or as a result of interactions with peers who had made the transition to the shelter. While Mayock et al. (2011) discussed the need for children to forego their relationships with street peers as they make their transition off the streets, since street peers encouraged one another to transition off the streets, perhaps interventions that target friendship groups on the street would be effective. This is in contrast to the literature which describes street peer groups as having a detrimental impact on children's pathways out of homelessness.

Finally, children's decisions to transition off the streets are largely influenced by their experiences on the streets. The difficulty in accessing basic necessities such as bathing and food as well as the traumatic and life threatening experiences that children are exposed to during their street life seem to be the most prominent factors in children's transitions from street life to shelter care. The children came to recognise that leaving home was an ineffective means of escaping their adversities as for most of them the circumstances on the streets were in fact worse. In general the children's narratives suggested that prior knowledge of the difficulties faced on the streets, such as abuse and violence, hunger and cold, and drug induced illness, may well prevent homelessness in some children or prevent them from relapsing into street life.

5.3 Reintegration with families

In discussing reintegration with their families, two conflicting stances became apparent. There were children for whom returning home was a positive outcome and there were children who spoke negatively of returning home. Certain intrapersonal factors and relationships with shelter staff seemed to have a positive influence on children's reintegration process.

Those children for whom reintegration was either a possibility or a fait accompli spoke quite prominently of their own agency in returning home. The children acknowledged their own need to mature, to make carefully considered decisions and to make an effort in order to be reintegrated with their families. Although children placed a good deal of importance on intrapersonal factors in their return home, the mediatory and supportive role of shelter staff was also noted to be central in their return home. The significance of the mediatory role that the shelter and shelter staff play in children's lives paralleled the study by Mayock et al. (2011) who discussed mediation between the children and their families. The children themselves acknowledged the influence of the shelter in their attempts to provide support to families in order that the children could return home.

After care support and long term relationships through the shelters' after care support services seemed to be of paramount importance for successful reintegration for those in the sample who had already returned home. The high value that the children placed on their continued relationships and interaction with shelter staff indicate that the children do need continued support within their home environments and their families after their lives at the shelter. The support these children receive from shelter staff would not be as effective without their continued interaction after they leave the shelter. Similarly, Nebbitt et al. (2007) found that for successful reintegration, interventions for homeless children need to be long term and to continue after they leave the shelter.

In support of the numerous studies (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Kurtz et al., 2000) that highlight the importance of children's perspectives, in this study the children themselves indicated that they too felt their perspectives should be taken into account in interventions designed to assist them in reintegrating with their families. For example, in order for them to be properly

helped, Charlie indicated that children need to have themselves understood. This indicates both a wish and a need to have their stories listened to and considered. In some instances, not accounting for children's stories may be a detrimental factor in their pathways through homelessness as in the case of Thembelihle, who returned to the streets after being reintegrated back into the abusive environment from which she initially tried to escape. While temporary shelters in South Africa are mandated to reintegrate children into their home environments, doing so too quickly and with too little consideration for the child's stories may result both in returning children to undesirable circumstances as well as exacerbating children's distrust in institutions there to assist them.

As indicated by the Department of Social Development (DSD, 2010), although reintegration with families is the preference, in some instances this is either impossible or undesirable and thus it is necessary to have alternative means of transitioning out of homelessness for some children. While alternative care is limited in South Africa (Director, personal communication, January 28, 2015), fostering seems to be a viable and advantageous means of alternative care, and foster grants may make this both a possibility and an attraction for families. However, in placing children in foster care, care needs to be taken that children are not placed into undesirable family environments that may be inadequate or exploitative. Foster families may be supportive and provide children with the adult care and attention that is needed such as the care received by Hluphizwe. In other instances, living with a foster family may be as undesirable as children's previous living circumstances and may play similar aetiological roles in their homeless journeys. Thus, although the process of fostering in South Africa is supposed to be rigorous it seems that it is nevertheless insufficient to ensure that all fostered children are placed within suitable homes.

Reintegration with families was therefore dependent on the individual child and their circumstances and was not a suitable option in all cases. Alternative solutions are limited in the South African context but fostering and eliciting support from extended family were two options that seemed available. Interestingly, a number of children's pathways of out homelessness involved their being accommodated by extended family. Thus in spite of the breakdown of the extended family network mentioned by Mufune (2000) and others, the network still actually seems to be a source of care that can be accessed with a certain amount of support from social services.

5.4 Pathways out of homelessness

5.4.1 What is needed for children to exit homelessness?

Relational support from families and shelter staff and intrapersonal strengths and resources were the most prominent factors needed in order for children to successfully exit homelessness. The children also mentioned the need for institutional support in their pathways out of homelessness as well as the detrimental nature of peer rivalry in exiting homelessness.

5.4.1.1 Family

Vissing and Diament's (1997, p. 167) definition of homelessness "the lack of a stable physical structure in which the adolescent feels he or she emotionally belongs", comes closest to the conception of homelessness of the children in this study. In equating a home with having a family, the children suggest that for them homelessness really means a lack of belonging, family care and family support. Thus for these children, belonging to a family that supports and cares for them seems to be the most necessary feature in their exit from homelessness.

In spite of the patriarchal context of some African families, the children's narratives do indicate an overriding need for a supportive and reliable maternal figure in the children's lives. The presence of a maternal figure seems to be a protective factor in children's successful journeys out of homelessness both locally and globally (Milburn et al., 2009), while the absence of a maternal figure may be detrimental. That most of the children lacked a reliable and supportive maternal figure is thus of concern and may also reflect the South African context. Speculating, the absence of maternal figures may be related to both the HIV epidemic and to the breakdown of families in South Africa. Thus, connecting children with supportive maternal figures such as aunts, grandmothers, or foster mothers may be more difficult but more imperative in assisting South African children in their pathways out of homelessness.

5.4.1.2 Shelter staff

While previous studies have suggested that family relationships play the most significant role in children's pathways out of homelessness (Kurtz et al., 2000; Milburn et al., 2009), the children in this study spoke of shelter staff probably as frequently as they spoke of family. This may reflect their current circumstances, i.e. living at the shelter at the time of the interview, or the broader circumstances within the South Africa context, such as the breakdown of families and the African kinship network (Mufune, 2000; Ward & Seager, 2010). Alternatively, this may reflect a greater need for support within children's poverty stricken home environments in South Africa, in contrast to the slightly better financial circumstances of first world countries in where some of the other studies were conducted. While families do seem to play the prime role in children's pathways out of homelessness, the children may not be able to gain adequate support from their families, and thus continued support from shelter staff in the after care programmes may be particularly vital within the South African context.

The children's narratives highlighted both positive and negative characteristics of shelter staff and relationships with them. Positive affirmation from shelter staff seemed to be at the centre of constructive relationships. Overall, the children seemed to appreciate staff who were able to set firm boundaries and who provided care and non-judgemental support. These findings parallel the studies of Kurtz et al. (2000) and Stewart et al. (2010) that highlighted similar characteristics found to be helpful in shelter staff. Interestingly, in this study, the persistence of shelter staff was noted to be conducive to transitioning off the streets and reintegration in home environments. The nature of this persistence indicates that children needed the continued support and affirmation that the shelter staff provided. Perhaps this persistence empowered children's belief in themselves.

The three phases of interaction with shelters described in previous literature was apparent in the children's narratives, and the children corroborated the importance of pre-shelter contact and after care support in addition to their lives at the shelter. The necessity of gradually establishing communication with shelter staff while on the streets was noted both by the children in the current sample as well as by Levy (1998). The gradual contact seemed to account for children's need for autonomy, the development of trust, and their readiness for support from shelters and others. Needs for autonomy and independence have been well

noted in the literature and were corroborated by the children's narratives in this study (Hyde, 2005; le Roux & Smith, 1998; Levy, 1998). Mufune (2000) indicated that forceful means of dealing with child homelessness are likely to be less effective.

5.4.1.3 Intrapersonal factors

Children spoke about learning at the shelter as playing an integral role in their maturity and their pathways out of homelessness. Most significantly, the children spoke of the life skills gained during their time at the shelter, such as learning responsibility, learning independent and prosocial ways of behaving, learning about drugs and learning coping skills. The values of respect and learning to respect others featured prominently in children's narratives, and learning about respect through the shelter seemed to have a profound impact on the children. However, none of the children expressed any expectation of being treated respectfully themselves and perhaps this was something missing in their learning. While children are often taught to be respectful of others, teaching children that they are deserving of respect from others and to treat themselves with respect is sometimes neglected. Believing that they are deserving of respect may be constructive in developing children's sense of self-worth and self-love which Lindsey et al. (2000) found to be constructive in children turning their lives around.

The development of a sense of self-worth may play a role in children's pathways out of homelessness. For example, Londisizwe and Siboniso had both made successful transitions home *and* seemed at ease with themselves. Furthermore, part of the learning at the shelter involved shelter staff helping children to develop their belief in themselves as well as strategies to withstand peer pressure. This suggests that shelter staff valued the role of developing children's ego strength.

Lindsey et al. (2000) similarly found that the children's ability to learn through their experiences and the learning they gained at the shelter were significant factors in their successful navigation through their homeless trajectories, as well as in their transitions out of homelessness. With both time and through their experiences, the participants seemed to gain in maturity. They become more responsible and are able to recognise their own agency in their relations with family and in the success of their own lives. Thus, as concluded by

Lindsey et al. (2000), it may be necessary for some children to have these experiences in order to learn from them.

5.4.1.4 Institutions

With regards to institutions, the children spoke of the need for drug rehabilitation and support from police services. Interacting with shelter staff enabled children to access drug rehabilitation centres that seemed to be essential in assisting some children's pathways out of homelessness. However, limited access to drug rehabilitation centres is likely to impede their transitions off the streets. Interestingly, the victimisation for which the police services are known amongst homeless children (Bourdillon, 1994; Chetty, 1997; Mufune, 2000) was not noted in this study. On the contrary, the police services were acknowledged to be a source of possible support in the children's lives such as in the cases of Thembelihle and Charlie who spoke of the police playing a potential role in their pathways out of homelessness. The level of trust that this indicates is noteworthy within the current situation in South Africa in which reports of police brutality are rife in the media. Despite their need for help from this establishment, the children's narratives indicated a failure of service, as suggested by Charlie who found police intervention to be ineffective. Similarly, support for social services was expressed as an unmet need by Dingane and Siboniso.

5.4.1.5 Peers

Peer rivalry featured infrequently, if at all, in the homeless literature. Yet peer rivalry at the shelter was prominent in some children's narratives and it seemed to have a detrimental impact on their homeless trajectories as well as their chances of exiting homelessness. The rivalry may be indicative of either the competitive, survival driven environment in which these children existed or of difficulties with interpersonal skills. Direct from life on the street, the children are placed in close daily contact with peers and the expectation of cooperation may thus not be met. Desperation for adult care and attention seems to be a point of rivalry amongst the children, indicating that what the children really need is support, care, attention and love from parental figures.

Yet, while peer rivalry and negative peer influence may play a negative role in children's homeless trajectories, the supportive and positive impact of peers at the shelter that a number of children discussed is an indicator of the positive role that peers play in these children's

lives. Similar to Milburn et al.'s (2009) findings, friends can be a source of support as well as guidance towards a more prosocial way of behaving and interacting. Perhaps for these children whose family and home environments have been inadequate in some way, relationships with peers are exceptionally significant. The support and camaraderie these children gain from peer relations seem to have a positive impact on their homeless trajectories as well as being a constructive factor in their pathways out of homelessness.

5.4.2 What is needed for children to transcend their circumstances?

Shelters and intrapersonal factors play a significant role in helping children to transcend the difficulties of their circumstances. The children's narratives highlight the need for positive affirmation and acknowledgement of their strengths and resources and the empowering nature of shelter life as constructive in them transcending their adversity. For some children, religion also played a role in their resilience and coping.

In South Africa where social support is limited and often children lack a stable parental unit, intrapersonal factors become an indispensable area for consideration. Given that children themselves seem let down by institutions and services, they may themselves feel empowered through fostering intrapersonal strengths and resources. Perhaps most significantly, children's belief in themselves and their ability to improve their conditions in life had an impact on their transcendence of their circumstances. Londisizwe, for example, believed that his determination played a primary role in his return home and Mphumelelo acknowledged his own agency in achieving his goals when he indicated he would have to work hard to get what he wanted.

Although a strengths based approach may be empowering and has been advocated by Kidd and Davidson (2007) and others, it was challenging to discover homeless children's strengths and the internal and external resources available to them as problems seemed omnipresent in their lives. Their narratives abound with the difficulties they face, the trauma of street life, the lack of resources and services available to them and the complications faced in reintegrating with families amongst other problems and deficits. Lindsey et al. (2000) also noted the effort required in making the transition to a strengths based approach. Although not easily discernible, strengths and resources were nevertheless discoverable, apparent, for example, in the children's appreciation of their residence at the shelter through which they felt they had

gained considerably as well as the leadership roles that some of the children held. The children's desire for the acknowledgement of their own strengths and resources, suggests that the proposed focus on strengths and resources (Bender et al., 2007; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2000; Mayock et al., 2011) is appropriate and is likely to be empowering. Given the difficulty in making the transition, discourse of a strength based approach may promote awareness of the internal and external strengths and resources that can be utilised in assisting children's pathways of homelessness. That the children's narratives abound with problems suggests that the children themselves need assistance in making this transition. The empowering nature of life at the shelter, as evidenced by the learning that children seem to gain at the shelter, indicates that shelters and shelter staff are indeed able to highlight and effectively use children's strengths and resources.

Although some problems and challenges with the shelter were noted, in general a positive, constructive image of life at the shelter was conveyed with children experiencing fun, excitement and camaraderie as well as gaining in maturity and learning responsibility. Life at the shelter provided the children with respite from the adversity of their home environments and street life and thus for many, their experiences at the shelter were positive. Their descriptions paralleled other studies that suggested similar experiences of shelter life such as the study by Nebbitt et al. (2007). Interestingly, the number of children that spoke of soccer at the shelter and the manner in which it was spoken of supports Van Blerk's (2011) finding that sport activities, particularly soccer, may play a constructive role in children's homeless trajectories. On the other hand, the relational distress experienced by Dingane at the shelter and his occasional relapses to street life indicate that for some children shelter life was not providing what was needed in order for them to exit homelessness or to transcend their circumstances. Dingane's unmet need for adult attention is indicative of overburdened resources and suggests that the lack of individual attention and adult care may impede pathways out of homelessness. Dingane seemed unable to capitalise on the opportunity that the shelter provided thus, once again, the value of the shelter is mediated by the child's individuality.

Shelter care is thus not just about life at the shelter and, as recommended by the DSD (2010), shelters can and seem to be providing children with much more than the basic necessities. Through shelters, children are supported throughout their homeless journeys as well as provided with access to a variety of services that they would not otherwise be able to access.

The constructive role of religion in children's pathways through homelessness is mentioned in the literature (Bender et al., 2007; Lindsey et al., 2000). To some extent this is corroborated in this study. Religion seemed to play an emotionally supportive role in some children's homeless trajectories and some children displayed a naïve dependence on God's protection. On the other hand, religion for some children was a function of the shelter on which they depended rather than coming from within them. Furthermore, the hypocrisy apparent in religious institutions seemed to detract from the constructive role that this institution could play in the children's lives. Thus, although religion may play a positive role in children's homeless trajectories (Lindsey et al. (2000), it seems that this is dependent on the individual concerned and each child's uniqueness should be acknowledged in religious interventions.

5.5 Implications for policy and practice

5.5.1 Broad ecological systems

It is apparent both in the literature and in the current study that homelessness should be understood within an ecological framework. Children's pathways through homelessness involve a variety of interactions between ecological systems. Although not all literature on child homelessness has adopted an ecological approach, Chetty (1997) and Milburn et al. (2009) speak of the systemic nature of this issue and Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) discussed pathways into homelessness as a function of the interaction of various factors that fall across different systems (Chetty, 1997; Milburn et al., 2009; Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). As child homelessness is a systemic problem, interventions designed to address the issue need to take into consideration the broader ecological systems in which homelessness occurs.

While poverty, unemployment and inequitable access to resources remain an issue, children are likely to be found on the streets of South Africa. Thus poverty, unemployment and inequity need to be addressed on a macro level through multidisciplinary collaboration and governmental support. Such an approach has been recommended by the Department of Social

Development (DSD, 2010) and suggestions for governmental interventions have been carefully laid out.

In addition, traditional systems that promote a paternalistic approach may hinder opportunities for South African children to escape these adverse circumstances if they inhibit devolved decision making. Promoting psychological empowerment of the South African nation and encouraging a culture of respectfulness towards all, children and adults, men and women alike, may lessen the sense of oppression that seems to play an unfavourable role in children's homeless trajectories.

5.5.2. Inner ecological systems

Learning to be respectful, which seemed to have a profound influence on the children, could also be approached within the inner ecological systems. In teaching children to be respectful, respect should be modelled. Thus children should themselves be treated with respect and the immediate environments in which they live, whether in shelters or in their communities, also need to be encouraged in respectful ways of relating.

The role of shelters needs to be recognised and supported within governmental systems and infrastructure. Given the magnitude of the role of shelter staff in children's transitions off the streets, their time in shelter care as well as their function in children's lives once they have exited homelessness, supporting shelter staff may be the most valuable assistance that can be provided towards homeless children. Perhaps this could be done through caring for shelter staff, providing positive affirmation of their work and enhancing their abilities through training. Furthermore, as relationships with shelter staff are incredibly valuable within the children's lives and are also dependent on the individuality of both the child and staff member, shelters that are able to provide children with a diversity of staff with whom to connect may be able to expand their positive influence.

Considering the negative role of peer conflict during shelter care, the children may benefit from shelter staff who are trained in managing conflict. Furthermore, staff who are able to provide relationship building exercises or workshops for the children and the active implementation of them may be of particular service due to the significance of relationships in children's pathways out of homelessness. Finally, children may well be likely to benefit

from self-esteem building activities, implemented by shelter staff, that increase the children's levels of resilience. On the other hand, shelter management needs to be aware of the possibility of abusiveness and misuse of power within shelters and take steps to ensure that it does not occur.

The difficulties faced in assisting children to access education is problematic for the children, particularly as furthering their education is one deciding factor in their pathways out of homelessness. However, it is necessary to assist the children within the current educational system. Thus, while children are waiting to be placed at schools, a 'homework' programme implemented by shelter staff may be constructive in children's pathways out of homelessness. Apart from providing the children with daily occupation, a well-developed homework programme may further the children's education as well as make it more possible to place the children back within the school system.

Assisting the children in the above mentioned ways is likely to help the children, particularly if this kind of support is ongoing and extended to the family environment once the children exit homelessness. Thus shelter staff who are able to provide the children with ongoing support and at the same time work with families so that they too can assist the children in furthering their relational skills, their ability to manage conflict and in developing self-worth are likely to be of greater benefit to the children. Additionally, the patriarchal nature of some African families may need to be accounted for in interventions for homeless children as the greater significance of the paternal family may influence the reintegration processes. It may be more appropriate, in such instances, to establish communication amongst and seek support from children's paternal families.

5.6 Conclusion

Despite an adverse macrosystemic context, the participants' narratives do reveal strengths and resources available to them in their pathways through homelessness. While the children have a generally negative perception of institutional resources, they nevertheless did discuss a significant amount of support and assistance received from shelters. Of particular significance were certain relational resources drawn upon during the children's homeless trajectories. To a certain extent peers and to a much greater extent families and shelter staff, who seem to take

on a substitute parental role, are significant factors in their pathways through homelessness. Children also discussed certain intrapersonal factors that influenced their pathways through homelessness. Self-worth seems to play a role in children's navigation through their homelessness. Furthermore, maturity and learning gained through their experiences were weighty factors in children's pathways out of homelessness.

In discussing their pathways through homelessness, South African children highlighted the causal role of poverty, the absence of parental figures and negative peer influence while positive peer influence, shelter experiences and parental like relationships were discussed as positive factors in the children's homeless trajectories. The participants of this study highlighted the importance of being included in the decision making process and cited education, peer influence, both positive and negative, and their own experiences as playing a major role in their decisions in their pathways through homelessness. Although the need for alternative care was noted, with regards to factors influencing the reintegration process, the children largely spoke of their own agency, support received from shelter staff and the importance of taking into account the children's perspectives of their circumstances. The children expressed a need for positive and affirming relationships, particularly with adults, in their pathways out of homelessness and adversity alongside intrapersonal factors, such as their ability to learn from their experiences and their sense of self-worth. The children expressed a need for more effective institutional support.

Recommendations derived from the current research include continued attention to systemic change, support for shelter staff and homework programmes to occupy children while they await placement within the education system and, finally, continued support for and from the families of homeless children.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter, the main findings of the current study are summarised, followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings for future interventions. The limitations of the current study are reflected upon and finally suggestions for future research are included.

6.1 Main findings

Against a backdrop of poverty and parental absence, the participants' narratives revealed that institutions, relationships and intrapersonal strengths and resources are the most significant factors in their pathways through homelessness. These three factors integrate in unique ways that impact on the individual child's homeless journeys.

The rights of homeless children, such as their rights to education as well as basic shelter and food, are impeded by their circumstances and institutional failure. While the children are let down by institutional failure on a broad ecological level, the children do rely on schools and shelter services from where they receive support and assistance. Nevertheless, given their circumstances the children are forced to rely primarily on microsystemic factors and on themselves to navigate their way through their adversity.

Relational support from peers, shelter staff and family along with intrapersonal strengths and resources were the most crucial factors in participants' successful navigation of their pathways through homelessness and parallel the findings of previous research (Kurtz et al., 2000; Lindsey et al., 2000; Mayock et al., 2011; Milburn et al., 2009; Nebbitt et al., 2007). The influence of friends and peers is substantial for the age group of this sample. The importance of friends becomes of even greater significance under the circumstances in which children are disillusioned by adult support in their lives and thus turn to their peers as an alternative means of support. Of some particularity in this study was the detrimental impact of peer rivalry in the homeless trajectories of some participants. While peer groups were noted to have a negative influence on children, both in the literature (Mayock et al., 2011) and in the current study, thereby making it essential that these children develop strategies

with which to combat negative peer pressure and influence, friendships can also be of vital support and the positive influence of prosocial friends should not be underestimated.

Once again, given the manner in which the children are let down by, or lack, responsible adults in their lives, shelter staff play a major role in providing substitute care for homeless children in South Africa as well as internationally (Kurtz et al., 2000). The children benefit from shelter staff who care for them, give them attention and positive affirmation as well as provide them with appropriate discipline which they lacked during their street lives and are likely to have lacked in their previous home environments. Apart from the primary significance of the relationship, the intercessory function that shelter staff take on within children's microsystems is of vital importance. Through this, shelter staff assist children in obtaining the services of institutions such as hospitals and schools as well as regaining familial support. Thus this intercessory function is an attempt to assist children on a systemic level. While change within the children is recognised as an important aspect of their pathways out of homelessness, equally, change within children's environments is vital.

Just as indicated by Milburn et al. (2009), family, particularly some form of parental or maternal care, may be highlighted as the single most important factor in children's pathways out of homelessness, as for these children having a home means having a family. Of note in the current study was the potential need to connect some children with their paternal families within the South African context.

The children expressed a great need for adult guidance, support and attention. While shelter staff filled this role to a certain extent, they cannot entirely compensate for the lack of parental care. Although family and parental care was deemed so important, many children lacked this sort of support and thus alternative means of providing a home environment, such as foster care, for such children is necessary. While the Department of Social Development provides sound reasons for steering away from long term shelter care for children (DSD, 2010), this policy does place some children at a disadvantage as reintegration and foster care are not suitable or possible for all children.

Finally, the role of intrapersonal strengths and resources should not be minimised in children's homeless trajectories. The benefit that children gain from institutions and relationships is mediated by their intrapersonal strengths, weaknesses and resources. Thus, as

indicated by Lindsey et al. (2000), intrapersonal factors can enhance or impede children's pathways in, through and out of homelessness. Attention to personal strengths and resources may be of even greater significance within the South African context, given the sense of oppression that was distinctive in the current sample. As relationships with others are of such importance in children's pathways out of homelessness, relational strengths are thus a crucial factor in children's homeless trajectories. Intrapersonal factors, however, are unique to each individual and thus interventions will be of greater benefit to children's pathways out of homelessness if they are tailored for each child's intrapersonal characteristics. While some seemed to be spirited individuals who have the strength of character to transcend their circumstances, other children lacked this sense of internal resilience.

6.2 Implications for interventions

In assisting children out of homelessness three overall factors need to be recognised: 1) Acknowledgement and enhancement of children's internal strengths and resources. 2) The importance of systemic change and 3) The need to support, enhance and expand on shelter services as the point through which interventions can be implemented.

The ecosystemic model, derivative of the ecological model, posits the notion of recursion which can be aptly applied in discussing interventions for homeless children. Recursion refers to perceiving people and events "in the context of mutual interaction and mutual influence" (Becvar & Becvar, 2014, p. 69). The reciprocal interaction between the homeless children and their contexts needs to be acknowledged in interventions. Homeless children are not passive recipients in their environments. They influence their environments and the benefit children gain from the support they receive is facilitated by the children themselves. Thus attending to intrapersonal factors is of primary significance in homeless interventions. Each child's internal strengths and resources need to be recognised, capitalised on and reinforced. This means that interventions need to recognise each child's individuality and that homeless children are not a homogenous group who will all respond in the same way to interventions. Positive affirmation and judiciously planned life skills training, such as relational skills training, will assist children in the development of their own belief in themselves and in the successful navigation of their pathways through homelessness. Furthermore, children are likely to be empowered if their capacity to make decisions, whether

adaptive or maladaptive, is recognised and accepted and they and their stories are treated with respect, thereby enabling the children to feel valued and heard. This will most likely require persistence and patience as the development of internal resilience is a slow process.

While the children themselves need to be accounted for in homeless interventions, recognising the need for systemic change is essential. Poverty seems to be the underlying factor in homelessness, yet addressing poverty on a macrolevel is a long term challenge. By dealing with macrosystemic factors at the microsystemic level, for example addressing poverty on an individual level, macrosystemic issues may be more manageable. Thus the importance of education and access to educational resources in the children's own futures and transcendence of their individual poverty seems paramount. Thus it is essential to assist children in their education, whether informally, through mainstream schools or through vocational training and through providing children with structure and discipline and informal educational support.

Specific interventions such as medical care and particularly drug rehabilitation and counselling services are critical where these are indicated. Yet these resources are limited and access to them is difficult, particularly for these children who fall outside of the law. Thus ministerial or governmental support for these institutions is required.

Interventions for homeless children need to consider the influence of peers in the lives of homeless children. Rather than labelling peers as a negative influence, interventions may instead capitalise on peers who provide positive role models. Finally, systemic change should target families. Once more, while family breakdown may be understood on a macrosystemic level, addressing the problem on a microlevel is likely to be more feasible. This can be done by supporting families in their poverty stricken circumstances as well as in enhancing communication and positive family relationships. Families are essential for children's pathways out of homelessness, thus the availability of suitable, possibly substitute, families is of prime importance. In considering this, abusive circumstance which may have led children to flee onto the streets need to be accounted for and the presence of a responsive adult, especially a maternal figure, needs to be ensured.

Shelter services have in the past provided children with accessible support and should be seen as the hub through which broader and inner ecological systems come together to support

homeless children in their journeys. Well run shelter services may provide children with the opportunity to enhance or capitalise on their strengths and develop resilience. At the same time, they may become the point through which the children and families or substitute families, communicate. Furthermore, shelter services are in a position to access support for families in need. Lastly, shelter services are the hub through which children access specific interventions. Thus it is essential that shelter services are supported by the state and that shelter management is competent to ensure a well-run organisation, as well as the presence of appropriately responsive shelter staff who understand that trust takes time to develop, and who will act to build the child's sense of worth.

6.3 Limitations

The current research included a sample of children who had mostly spent relatively short periods of time on the street, in contrast to the children of studies such as Kurtz et al. (2000) and Bourdillon (1994). Thus the findings do not necessarily apply to those children whose way of life is entrenched in the streets. Furthermore, the interviews did not include children currently living on the streets, whose perspectives would also have been valuable in contributing to the findings. They were not included due to the difficulties with obtaining informed consent and to the time limitations of this project.

Similarly, the research was limited to single interviews due to the time and resource limitations of the current study. While this was necessary in the current instance, given that homeless children have been found to be wary, and that developing trust is an incremental process providing children with a chance to develop rapport and establish trust with researchers is likely to enhance the researcher-participant relationship. For this reason, a single interview design may not be the most effective means of data collection with this group of children and may limit the richness of the children's narratives.

Given the limitations of a single interview, Seidman's (2013) three-interview format which starts with a life narrative interview may be a more appropriate interview format for homeless children. Furthermore, this would allow children the opportunity to discuss their street experiences, which they seemed to need to do, but which but were necessary to curtail for the purposes of research.

While the perspectives of homeless youth are valuable, they should also be treated with circumspection given the tendency of homeless youth to lie. Children may also be more prone to social desirability bias and thus may be more likely to respond to queries in a manner in which they feel they are expected to respond. The tendency to lie was noted both in the previous studies (Bourdillon, 1994; Mufune, 2000) as well as in one case in the current study and social desirability bias was suspected in the current study. For this reason, researchers need to be aware of these concerns and dichotomies within the children's narratives when studies include only the voices of the children.

6.4 Future research

The use of drawings as a means of data collection has been well researched and shown to be effective with homeless children (Laws & Mann, 2004; Merriman & Guerin, 2006), however it is not a suitable means of data collection for all children, as noted in the current study. This may be related to the age of the sample, all adolescents in this case, and this should be considered when including drawing as a means of data collection. Nevertheless the use of drawings was effective in the current study, thus in similar instances, including drawings should be done with flexibility allowing the choice to rest with the adolescent, as was done in this instance.

While there has been an extensive call to include the voices of the children in homeless research, this demand has to a great deal been met, particularly within the African context (Bourdillon, 1994; Mufune, 2000). Thus, while the perspectives of the homeless youth should not be neglected, for a more holistic and perhaps accurate picture, research should include the voices of service providers as well as the families of homeless youth who also have valuable information to offer.

Also within the African context, research may benefit from exploring the impact of patriarchy of some African societies on children's pathways in and out of homelessness. For example, the lack of belonging that accompanies some children's pathways into homelessness may be influenced by patriarchal systems and may impact on children's pathways out of homelessness.

While only one reference to abusiveness within shelters was found in the African literature (Mufune, 2000), its consequences are sufficiently dire that it would be worthwhile for research endeavours to explore the possibility of this occurrence. On a more positive note with regard to shelter care, as shelter staff are so integral in the helping process, research that explores what they need and what can most assist shelter staff in providing for children may be of value. Lastly, while there may be an association between positive self-worth and pathways out of homelessness, there is little evidence in the current study to support such a claim. Research that investigates this claim may be useful.

6.5 Conclusion

Although children's trajectories into and out of homelessness vary according to circumstance, the commonalities they share seem to relate to adverse macrosystemic factors such as the breakdown in traditional family structures and processes as well as the unavailability or absence of parents, the negative influence of peers and the desire to belong, which often results in substance abuse. Given the systemic nature of homelessness within the South African context, interventions should include systemic change as well as attention to intrapersonal strengths impacting children's successful navigation through their adversity. As shelters play such an integral role in interventions, maximum support should be provided to shelters and shelter staff in this endeavour. Limitations of the current study include some aspects of the sample chosen, interviewer inexperience and the use of a single interview with the children. Finally, recommendations for further research include the judicious use of drawings in research with children, exploring the possibility of abusiveness within shelters, exploring the role of self-worth in children's pathways out of homelessness and including the voices of service providers and families in homeless research in South Africa.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter from the shelter

Appendix Letter from [REDACTED] **Children's Shelter**

13 February 2015

Anna Wilshire Jones Bornman
Psychology Masters Student
Discipline of Psychology
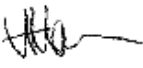School of Applied Human Science

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Request to conduct research at [REDACTED] **Centre**

Dear Anna

Thank you for your request for permission to conduct your Masters research project with the help of [REDACTED] Centre and its young participants, as well as outlining how you intend going about this research.

I am very pleased to confirm that we are happy for you to go ahead. We give permission for you to interview the young people who are in our care. This may be done in a room at our centre. The young people will continue to have access to our social worker for counselling, should this be necessary. We are willing to assist you in any way we can and look forward to learning the results of your work.

Yours sincerely

[signature]

[REDACTED]

DIRECTOR: [REDACTED]

Appendix 2: Shelter consent form

Title of the Study:

Pathways out of homelessness: A study of the perceptions of homeless children in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

Dear [Shelter],

My name is Anna Bornman. I am Masters Student in the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu Natal and I am researching pathways out of homelessness. I would like to request your wards' participation in this study, which we hope will benefit us in understanding children's perceptions on exiting homelessness.

During the study, your wards will be involved in an interview and a drawing activity with me and with a colleague. The interview will be held at the shelter on a date and time arranged with you. Children will be asked about their experiences on leaving home and at the shelter and their perceptions of returning home. Children will not have to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer. With your and your ward/child's permission interviews will be recorded using an audio voice recorder and later transcribed. When I analyse drawings and narratives, I will be looking for themes across our interviews in order to better understand children's perceptions of exiting homelessness.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and your wards are not being forced to participate in this study. This means that the choice of whether you would like your wards to participate is yours and your wards' alone. Your or your wards can withdraw consent at any time and there will be no repercussions. I encourage you to speak to your wards about this study and discuss with your wards whether or not they would like to participate in the study before the process begins.

Allowing your wards to participate in this study will be greatly appreciated and I will be providing feedback about the findings of my study to you and to your wards and recommendations may be included. A written report of the findings will be provided to you in person and a diagrammatic/pictorial report will be provided to be given to the children by the shelter's social worker. Unfortunately I cannot offer any other direct benefits to you for allowing your wards to participate. However, your wards may enjoy the experience of being able to talk about their perceptions of their experiences. Your consent will be kept separate from the recorded data.

Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that signed informed consent forms are stored by myself and my supervisor and are not accessible to anyone else. These consent forms will be kept in a secure location for a period of at least five years. If the material is no longer needed, it will be incinerated. In my report, confidentiality will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms and there will be no identifying characteristics. Anyone who reads the data will not be able to link the transcription to your wards names. The transcriptions and tapes will also be kept in a secure location for at least five years and will also be incinerated if they are no longer needed. When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your wards' identities. Information from this study could be used for further research or published in journal articles in the future but as the data will not be linked to your wards' names, the information will not be traced back to your wards. I do not think there are any risks to your participating in this study and there is no deception in this study.

Thank you for considering this request. **Should your child/ward feel the need for post interview counselling for any reason, they can speak to the shelter's social worker on ▬▬▬▬▬. Children can also be referred to the Child and Family Centre in Golf Road. The CFC can be contacted on 0332605166.** If you have any questions about this study or if you would like to be made aware of the findings of this study, feel free to contact me by email at awilshirejones@gmail.com (Tel: 0333450193). My supervisor, Carol Mitchell of UKZN (M.Soc.Sci) can be contacted at mitchellc@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 6054). If you have any concerns about the nature of the study at any point, you may also contact UKZN's Human Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Tel: 031 260 3587).

Please sign and return the following to me to indicate that you choose to allow your wards to take part in this study:

GUARDIAN CONSENT: I …………………………………… (print name) voluntarily agree to allow the children at the shelter to participate in this study on pathways out of homelessness. I understand that my wards will not be forced to participate in this study, and my wards can withdraw at any point should I, or my wards, no longer wish to take part. I have been read the description of this study above and I understand what the study involves.

Additional consent to audio recording:

In addition to the above, I hereby agree to the audio recording of the interviews in which my wards participate for the purposes of data capture. I understand that no personally identifiable information or recordings of my wards will be released in any form, and that the identities of my wards will be kept confidential in transcripts, reports and any future publications and will not be traced back to my wards.

_____   _____

Guardian's Signature   Date

Please Note that only a PARENT or LEGAL GUARDIAN may consent to allow their child/ward to participate in this study.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Appendix 3: Parent consent form

Request for your ward/child's participation in a study: Pathways out of homelessness: A study of the perceptions of homeless children in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Anna Bornman. I am Masters Student in the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu Natal and I am researching pathways out of homelessness. I would like to request your ward/child's participation in this study, which we hope will benefit us in understanding children's perceptions on exiting homelessness.

If you allow your ward/child to participate in this study, your ward/child will be involved in a drawing activity and an interview with me and with a colleague. The interview will be held at [the shelter] in Pietermaritzburg on the morning of Saturday [Insert date]. Transport for your ward/child to get to the shelter will be arranged. Children will be asked about their experiences on leaving home, at the shelter and upon returning home. Specifically children will be asked about factors that influenced them in their decisions to return home. Children will not have to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer. With your and your ward/child's permission interviews will be recorded using an audio voice recorder and later transcribed. When I analyse narratives, I will be looking for themes across our interviews and drawings in order to better understand children's perceptions of exiting homelessness.

Your ward/child's participation in this study is completely voluntary and he/she is not being forced to participate in this study. This means that the choice of whether you would like your ward/child to participate is yours and your ward/child's alone. You or your ward/child can withdraw consent at any time and there will be no repercussions. Your ward/child will also be able to withdraw from the interview once it is in progress. I encourage you to speak to your

ward/child about this study and discuss with your ward/child whether or not they would like to participate in the study before you sign this form.

If you choose to allow your ward/child to participate in this study, it will be greatly appreciated but unfortunately I cannot offer any direct benefits to you for allowing your ward/child to participate. However, your ward/child may enjoy the experience of being able to talk about their perceptions of their experiences. Your consent will be kept separate from the recorded data. I will provide you and your ward with a diagrammatic/pictorial report of the findings of the research through the shelter's social worker.

Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that signed informed consent forms are stored by myself and my supervisor and are not accessible to anyone else. These consent forms will be kept in a secure location for a period of at least five years. If the material is no longer needed, it will be incinerated. If you agree to allow your ward/child to participate in this study, a report of our findings will be made available to you through the staff at the shelter. In the report confidentiality will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms and there will be no identifying characteristics. Anyone who reads the data will not be able to link the transcription to your ward/child's name. The drawings, transcriptions and tapes will also be kept in a secure location for at least five years and will also be incinerated if they are no longer needed. When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your ward/child's identity. Information from this study could be used for further research or published in journal articles in the future but as the data will not be linked to your ward/child's name, the information will not be traced back to your ward/child. I do not think there are any risks to your participating in this study and there is no deception in this study.

Thank you for considering this request. Should your child/ward feel the need for post interview counselling for any reason, you can contact the shelter's social worker on ██████. Children can also be referred to the Child and Family Centre in Golf Road. The CFC can be contacted on 0332605166. If you have any questions about this study or if you would like to be made aware of the findings of this study, feel free to contact me by email at awilshirejones@gmail.com (Tel: 0333450193). My supervisor, Carol Mitchell of UKZN (M.Soc.Sci) can be contacted at mitchellc@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 6054). If you have any concerns about the nature of the study at any point, you may also contact UKZN's Human

Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Tel: 031 260 3587).

Please sign and return the following by giving it to [your child's social worker] if you choose to allow your ward/child to take part in this study:

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT: I voluntarily agree to allow my ward/ child ………………………………………………………………….. (print name) to participate in this study on pathways out of homelessness. I understand that my ward/child will not be forced to participate in this study, and my ward/child can withdraw at any point should I, or my ward/child, no longer wish to take part. I have been read the description of this study above and I understand what the study involves.

Additional consent to audio recording:

In addition to the above, I hereby agree to the audio recording of the interviews in which my ward/child participates for the purposes of data capture. I understand that no personally identifiable information or recording of my child will be released in any form, and that the identity of my child will be kept confidential in transcripts, reports and any future publications and will not be traced back to me or my child.

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

Please Note that only a PARENT or LEGAL GUARDIAN may consent to allow their child to participate in this study.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Appendix 4: Child Assent Form

Title of the Study:

Pathways out of Homelessness: A study of the perceptions of homeless children in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

My name is Anna Wilshire Jones Bornman. I am trying to learn about the perspectives of the shelter children (OR: Children who have lived at the shelter) regarding pathways out of homelessness. I am doing this because I am a student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in Pietermaritzburg, and for my study program I have to do a research project. If you would like to, you can be in my research.

Project Tasks: If you decide you want to be in my research, we will continue with a drawing activity and an interview. It will not be longer than 60 minutes and this is [my interpreter] who is here to help us understand each other. I am going to ask you to draw and talk about your experiences of being homeless, of living here at the shelter and your perspectives on going back home. I will be recording the interview so I can later write down what we talked about but only my supervisor and I will be able to access the tapes. Is that OK with you?

Benefits and Risks: If you choose to be in my project I will be very thankful, but sadly I can't offer you any benefits/prizes. You will be safe and I will be honest with you at all times in this project. I will provide you with a picture telling you what I learned and you can get this from your social worker. Should you wish to talk to someone because you are upset about things we discussed during our interview, you can contact your social worker on ███████. You can also contact the Child and Family Centre (CFC) in Golf Road. The CFC can be contacted on 0332605166. Your social worker will help arrange for you to get there.

Privacy: I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other children, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I

will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about. What you say to me in the interview is confidential, but if you say something that makes me think you may hurt yourself or others, or if someone is hurting you, I will have to speak to someone about it. We will discuss this together. Do you understand that?

The shelter (OR: your guardian/parent) has said it is OK for you to be in the study. After the shelter (OR: your guardian/parent) decides, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be upset or angry with you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

I would like you to sign this form here just to say that you have decided to be in the study even though you know you do not have to. Is that OK? Do you want to ask me any questions you would like to ask me first?

If you have any questions about this study or if you would like to be made aware of the findings of this study, feel free to contact me by email at <u>awilshirejones@gmail.com</u> (Tel: 0333450193). My supervisor, Carol Mitchell of UKZN (M.Soc.Sci) can be contacted at mitchellc@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 6054). If you have any concerns about the nature of the study at any point, you may also contact UKZN's Human Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Tel: 031 260 3587).

Agreement: I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don't have to do it. Anna Wilshire Jones Bornman has answered all my questions.

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   Date

_____   _____

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule 1 (Children at the shelter)

Drawing Activity Instructions

1. Please draw a picture that shows your experiences of homelessness.

2. Please draw a picture that shows your experience of the shelter.

3. Please draw a picture that shows your experience/perceptions of going home.

Once the drawing activity has been completed, the participant will be asked to discuss the drawing. Questions and probes will be based on the drawings. The following interview schedule will be used to guide questions or will follow discussion of the drawings. The interview will be semi-structured. Depending on the participant, certain questions may be irrelevant and others may become necessary. Probes will depend on answers to questions but care will be taken not to cause unnecessary distress. Should it be found to be necessary, the interview schedule will be adjusted, in conjunction with my supervisor, during the data collection process. The interviewer is a student psychologist and the translator will be a post graduate psychology student. Before commencing questioning, children will be told that if they don't want to answer a question, they can say so.

1. Leaving Home

   (Answers to these questions will inform later questions and give clarity to responses.)

   - Please tell me how you came to leave home?

   - Please tell me about your friends you had when you left home.

   - How do you feel about home?

   - What made you to come to the shelter?

2. Perspectives on pathways out of homelessness:

   - If you could choose somewhere else to live other than the shelter:

3. Going Home

   - What are the good things about going home?

   - What are the bad things about going home?

4. Reintegrating with families

   - If you could choose someone to live with (back home) who would that be?

   - Who else would you like to live with?

5. Child factors influencing the re-integration of children back into their homes:

- What would help you to have the courage to go back home?

- What have you learnt since leaving home that would help you in going back home?

- Tell me about your friends back home.

6. <u>The shelter</u>

- One of the key goals of the shelter is to help you to go back to your families. How do you feel about that?

- What have you learnt at the shelter that would help you to live at home again?

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule 2 (Reintegrated children)

Drawing Activity Instructions

1. Please draw a picture that shows your experiences of homelessness.
2. Please draw a picture that shows your experience of the shelter.
3. Please draw a picture that shows your experience/perceptions of going home.

Once the drawing activity has been completed, the participant will be asked to discuss the drawing. Questions and probes will be based on the drawings. The following interview schedule will be used to guide questions or will follow discussion of the drawings. The interview will be semi-structured. Depending on the participant, certain questions may be irrelevant and others may become necessary. Probes will depend on answers to questions but care will be taken not to cause unnecessary distress. Should it be found to be necessary, the interview schedule will be adjusted, in conjunction with my supervisor, during the data collection process. The interviewer is a student psychologist and the translator will be a post graduate psychology student. Before commencing questioning, children will be told that if they don't want to answer a question, they can say so.

1. <u>Leaving Home</u>

   (Answers to these questions will inform later questions and give clarity to responses.)

   - Please tell me how you came to leave home?
   - Tell me about your friends you had when you left home.
   - How do you feel about home?
   - Tell me about going to the shelter.

2. <u>Going Home</u>

   - Tell me about deciding to go back home.
   - What is different at home that made it possible for you to want to be home?

3. <u>Reintegrating with families</u>

   - Tell me about going back home.
   - How did the shelter help you in being able to live back home?

4. <u>Child factors influencing the re-integration of children back into their homes:</u>

   - What role did you play in going back home?

- Tell me about your friends at home.

5. <u>The Shelter and Formal Institutions</u>

- What did you learn at the shelter that helped you to live at home again?

- Tell me about the role of school in your life?

Appendix 7: Letter from the Child and Family Centre

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

11th February 2015

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to provide the assurance that should any participant require psychological assistance as a result of any distress arising from the research project titled: *"Pathways out of homelessness: a study of the perceptions of homeless children in South Africa"* conducted by Anna Wilshire Jones Bornman a psychology Masters student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal; it will be provided by psychologists and intern psychologists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus Child and Family Centre – phone 033-2605166.

Yours sincerely,

Prof D R Wassenaar
wassenaar@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 8: Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

10 June 2015

Mrs AWJ Bornman 215079436
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Bornman

Protocol reference number : HSS/0436/015M
Project title: Pathways out of homeless: A study of the perceptions of homeless children in South Africa.

Full Approval – Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px
cc Supervisor: Carol Mitchel
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken
cc School Administrator: Mr Sbonelo Duma

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3687/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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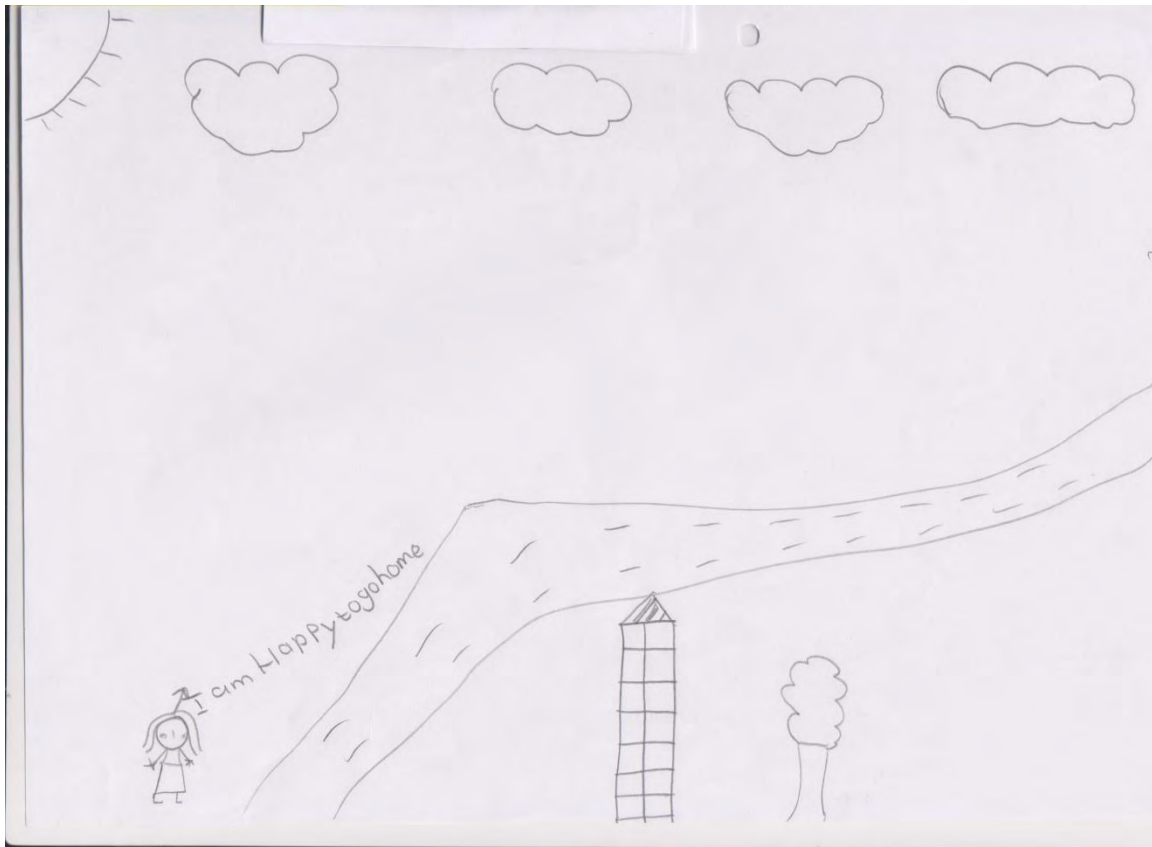
Appendix 9: Drawings

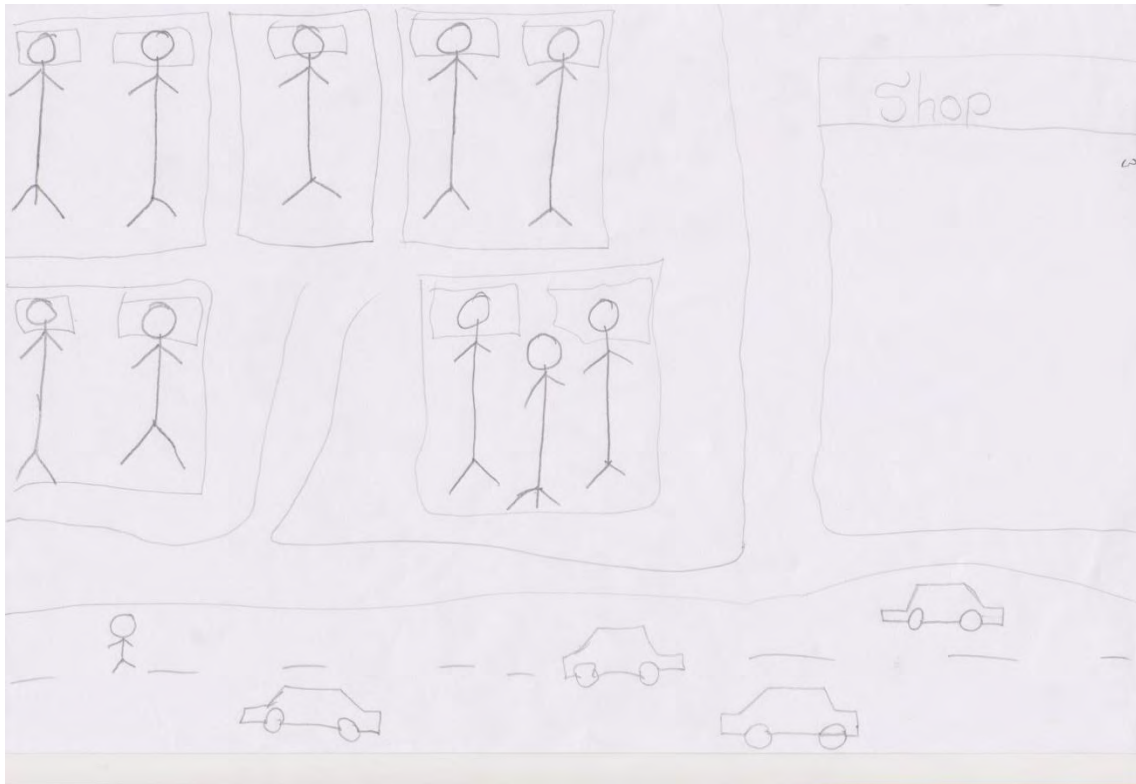**Figure 11: Nqobile - Perceptions of returning home**

Figure 12: Thembelihle – Life on the streets

Figure 13: Charlie - Perceptions of returning home
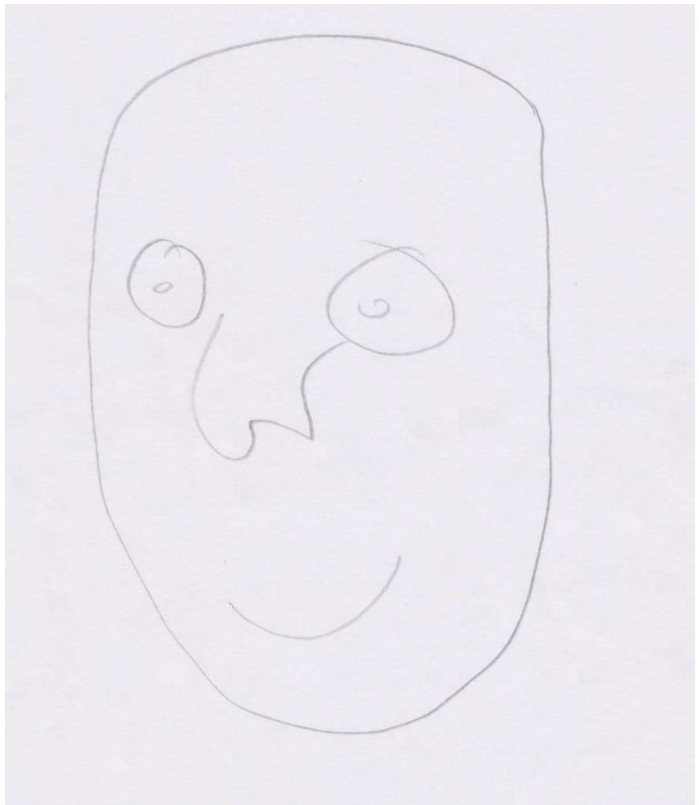
Figure 14: Londisizwe - Leaving home
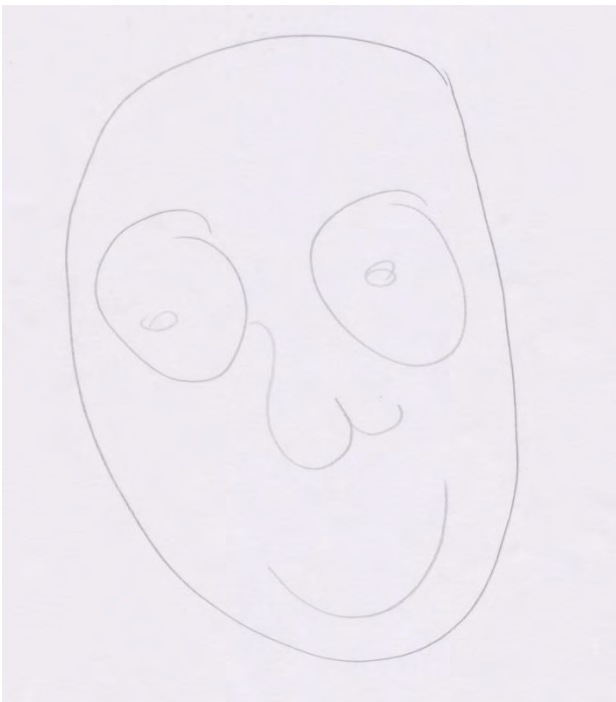
Figure 15: Londisizwe - At the shelter

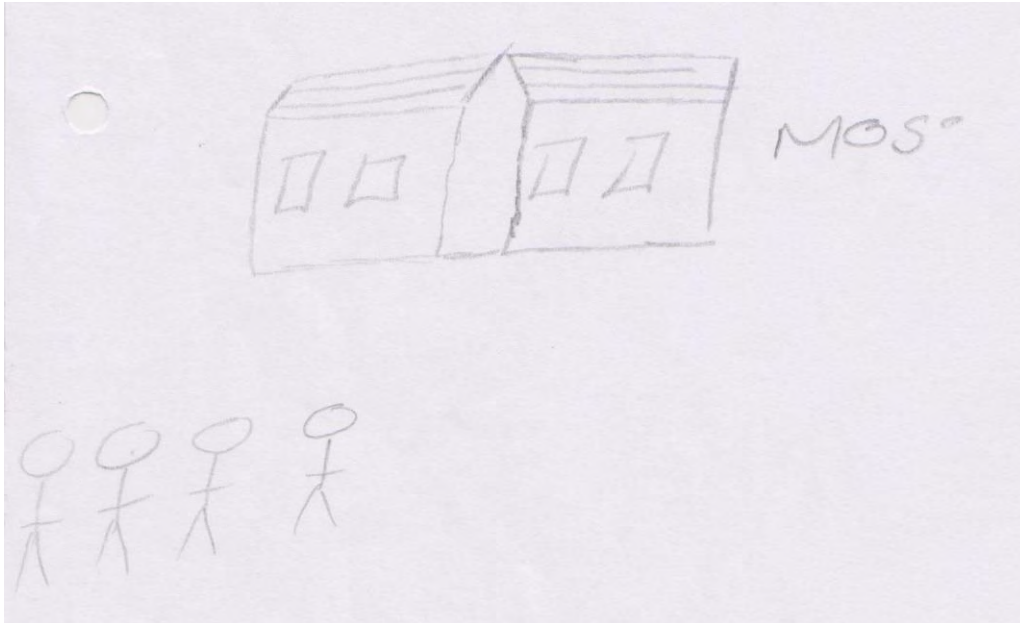

Figure 16: Londisizwe - Going home

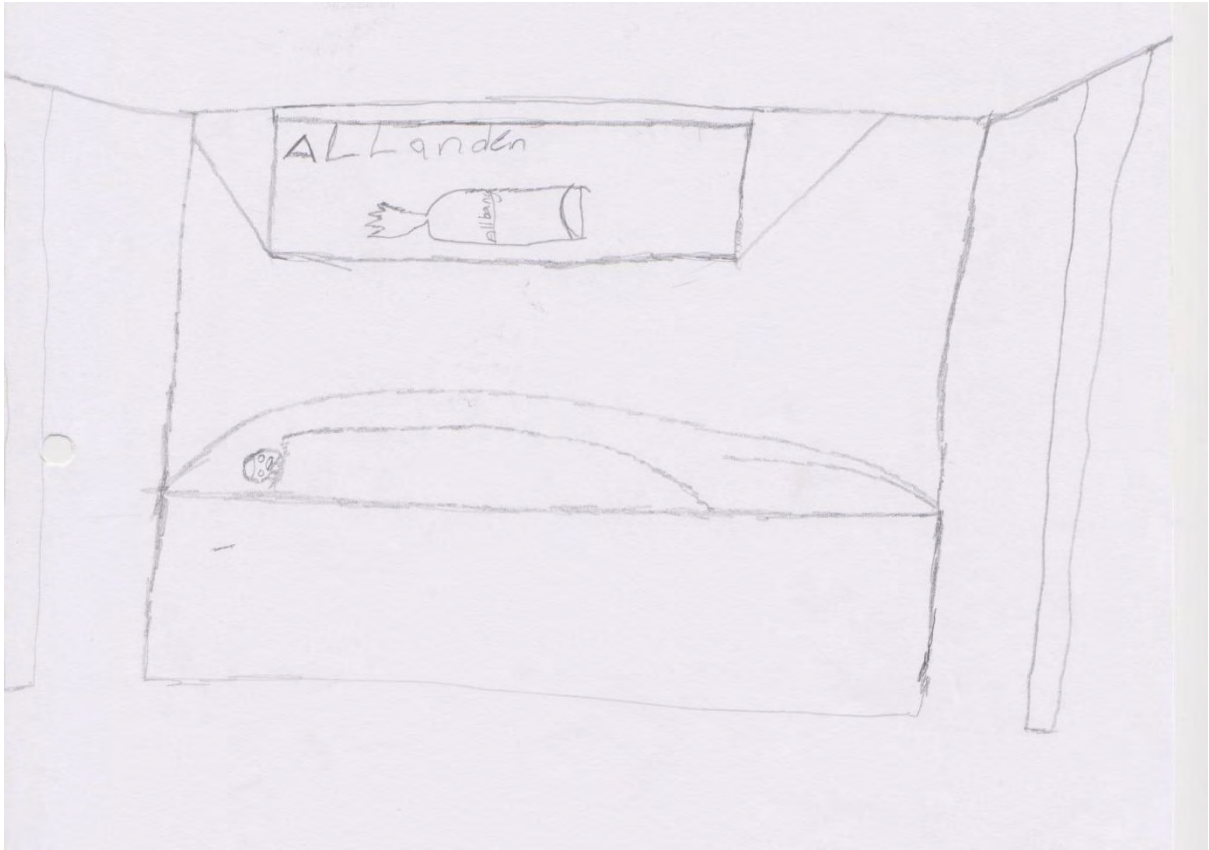**Figure 17: Siboniso - Leaving home**

Figure 18: Siboniso - At the shelter

Figure 19: Zithulele - Life on the streets